It has become increasingly common for scholars to locate the eighteenth century as a turning point in what Nell Irvin Painter calls the “now familiar equation that converts race to black and black to slave.” Recent studies explore how scientific racism, which flourished in the nineteenth century, emerges in debates involving Enlightenment savants like Voltaire, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and several less prominent authors. European anatomists, natural historians, and philosophers devised racial classification schemata, frequently relying on erroneous travel narratives as their main source of knowledge. The voices of “non-whites” are predictably muted in debates that took place almost exclusively among Europeans, but that also included well-connected North Americans, chief among them Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826). Although “race”—by no means a stable concept in the eighteenth century—included myriad categories besides “blackness,” this article will discuss how intellectuals in the Americas wrote about black Africans and their descendants in the context of Enlightenment-era science.

Given how the Portuguese and British Americas received the majority of Africans taken to the New World as slaves, it is not surprising that there is a longstanding tradition of comparative approaches to racial relations in Brazil and the United States. Sparse attention, however, has been paid to how the transatlantic circulation of eighteenth-century scientific discourses, especially in natural history, might have impacted the later development of different forms of racism across the hemisphere. This study brings to the fore texts from the Luso-Brazilian world that have been largely overlooked, and aims to add to the vast literature on Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781). Although the analysis here does not pretend to be comprehensive or exhaustive, by in-
vestigating connections between a group of would-be revolutionaries in the Brazilian captaincy of Minas Gerais and the United States independence movement, it attempts to be connective as much as comparative. This hemispheric approach evinces the disparate roles and station of Luso-Brazilian and United States lettered elites in transatlantic circulation of knowledge, while seeking to contribute to an understanding of how they produced divergent texts about blackness in the period preceding the French and Haitian revolutions.

The Luso-Brazilian eighteenth century has generated an outstanding body of scholarship, but it does not often appear prominently in panoramic studies of the period—despite the fact that the Portuguese empire remained one of Europe’s most extensive, and that gold from its Minas Gerais possessions had a significant impact on the global economy. Perhaps it is so because Brazil does not easily fit within the Age of Revolutions paradigm: in 1822, it was the Portuguese monarch’s son, rather than a republican revolutionary, who declared independence. Brazil was an empire through most of the nineteenth century, and became a republic in 1889, later than its Spanish-speaking neighbors. Eighteenth-century movements that might have become comparable to the United States and Haitian Revolutions were thwarted by the Crown. Likewise, although by some estimates mining in the Portuguese Americas alone propelled about ten percent of all slave trade in the eighteenth century, the Luso-Brazilian world remains largely absent from scholarship on the connections between slavery and the “Sciences of Man” during the Enlightenment: one aspect of what Charles Withers calls “geographies of human difference.”

While the historiography on slavery and race relations in the Portuguese empire has for some time been vibrant, studies on Luso-Brazilian scientific representations of race in the eighteenth century are still lacking. This might be attributed to the perception that scientific racism was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century, or that Portugal remained mired in religious obscurantism, its writers therefore not attuned to Enlightenment-era debates. Through a transatlantic lens, Brazil’s place in eighteenth-century geographies of knowledge is usually further diminished by how, unlike the British and Spanish Americas, it had neither universities nor a printing press. Nonetheless, as we well know, central books and ideas of the Enlightenment circulated among lettered elites.

In Brazil and Portugal, as elsewhere, history of science has experienced significant growth in the past decades. It seems to be an increasing consensus among scholars that a number of Portuguese polymaths helped to push the frontiers of knowledge, and natural history appears to have been the most advanced area of scientific inquiry. Racial classification, however, never became a central concern despite its increasing importance during the Enlightenment. The Portuguese Americas largely lacked practices like the casta paintings found in the Spanish Americas, or anti-miscegenation theories and policies like those found in the United States. I would like to suggest that this is not due to a greater openness to mixture, nor is it merely a result of racial concepts being an-
tiquated. Rather, natural philosophers of the Luso-Brazilian world selectively incorporated scientific methodologies and knowledge, but resisted new ideas about polygenism and anti-miscegenation. The latter constituted a potential threat to an empire seeking to stimulate intermarriage, partly as a solution to population scarcity. As elsewhere, polygenism (the theory that human races had multiple origins) disrupted Judeo-Christian orthodoxies regarding humanity’s descent from Adam and Eve, but in Portugal, other practical factors also need to be considered.

Snait Gissis observes that in the eighteenth century “humans became classified and visually represented along the same lines as flora, according to similar assumptions about visible features.” Racial taxonomies consistently relegated black Africans and their descendants to the bottom of hierarchies, regardless of whether they were written by supporters or opponents of slavery, proponents of monogenism or polygenism. Portuguese scientific writing in the last two decades of the century centered on the Academia Real das Ciências (Royal Academy of Sciences), created in Lisbon in 1779. Among its founders was the Abbé José Correia da Serra (1750–1823), a polymath and leading botanist whom Jefferson deemed “the most learned man” he had met “in any country.” Although some members of the Academy wrote forceful defenses of the institution of slavery, Portuguese naturalists were not as engaged in exercises of racial taxonomy as their counterparts in other European countries.

Early justifications of slavery in Lisbon’s Academia Real das Ciências were often grounded in political economy, and not inscribed in nature. In other words, though black slaves were crucial to the Portuguese imperial enterprise, “blackness” itself was not an essential category: skin color implied barbarity and servility, but it did not provide the foundation for a natural “race,” “variety,” or “species,” lexica that became increasingly typical in scientific discourse. This is the case in writings by Academy members João de Loureiro (1710–91), José Joaquim da Cunha de Azeredo Coutinho (1742–1821), and others. Rather than inherent, racial differences were articulated as “accidental.” Although this Aristotelian distinction has precedents throughout early modernity, it was used by some of these savants to counter notions of blacks as a different species in the context of secular polygeny, in arguments that resorted not just to classical authority but to direct experience as well.

If, as Michel Foucault asserts, “natural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible,” eighteenth-century writing of African blacks and their descendants in the Luso-Brazilian world was the product of a process of seeing that set it apart from the dominant practices of European naturalists. As Scott Atran and others have demonstrated, Foucault’s claim overlooks several aspects of natural history’s cognitive foundations, but nevertheless, skin color became increasingly relied upon as a harbinger of difference. Andrew Curran makes the crucial point that “many of the thinkers who would usher in a major transformation of the notion of nègre at mid-century,” like most French people, “probably
never saw or met an African.” European pioneers of racial classification had very limited or indirect contact with the peoples of the South Atlantic. Portuguese epistemologies, in contrast, resulted from direct and sustained engagement with Africans from the fifteenth century onward. According to Didier Lahon, Lisbon’s population of African descent numbered around 30,000 in 1700—significantly more than in all of France and other cities of the North Atlantic.

Josiah Blackmore writes that blackness in medieval and early modern Portuguese literary, religious, and historical texts “most often appears as a visible sign of sin or spiritual waywardness, often with diabolical associations.” Eighteenth-century dictionaries of the Portuguese language register an association between blackness and slavery: as the third meaning of “preto” (black), Raphael Bluteau gives “also as black slaves are called Servus niger.” The association had even earlier roots, and the expression “negros da terra” (blacks of the land) was often applied to enslaved Indians, a use that eventually became outlawed as imperial policy shifted to black African slavery.

A more textured writing of blackness, however, becomes possible, including strikingly modern forms of cultural relativism in unsuspecting places. The Brazilian-born José Pereira de Santana (1694–1759), a Carmelite and Doctor in Theology through the University of Coimbra, engaged in a fascinating discussion of blackness in a hagiography of two Ethiopian saints, published in Lisbon in 1735. His defense of the idea that St. Elesbaan and St. Ephigenia were black, part of an effort to convert slaves to Christianity, cites Robert Boyle. Boyle (1627–91), a pioneering chemist and natural philosopher, held the monogenist belief that all humans came from Adam and Eve, but he opposed the notion that skin color can be attributed to climate. Boyle had also argued against the idea that Europeans in Africa’s climate would generate black offspring (and vice versa), a theory that some eighteenth-century natural philosophers espoused.

Santana enlists empirical evidence to buttress the position: many in the “Zona Torrida” are not black and many outside are, he writes, giving the Cape of Good Hope as an example of the latter. This was not an original argument against climactic determinism, but Santana, a native of “torrid” Rio de Janeiro, is in effect practicing the scientific method. The Brazilian-born friar then evokes civil and canonical law to maintain that “when the [genealogical] tree is mixed,” if progenitors continue to be white, within five generations descendants become “legitimately white,” and likewise with blacks. That view diverges from the so-called “one drop rule” already in practice by the early eighteenth century in parts of British America, where “miscegenation,” as in the Luso-Brazilian world, was commonplace. Santana, to whom the objectives of theology and scientific inquiry are not yet divided, proceeds to argue that emperor David, by being from Palestine and thus “white,” would have generated “displeasure” among those from Axum because he was not black. Among Ethiopians, the friar writes, “the black color is held in high regard,” and being white is to them a defect—“just as being black is to us.”
The Carmelite writer did not seek to make a contribution to natural philosophy, but his attitude toward “blackness” reveals something more widespread among Luso-Brazilian contemporary intellectuals. Scholars have observed a certain nonchalance in Luso-Brazilian descriptions of the slave trade and bondage, an attribute that can be connected to the framing of slavery “not as a moral or a political problem” but as a form of labor, “the result of geo-demographic circumstances that were unrelated to the absence or presence of ‘enlightenment’ (as luzes).” This approach seems to extend to a certain nonchalance in attitudes toward racial mixing theories. Theories of degeneracy became more prevalent in Europe after Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon’s influential Histoire naturelle (1749). Like others before him, Buffon (1707–88) maintained that “miscegenation provided the proof of monogenesis.” The notion of blacks and whites having a common ancestry pushed against the also widely read categories put forth by Carl Linnaeus (1707–78) in Systema Naturae (1735). But racial mixture continued to imply degeneration, always with the presumption of “whites”—or “Caucasians”—as representing the ideal stock from which other peoples “degenerate,” a theory notably developed by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) in his De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa (1776).

The Abbé Raynal (1713–96), who advocates for racial “cross-breeding” in certain passages of his popular Histoire Philosophique et Politique des deux Indes (1770, 1774), nonetheless suggests black-white miscegenation as one of the reasons why South Americans were destined to be inferior to North Americans:

In America, therefore, as in Europe, it will be the north that dominates the south. The first will abound in people and crops, while the second will find its vital juices and its gold mines equally exhausted. The first will be able to civilize savage tribes by means of its links with nations of free men; the second will never create anything more than a weak and monstrous amalgam of a race of slaves with a nation of tyrants.

While biological determinism and the sense of “blackness” as a threat became an important component of social thought in the Brazilian empire and republic, Enlightenment-era Luso-Brazilian writers tended to describe the colony’s racial “amalgam” without scientificist undertones. Manoel Ferreira da Câmara (1762–1835), a Minas Gerais native and member of Lisbon’s Royal Academy of Sciences, provides a representative example. Câmara was familiar with contemporary theories about degeneration. In an essay published by the Academy in 1789, Câmara provides a matter-of-fact description of a “new race” (nova raça), product of a “combination.” Evoking “blood purity” laws targeting Jewish, Moorish, or Pagan descent, Câmara notes that with the exception of some “civilized Indians,” “some Europeans,” and “very few pure families,” most others are mulatto or black (negros).

As Silvia Hunold Lara amply demonstrates in her research on eighteenth-
century slavery in the Portuguese Americas, color designations became increas-
ingly politicized, “directly connected to the tensions present in that society.”

The word negro, she argues, begins to apply to anyone who was not white, more as a descriptor of social condition than skin color. What Lara calls a “racialization of social relations,” however, is not accompanied by a racialization of scientific literature, even though the theories of thinkers like Linnaeus arrived in Portugal. One of the most important figures of the Portuguese Enlightenment, Theodoro de Almeida (1722–1804), indirectly addresses the issue in the eighth tome of his Recreação Filosofica (1792). Volumes dedicated to natural philosophy (1778, 1795) do not cover material related to flora, fauna, or the “Science of Man,” but the topic surfaces in a discussion about differences between the concepts of “essences,” “attributes,” and “accidental predicates.”

The Recreação, intended for pedagogical purposes, is structured as a series of dialogues between the author and two pupils. In this lesson, Almeida describes how it is easy to know an “ideal” or “metaphysical essence,” but difficult to discern a “real” or “physical essence.” One of the students attempts to illustrate the difference by giving examples of animal genera. Though we need not get into details of this lesson on principles of logic, Almeida’s reply reveals how a Luso-Brazilian eighteenth-century epistemology could not easily assimilate theories of race that posited whites and blacks as separate “species.” Lions, horses, cats, and dogs, he asserts, belong to different species of quadrupeds. But the different “classes” of dogs do not constitute a “different essence” (essencia diversa); arguing otherwise would be as ridiculous as suggesting that “men from America, Africa, India and Europe have a different essence . . . because some are black, as those from the Coast of Africa; others brown, like those from the backlands of America; others yellowed, like those from China; others white, like those from Europe.”

Almeida concludes the analogy: “There are more differences between some one black from Angola and a German gentile, than between a species of dog and another among the least distant; and nonetheless, no one claims men to be of different species, nor of a diverse essence.” By the time of this publication, the last statement is, in a strict sense, not accurate. Though by no means a consensus, as George Fredrickson writes, early polygenists had already “opened the way to a secular or scientific racism by considering human beings part of the animal kingdom rather than viewing them in biblical terms.” Their racial typologies, he adds, “established a framework for the full-blown biological racism of the nineteenth [century].” Almeida, who conciliated scientific pursuits with life as an Oratorian, reveals his knowledge of contemporary theories that displaced discussions about skin color—among many other characteristics—from a theological to a secular sphere. His affirmation of all “races” as “essentially” part of the same humanity, framed as a rebuttal to a student’s suggestion, might very well arise out of a wariness of theories of polygenesis, which conflicted with Christian universalism. At the same time, the Recreação later asserts
an aesthetic relativism that stands in stark contrast to Kant’s position about the universal validity of beauty. To Almeida, the Portuguese, English, Dutch, Tartars, and “Negros” simply have different standards, which is why “we” judge the latter’s noses and lips as “ugly.”48

Referring to the period of Portuguese expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Blackmore writes that sub-Saharan peoples receive “the most degrading characterizations as bestial and barbaric,” but we do not find “emphasis on sexual difference or on the sexuality of the African as a characteristic of his alterity to European paradigms of civility.”49 In the eighteenth century, “race mixing was considered a serious moral violation in France, and was even a punishable act under the 1685 Code noir.”50 In North America, concepts of race remained unstable and susceptible to multiple appropriations, but several antimiscegenation laws were promulgated to punish interracial sexual relations and interracial marriage, including one written by Jefferson in 1779.51 In Brazil, hierarchies of race maintain blacks at the bottom, but miscegenation becomes an imperial tool to consolidate territorial claims. To a significant extent due to demographic pressures, there seemed to be little oxygen in the Luso-Brazilian world of the eighteenth century for scientific discourses that decreed blacks as so essentially different that mixture should be considered unnatural.

Although the colonial inheritance of widespread racial mixture would become a harbinger of twentieth-century phenomena like the myth of racial democracy in Brazil and the luso-tropicalismo of António de Oliveira Salazar’s dictatorship in Portugal,52 in the eighteenth century it is better understood in the context of an overextended and underpopulated empire. Nonetheless, there is a contrast to the newly formed United States. Painter, following a discussion of texts by French-American writer Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur, Samuel Stanhope Smith, and Jefferson, concludes that “to the leaders of [North] American society . . . mixing produced a unique new man, this American, but mixing only among Europeans.”53 The question of what it meant to be white becomes crucial. While skin color correlates with racism in both Americas, in Brazil mixture becomes normative, whereas in the United States normative whiteness is usually seen as “unmarked” in later critical thought.54

As contemporary scholarship builds onto the achievements of hemispheric approaches, it is crucial not to lose sight of the intractability of certain North-North connections (and Iberia’s ambivalent position).55 Although Almeida was translated into Spanish, and despite Serra’s reputation in some circles, lettered Europeans generally did not look past the Pyrenees for scientific thought. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra finds that “the bulk of the scholarship critically addressing the epistemological and methodological proposals of the Enlightenment did not come from the British American colonies but from Mexico.” He adds: “Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin did not offer any comprehensive methodological response to the negative views of America proposed by authors such as Buffon, de Pauw, Raynal, and Robertson.”56 Jeffer-
son’s engagement and interest in various Hispanic authors, as Ralph Bauer has shown, complicates that picture. But it nonetheless remains the case that after the Revolutionary War, North Americans were at the same time more independent from European colonial control and further integrated into European Enlightenment epistemological frameworks. Figures like Franklin—revered as a scientist in France—and Jefferson, therefore, could take part in scientific debates and impact transatlantic circulation of knowledge in ways that Spanish and more so Portuguese Americans never could.

While Franklin’s reception as a pioneering scientist in Europe has been the subject of major works, Jefferson’s potential impact to scientific racism remains to be better understood in a transatlantic and hemispheric context. Jefferson might very well have been the first to engage European disputes over the science of blackness with the presumed authority of an American’s direct knowledge of black slaves. This article’s emphasis on his Notes on the State of Virginia, therefore, owes not to a sense of its representativeness, but rather seeks to highlight its exceptionality within the Enlightenment. The extensive scholarship on Notes has seemingly approached it from every angle, but seldom is its transatlantic circulation considered. Jefferson initially wrote Notes at the request of François Marbois (1745–1837), secretary of the French legation to the United States, who in 1780 sent a list of queries to the governors of the thirteen states in Revolutionary America. In 1785, Jefferson had 200 copies printed in Paris for private circulation. A translation by André Morellet (Paris, 1786) was followed by an English edition (London, 1787).

Marbois’s queries did not list “race” or blacks among the twenty-two topics he requests information about. Jefferson’s writing on race occupy but a few pages of Notes, containing an at once “impassioned indictment of slavery” and a “scheme for eliminating not only the ‘hideous evil’ of slavery, but the blacks themselves.” While Jefferson’s complex relationship to slavery has been widely discussed, Notes is less often read in the context of emergent scientific racism in Europe. To do so, we must also consider Observations sur la Virginie, as Jefferson understood very well that publishing in French implicated fuller participation in contemporary scientific debates: in 1785, he wrote to James Currie that “publications in that language at present far exceed those of the English in science.” Gordon Barker convincingly dispels misconceptions of that French edition as “botched”—a narrative that Jefferson later sought to perpetuate.

Jefferson was involved in the translation process and exchanged letters with Morellet, a member of the French Academy and prestigious man of letters in his own right. His detailed and extensive errata, both the published and unpublished versions, make only two minor changes to the passages in Observations devoted to race. From this we can presume that Jefferson approved of how the translator rendered those particular sections, as well as other editorial choices. The French version dedicates a separate chapter to the “Esclaves noirs,” borrowing from four different sections of the English original.
A long review of *Observations* published in 1787 in the *Mercure de France* hailed the author alongside Franklin as someone who had established an “empire of reason” in the New World. The review praised several of the book’s contributions to science, including its refutation of Buffon’s and Raynal’s theories of degeneracy in the Americas. When writing about race, Jefferson avoids biblical or religious frameworks, preferring to dialogue with contemporary European natural philosophers: “To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history.”

Jefferson’s protoclar first-person plural gives place to a voice that positions him as an American, able to provide a perspective informed by direct observation: “I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.” *Notes* equivocates on whether blacks constituted “different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species,” or whether blacks were “originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances.” But Jefferson goes on to make perhaps the most forceful—and at the time, credible—case by an American until then against racial mixture.

As a theorist of race and slave owner, Jefferson categorically condemned white-black miscegenation: when freed, he writes in *Notes*, slaves must “be removed beyond the reach of mixture,” to avoid “staining the blood of his master.” Jefferson’s positions are not necessarily incompatible with each other, though they are certainly incompatible with his standing as an American icon. Especially in light of his relationship with Sally Hemings, Jeffersonian scholars and biographers often frame those stances as “contradictions,” “paradoxical,” or “of the day.” Jefferson’s views of blacks as innately inferior and beyond assimilation, however, were in some ways outside the eighteenth-century mainstream, even if they would become commonplace in nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial discourses. Jefferson’s writing is part of a shift away from the idea of color as a factor of climate or external conditions, positing differences between blacks and whites as “fixed in nature” rather than caused by it. *Notes* displays knowledge of debates concerning anatomical explanations of blackness, but does not take sides. At the same time, it asserts a notion of essential difference that as we have seen seemed untenable in Luso-Brazilian epistemologies: “Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the color of the blood, the color of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us.”

*Notes* makes numerous implicit and explicit appeals to direct knowledge and first-hand experience, most related to what Antonello Gerbi deemed “The Dispute of the New World.” But to readers in the Old World who had not
interacted at length with non-Europeans, the “disagreeable odor,” “transient” grief, and inability to “reflect” that Jefferson attributes to “negroes” must have seemed as credible as the “seat and cause” of these “differences” remained unknown. On the one hand, citing Linnaeus, Jefferson disagrees with Systema Naturae’s distinction between Europeans and Indians, speculating that “we shall probably find” the latter to be “formed in mind as well as in body, on the same module with the ‘Homo sapiens Europaeus.’”71 On the other, he invokes the trope of blacks as closer to apes, suggesting a disavowal of the notion that all humans constituted a single species—defended by among others, Buffon:72

Is it [difference of color] not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? . . . Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favor of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan for the black woman over those of his own species.73

When articulating these putative differences, Jefferson’s writings were occasionally even more incisive in the manuscript of Notes and in Observations, which might indicate that his positions softened over time. Jefferson’s drafts, likely from 1780–81, show that he abandoned some more categorical assertions.74 And the French edition inserts a reference, for example, to “cette différence si frappante dans la couleur des deux especes” (italics added).75

This mention of blacks and whites as “two species,” as distant from each other as blacks are from the “Oran[g]ootan” (a generic term for primates at the time), does not necessarily make Jefferson a polygenist. The word is used more broadly in romance languages, and had not yet acquired its modern biological meaning.76 It does, nevertheless, introduce ambiguities along with a stronger sense of blackness as different and threatening, ideas that other changes in the translation reinforce. In reference to advocates of emancipation, Notes comments that “while they wish to vindicate the liberty of human nature, [they] are anxious also to preserve its dignity and beauty”—to which the French edition adds, “de l’espèce humaine.”77 When proposing that freed blacks be kept apart from whites in order to avoid “staining the blood of his master,” the translation elaborates: “sans altérer la couleur de l’espece & sans degrader ses facultés.”78 More than just an underlying threat, slavery (and the mixtures that it engendered) constitutes in Observations a “funeste influence sur les moeurs de notre peuple.”79

Jefferson’s racial theories diverge from the strict polygenism of someone like Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782), a Scottish philosopher that he admired. Notes is as ambivalent in questions of classification as it is unequivocal in its writing of blacks as inferior, or in its characterization of their assimilation as undesirable if not impossible. As other eighteenth-century proponents of the idea that blacks were innately or “naturally” inferior—like Voltaire and Hume—
Jefferson was criticized by contemporaries for his views. The historian David Ramsay, for instance, told him in a letter: “You have depressed the negroes too low.” Arguments about whether Notes was “a founding document of a new American ‘scientific racism’” or, as Bruce Dain prefers, “a home-grown interpretation of an increasingly obsolete natural philosophy,” might very well miss a larger point. The book had a transatlantic outlook and reach, at least in part conceived with a lettered European public in mind. Despite Jefferson’s defense of the New World, as Cañizares-Esguerra also suggests, his Notes and Observations do not challenge epistemological proposals and methods—as opposed to results—of the Old World. More importantly, writing with the language of science and within conceptual frameworks of the Enlightenment, Jefferson authoritatively argued for a vision of America that excluded blacks.

In many ways, Jefferson had more at stake in discussions about blackness and slavery than European philosophes; the same goes for the lettered, slave-owning mineiros, as residents or natives of Minas Gerais were known. In that captaincy, slaves were the foundation of the mining and agrarian economies, and the ratio of slaves to free men and women was about equal to Virginia’s at the end of the century (10:11). But in the Portuguese colony, where individuals from a mixed race majority sometimes became part of the ruling elite, racial classifications and relationships had to be more fluid and relative. Demographic trends attest to the prevalence of miscegenation. And census categories suggest that the category of blackness had another order of complexity in comparison to the North Atlantic. In the United States, racial categories were often limited to white and black and, at least in Virginia, these signifiers were often interchangeable with “free” and “slaves.” In contrast, the census of Minas Gerais’s Vila Rica—one of the major urban centers of the Portuguese empire at the time—differiates between “Branco/a” (whites), “Pardo/a” (brown), and “blacks” specified as “Angola,” “Crioulo/a,” “Mina,” “Banguela,” “Cabra,” “Xambá,” etc. Comparing records of 1716 and 1804, Donald Ramos notes that the Portuguese “tended to make fewer differentiations among the origins of the slaves” as the century progressed.

Central texts of the Enlightenment circulated among the lettered mineiros, including titles by Jean le Rond D’Alembert; Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu; Jean-François Marmontel; Nicolas, Marquis de Condorcet; Étienne Bonnot de Condillac; Denis Diderot; Adam Smith; Voltaire; William Robertson; and Gabriel Bonnot de Mably. Works related to discussions of blackness were also present in their libraries (Buffon’s Histoire Naturelle, Raynal’s Histoire Philosophique et Politique, Condorcet’s Réflexion sur L’Esclavage des Nègres [1781]). Several of the Minas Gerais elites studied at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, were well versed in the classical languages, translated, and wrote erudite, sophisticated poetry. We do not know whether the mineiros engaged in theoretical discussions about race, or even natural philosophy. Even if they did, the lack of a printing press in the colony and the Portuguese
emprise’s centralization of scientific discourse meant that the Brazilians could not partake as full citizens in debates of the “Republic of Letters”—unlike their North American counterparts.

Based on clues from their poetry and sparse references in unpublished manuscripts, it appears that mineiros subscribed to environmental explanations of racial differences, like the aforementioned members of Lisbon’s Royal Academy of Sciences. In a poem titled “Vila Rica,” Cláudio Manuel da Costa (1729–89) describes skin color as a factor of climate, in accordance with prevalent views: “all the body adust / Shows nudity burnt by the sun / And that the innate white and light color / Became a bit dark.”90 It does not seem as if Notes on the State of Virginia or Observations sur la Virginie made it to Brazil during the eighteenth century, and we can only speculate about how it would have been read. The Brazilians, however, were well aware of the American Revolution, and they corresponded with Jefferson about the possibility of the United States supporting an independence movement in the Portuguese colony. In 1786, when he was an envoy in Paris, Jefferson exchanged letters with José Joaquim Maia e Barbalho, a native of Rio de Janeiro studying medicine in Montpellier. Maia e Barbalho appealed to a precociously pan-American consciousness: “Nature made us inhabitants of the same continent,” he tells Jefferson, “and in consequence in some degree compatriots.” The Brazilian, under the pseudonym “Vendek,” wrote that “[m]en of letters are those most desirous of a revolution,” and that “on the question of revolution there is but one mind in that country.”91

Maia e Barbalho arranged a secret meeting with Jefferson for the following year in Nîmes. In a letter from Marseilles, Jefferson relayed the information in detail to John Jay: “They consider the North American Revolution as a precedent for theirs,” he explained, adding that the Brazilians “look to the United States as most likely to give them honest support and for a variety of considerations have the strongest prejudices in our favor.”92 Jay, Secretary of Foreign Affairs to the Confederation at the time, forwarded Jefferson’s letter to the president of the congress, but nothing came of it: as Jefferson had already suggested to Maia e Barbalho, aiding a revolution in Brazil was not in the economic and political interests of the United States at the time. Upon his return, the student died of tuberculosis before reaching Brazil, but news of his exchanges with Jefferson arrived in Minas Gerais through Vidal Barbosa and José Alves Maciel. The latter, who had studied with Maia e Barbalho in Coimbra, also took to Brazil a book that he acquired while in Birmingham, the Recueil des loix constitutives des colonies anglaises, confédérées sous la dénomination d’Etats-Unis de l’Amérique septentrionale (1778). This publication, mostly unknown to scholars of the United States and France, has recently had its importance restituted.93

Kenneth Maxwell writes a history of this compendium of foundational constitutional documents from the United States, and how it influenced a group of mostly lettered mineiros plotting to rebel against the Portuguese crown. They sought to gain independence, motivated by a rejection of fiscal demands, simi-
lar to North America. The republican movement, known as the *Inconfidência Mineira*, included ideas like the establishment of a university in the colony. The plot was betrayed and eleven of its members sentenced to death. The sentence was only applied to Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, known as Tiradentes or “tooth-puller.” He served as an example to would-be revolutionaries. Records of the testimonies and judicial proceedings conducted by the authorities were published in 1936 and in 1978. Although partial, these documents can provide a window into colonial perspectives on race and slavery among lettered elites. They can also help us to understand the potential impact of developments in North America, as knowledge of the United States circulated across the Atlantic. But here, once again, translation is a crucial piece of the puzzle.

More than a document of the North American independence movement, this *Recueil* functioned as an instrument of diplomacy. Supported by the French monarchy as part of efforts to destabilize the British empire, the pirated compendium was dedicated to Franklin, who had been involved in the translation and dissemination of several of its texts. The translations and the editorial apparatus seem designed to meet expectations of a French Enlightenment public, and in some cases offer a distorted and tendentious perspective of developments in the United States. One of the most emphatic examples appears in a “Note from an American” added to the Pennsylvania constitution. The note, likely written by Franklin himself, implies that the abolition of slavery was imminent:

> Perhaps one is surprised to find a distinction of free men in a country in which it is believed that all men are free. There still are in America two classes that aren’t. One, entirely enslaved, blacks. In reality, a variety and even a majority of the Colonies always opposed their importation, and with frequency made laws to stop it; but, since the consent of the Crown was necessary for the confirmation of these laws, they could never be established, the King having always rejected them as contrary to the interests of the English African Company; therefore, the prohibition of importing these unfortunate victims of European avarice was one of the first operations of the General-Congress; and it should be believed that it will soon decree on the fortune of blacks currently within the extension of the 13 United States.

By grouping black slaves with another class that was also not free (comprising servants, apprentices, and those too young to vote), the note suggests that slavery in the colonies exists on a continuum: the implicit difference between blacks and non-blacks is one of degree rather than kind. This can be read as rhetorical strategy against the idea of blacks as *essentially* different. In the least, the striking paragraph creates a perception of abolitionist consensus among the thirteen colonies that evidently did not correspond to facts.

The Pennsylvania constitution was certainly one of the texts that the *mineiros* would have read with great care, due to its associations with Franklin. Whether
this note was dissimulated, sincere, or strategic—it is likely a bit of each—the message could not be clearer, and it played on the liberal sentiments of Enlightenment philosophes that opposed slavery. In one of the most significant changes produced by the translation, Jefferson’s Observations also created the impression that emancipation was imminent. Readers appeared to pick up on these kinds of cues. Mably’s Observations sur le gouvernement et les loix des Etats-Unis d’Amerique (1785) reproduces the “Note from an American” in an appendix attributed to “An Anonymous Republican.” This is a book found in libraries of the conspirators in Minas Gerais. Tellingly, the note did not appear in the English version of Mably’s book, published in 1784.

How would the mineiros have interpreted this image of the United States as closer to abolishing slavery than it in fact was? The seditious plot in Brazil preceded the French and Haitian Revolutions, and the mineiros regarded the United States as an inspiration and example for their own ambitions. During the interrogations tied to the movement’s suppression, one of the conspirators, Alvarenga Peixoto (1744–93), speaks of discussions about a flag for the new republic. He attributes to Costa the design of flag inspired by the “English American Republic,” with an inscription in Latin: “libertas aquo spiritus.” This particular idea did not meet with favor, but it suggests that attention and knowledge of the United States precedent was greater than previously assumed. The Latin phrase appears to have been transcribed incorrectly during the interrogations, and should read as “Ab eo libertas a quo spiritus” (meaning, roughly, “the one who gives life gives liberty”). The phrase, quoted from Algernon Sidney’s Discourses Concerning Government (1750) was adopted as a motto by Jefferson. We find it in a coat of arms and seals that Jefferson used in several of his papers. It is not farfetched to imagine that the seal appears in his letters to Maia e Barbalho, serving as the source for the United States’ inspiration in Costa’s flag.

In relation to North America, abolitionist discourses were very limited in the Portuguese Americas during the second half of the eighteenth century. The suppression of quilombos (maroon communities) was often fierce and violent. Discussions between the Minas Gerais oligarchs about possibilities for the revolt, however, included the topic of emancipating slaves. News had spread beyond those most directly involved. But in a meeting between leaders of the conspiracy, Maciel—who had bought a copy of the Recueil from Europe—expressed concerns over the fact that there were more blacks than whites in the captaincy. Echoing Jefferson, he fears that blacks might turn against them once they are freed. According to Maciel, Peixoto, a colonel, replied that this could be solved by giving blacks liberty before the uprising. Elsewhere, it is suggested that if freed by the mineiros, blacks would join the cause of independence. Opposition to these ideas was invariably of a practical nature: if slaves were freed, who would do the work? Peixoto proposes that only blacks born in Brazil and mulattos be granted freedom. These discus-
sions are not reported in great detail, and what we have is by no means conclusive. But what we do not have matters. Nothing resembles Jefferson’s idea that freed blacks should be kept apart from whites to avoid miscegenation, and representations of slaves as inferior lack a scientific veneer.

In the manuscript of an unpublished treatise on Minas Gerais, in many ways comparable to Notes on the State of Virginia, Costa demonstrates sympathy for the role of slaves in the creation of the captaincy. Peixoto goes further in a nativist poem that celebrates the labor of black and pardo (brown) slaves. After the revolt in Saint-Domingue (1791–1804), attitudes toward black slaves as a threat hardened throughout the colonial world. Eventually, scientific racism would flourish in Brazil. But in the eighteenth century, as North Americans like Jefferson joined Enlightenment-era scientific debates among Europeans, we can identify alternative epistemologies in Luso-Brazilian writings on race.

On the one hand, there are not enough elements to discern a type of “patriotic epistemology,” to quote Cañizares-Esguerra’s characterization of the Spanish Americas. On the other, the Luso-Brazilian writings on race should not be interpreted merely within diffusionist paradigms: if they did not pursue a scientific vision of black inferiority, it was for reasons more complex than ignorance of European debates or enlightened tolerance, as we have shown. The United States, in the meantime, was evidently much more than Notes on the State of Virginia. Franklin, as we saw, pursued a different vision of America. The poetry of African-born Phillis Wheatley (1753–84), famously targeted by Jefferson, “put all humans together in a single species.” In questions of race, writing matters, and several of the promises and struggles of later periods remain inscribed in some of these eighteenth-century voices. But rather than serve as fodder for narratives that essentialize Brazil and the United States, the texts analyzed here should instead act as a reminder that as critical race studies continues to flourish, it is crucial that we return to some of the better- and lesser-known texts from the period and attempt to resituate them along hemispheric and transatlantic lines.

NOTES

I would like to thank Kenneth Maxwell, Tera Hunter, Graziella Moraes da Silva, and The Eighteenth Century’s two anonymous readers for their feedback.

2. Several of these studies will be referred to in this article. For selections of primary texts, see Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader (Malden, 1997), and Isaac Kramnick, The Portable Enlightenment Reader (New York, 1995), 629–70. For a comprehensive history of the emergence of racisms in the context of the New World’s discovery, colonization, and European scientific developments, see Francisco Bethencourt, Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century (Princeton, 2013), 63–289.
3. It should go without saying that such science has long been discredited. For a reflec-

4. According to recent estimates of the transatlantic slave trade, over 5 million Africans disembarked in Brazil (nearly half), compared to around 2.7 million in British America, 1.1 million in French colonies, and less than a million in Spanish America and elsewhere (Bethencourt, 188). For comparative approaches to later periods, see, for instance, Edward Telles, Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil (Princeton, 2004), Reginald Daniel, Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States (University Park, 2006), and Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic (New York, 2012). On the potential pitfalls of comparative approaches, see Seigel, Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States (Durham, 2009), 1–12.

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7. See, for example, Bethencourt and Adrian J. Pearce, eds., Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-Speaking World (Oxford, 2010).


10. See Rômulo de Carvalho, A História Natural em Portugal no Século XVIII (Lisboa, 1987); Ana Simões, Maria Paula Diogo, and Ana Carneiro, Cidadão do Mundo: uma Biografia Científica do Abade Correia da Serra (Porto, 2006); and on the openess of Portuguese thinkers to outside ideas as well as their influence on the Spanish Americas, see Maria del Carmen Rovira, Eclecticos Portugueses del Siglo XVIII (México, D.F., 1958).

11. Although the Spanish Americas will remain largely outside of this article’s scope, interested readers can refer to a critical literature that brings to the fore various racial (as well as “pre-racial”) categories across science, cultural production, and daily life, including caste, estate, and religious purity. The special issue of the Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies, “Categories and Crossings: Critical Race Studies and the Spanish World,” edited by Ruth Hill (10, no. 1 [2009]) is an excellent starting point.

12. Blood purity laws, targeting especially those of Jewish and Moorish descent but also directed toward blacks, were gradually abolished in Portugal during the 1770s, whereas in Spain they lasted into the nineteenth century. See Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, Preconceito Racial no Brasil Colônia (São Paulo, 1983), 175–94. Precedents for policies that encouraged intermarriage as a matter of practical imperial administration date back to the sixteenth century (Bethencourt, 210). Desire to populate and consolidate territorial possessions provided impetus for the incentivizing of European-Indian marriages during the eighteenth century. See Maxwell, Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1995), 71.

13. David Hume and Voltaire were both polygenists, along with others like the surgeon John Atkins (1685–1757) and the anatomist Charles White (1728–1813) in England, and Georg Foster in Germany (1754–94). Polygenism gained significant ground during


15. The institution’s creation was concurrent with Pombal’s reforms; on the Portuguese Minister, see Maxwell, *Pombal*. On the Academy, see Ilídio Amaral, *Nótilas Históricas Sobre os Primeiros Tempos da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa* (Lisbon, 2012).


20. Loureiro, resorting to classical sources and his own experiences in Asia and Africa, challenges Carl Linnaeus’s division of humans into separate species in an essay published in *Memorias de Mathemática e Fisica da Academia R. das Ciencias de Lisboa* (Lisbon, 1799), 65–81. Azeredo Coutinho rejects as “false” the idea of those that look at their servants or slaves as if they were of another species (“olham para os criados e escravos como para Gentes de outra especie”) in statutes that he wrote as Bishop of Pernambuco and later quotes in *Analyse sobre a justiça do commercio . . .* (Lisbon, 1808), 80. On Azeredo Coutinho, see Bradford Burns, “The Role of Azeredo Coutinho in the Enlightenment of Brazil,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 44, no. 2 (1964): 145–60.


24. Didier Lahon, *O negro no coração do Império* (Lisbon, 1999), 72. According to Curran, there were 4,000 to 5,000 nègres in all of France in 1750 (17); Peter Linebaugh estimates that number as 10,000–20,000 in London during the 1780s (*The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* [New York, 1991], 349).


29. “Pois se quando o tronco he mixto, e se continua na descendencia hum dos progenitors sempre branco, vem a ficar o descendent de quinto grao legitimamente branco” (José Pereira de Santana, *Os dois atlantes da Ethiopia . . .* [Lisbon, 1735], 215).

30. See Floyd James Davis, *Who Is Black?: One Nation’s Definition* (University Park,

31. “Presuem muito os Ethiopes da cor preta, e a tem mais por especiosa, parecendo defeito o ser branco; assim como nós temos por macula o ser preto” (Santana, 216).

32. Schultz, 103.

33. Curran, 106.

34. Linnaeus develops his classification of humans throughout the book’s many editions. Although generally seen as a turning point in modern taxonomy, Linnaeus remained attentive to variations in “climate and air” and other environmental elements associated to earlier natural histories. See Staffan Müller-Wille and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, A Cultural History of Heredity (Chicago, 2012), 30–34.

35. “L’avantage physique de croiser les races entre les hommes comme entre les animaux” (Abbé Raynal, Histoire Philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes, 4 vols. [Amsterdam, 1774], 4:254).


39. “Comprehende esta Comarca sette Villas . . . habitadas por huma nova raça, devinda a combinação dos Indios, com os Europeus, . . . à exceção de alguns Europeus, e de muito poucas familias puras, comprehende o mulatismo, e os negros” (Câmara, 1:307).

40. “diretamente ligadas às tensões presentes naquela sociedade” (Silvia Hunold Lara, Fragmentos Setecentistas: escravidão, cultura e poder na América portuguesa [São Paulo, 2007], 279).

41. See, for instance, Domenico Vandelli, Diccionario dos termos técnicos de historia natural extrahidos das obras de Linnéo (Coimbra, 1788).

42. On Theodor de Almeida, see José Alberto Silva, A apropriação da filosofia natural em Teodoro de Almeida (Lisbon, 2009).

43. Almeida, Recreacao Filosofica. Ou Dialogo Sobre a Metafisica (Lisbon, 1792), 76–92.

44. “Os homens da America, os da Africa, os da India, e os da Europa terão essencia diversa: . . . porque huns são pretos, como os da Costa de Africa; outros pardos, como os do Certão da America; outros amarellados, como os da China; outros brancos, como os da Europa” (Almeida, 87).

45. “Mais differença ha entre hum preto de Angola, e hum Alemão Gentil, do que entre huma especie de cães, e outra dos menos distantes; e com tudo ninguém dá aos homens especie, nem essencia diversa” (Almeida, 87).


47. Friedrickson, 61.

48. “Nos Negros a formosura traz consigo ter o nariz mui chato, os beïços grossos, e compridos, e tudo isto em nós he fealdade” (Almeida, 204).

49. Blackmore, 22.

50. Curran, 91.


52. Salazar ruled from 1932 to 1968. For a succinct contextualization of narratives of “Portuguese adaptability and racial tolerance,” see Lisa Voigt, Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic: Circulations of Knowledge and Authority in the Iberian and English Imperial Worlds (Chapel Hill, 2009), 14–17.

53. Painter, 117.

54. See Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (New York, 1992), and more recently, George Yancy, Look, a White!: Philosophical Essays on Whiteness (Philadelphia, 2012). Critical whiteness studies has not taken off to the same degree in Brazil, but has resulted in projects like the University of São Paulo’s “Studies in Whiteness” and arguments that whiteness is “more apparent to blacks than to whites” (Shohat and Stam, 233–35). In the mid-nineteenth century, an observation by a Christian missionary from the United States provides a window into how the concept and color of “whiteness” diverged in each society: C. S. Stewart describes the “fearfully mongrel aspect of much of the population [in Rio de Janeiro], claiming to be white” (Brazil and La Plata: The Personal Record of a Cruise [New York, 1858], 72).


58. For a recent enriching discussion that nonetheless skirts that possibility, see Keith Thompson, Jefferson’s Shadow: The Story of his Science (New Haven, 2012), 118–33. Bauer, focused not just on blackness but on Indians as well, proposes that we read Jefferson’s ideas about race as part of a “geopolitical counter-discourse . . . of creole patriotism” (“Thomas Jefferson,” 75), but does not consider the circulation of Notes in French nor the implications of a comparison that includes the Portuguese Americas. It would be hopeless to comprehensively cite the vast literature on Jefferson, but suffice it to say that very few biographers and scholars consider his writings on race in the context of eighteenth-century science. Even Dain’s balanced study of race theory offers quick disagreement with the “argument that Notes is the starting point for American scientific racism” (3).

On Benjamin Franklin, see Joyce Chaplin, The First Scientific American (New York, 2006).

59. François Marbois became a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1781.


64. The author was well known to be Jefferson despite the pseudonym “M. J.” The review, from June 2nd, is quoted in Barker, 174.


68. Dain uses such language (3–5), and Jefferson’s views on race remains a “paradox” to Thomson (119). On Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemings and its reception, see Anette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville, 1997).


70. Antonello Gerbi, *La disputa del Nuovo Mondo: storia di una polemica, 1750–1900* (Milan, 1955). As Dain notes, when disputing categorizations of the New World’s natural inferiority, “it seemed obvious to Jefferson that Buffon and Daubenton simply had not actually ‘measured, weighed, or seen’” several American animals (27). Jefferson frequently evokes or names an American “here” to validate his arguments against those who wrote about the New World while “there” in Europe (*Notes*, 183–84).


72. On arguments about black Africans as closer to apes, see Bindman (160, 168, 175, 194). Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, for example, opposed it (Bindman, 194–204).


74. Instead of the final “they are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation,” the earlier version read: “they are more ardent after their female: but love is with them only an eager desire, not a tender delicate sentiment, not a delicious food of the soul” (italics mine). In other cases entire phrases were crossed out: “we have often seen the Whites but never the Blacks catch long pieces of music by the ear alone” (Massachusetts Historical Society, p-060, reel 15 of 16, 85).

75. “The first difference which strikes us is that of color,” in the original (Jefferson, *Notes*, 264); “This difference is so striking in the color of the two species,” in the translation (Jefferson, *Observations sur la Virginie* [Paris, 1786], 200).

76. The vocabulary of race and species had been used interchangeably by early theorists of race like François Bernier (1620–84), and was later refuted by others like Immanuel Kant, who wrote in “Of the Different Human Races” (1777) that “Negroes and whites are clearly not different species of human beings” (in The Idea of Race, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott [Indianapolis, 2000], 8–22, 9). On Kant, see Sally Hatch Gray, “Kant’s Race Theory, Forster’s Counter, and the Metaphysics of Color,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 53 no. 4 (2012): 393–412.


78. “Without altering the color of the species, and without degrading its faculties” (Jefferson, *Observations*, 212).

79. “Baneful influence on the mores of our people” (Jefferson, *Observations*, 212). Barker, analyzing editorial rather than translation choices, finds that in the English version, “discussions of population sometimes referred only to people of European origin,” whereas in the French, “all races were treated as human” (143).

80. On disputes between Hume and James Beattie, see Eze (29–37). For contemporary reactions to *Notes* from Jefferson’s peers, see Dain, 46–48. An 1880 essay by R. T. Greener suggests other lines of research on the book’s reception: “At the first appearance of Mr. Jefferson’s book it became the target for hostile criticism, especially in France.” Jefferson, he claims, “was flattered by the attacks, and, with the pardonable pride of authorship, he assumed that the labors of the famous Société Amis des Noir and particularly Abbé Grégoire’s book were intended as replies to his strictures upon the Negro” (“The Intellectual Position of the Negro,” *The National Quarterly Review* [New York, 1880], 164–89, 170).


82. Dain, 37–38. Dain puzzlingly follows Winthrop Jordan’s earlier interpretation that
“Jefferson’s use of blackness harked back to thinking previous to the advent of natural history,” where blackness was a “God-given natural entity” (30).

83. Linda Lewin quotes an English merchant who resided in Recife (1811–13): upon inquiring “if a certain capitão-mor of Pernambuco’s militia was not a mulatto, confident in his knowledge that mulattoes were legally excluded from that rank,” he hears back, “He was, but is not now” (quoted in Surprise Heirs I: Illegitimacy, Patrimonial Rights, and Legal Nationalism in Luso-Brazilian Inheritance, 1750–1821 [Stanford, 2003], 100–102). On the prevalence of racial mixture in white-dominated Minas Gerais societies, see for example, Júnia Ferreira Furtado, Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, 2009), and Eduardo França Paiva, Escravidão e universo cultural na colônia: Minas Gerais, 1716–1789 (Belo Horizonte, 2001).

84. In Minas Gerais between 1776 and 1821, the percentage of whites remained stable (though the gender gap vanished), the percentage of mulattoes almost doubled, and the proportion of blacks declined to less than 40 percent. This significant growth of the mulatto population is even more pronounced in Vila Rica, where the percentage of mulattoes jumps from 21 percent to close to half of the total inhabitants, while in Minas it goes from 25.7 to 33.4 percent (see Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal 1750–1808 [New York, 2004], 263–65).

85. That is the case in both Notes and the 1790 census. Jefferson calculates the population distribution of his state in 1782 by grouping people according to age and gender only if they are “free.”

86. See Herculano Gomes Mathias, Um recenseamento na capitania de Minas Gerais—Vila Rica 1804 (Rio de Janeiro, 1969).


90. “todo o corpo adusto / Mostra que o sol sobre a nudez queimara, / E que a ingênia cor de branca e clara / Tornou um pouco escura;” (Claudio Manuel da Costa, “Vila Rica,” in A Poesia, 380).

91. On the episode, see Maxwell, Naked Tropics, 158–60. Maxwell quotes the correspondence from Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência II (1953): 11–19.

92. Jefferson to John Jay, Marseilles, 4 May 1787 (quoted in Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies, 58).


94. On the so-called Inconfidência Mineira, see Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies. The records of the proceedings and interrogations were published as Autos de Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira, 7 vols. (Rio de Janeiro, 1936–1938) (hereafter, ADIM).

95. “On sera peut-être surpris de trouver une distinction d’hommes libres dans un pays ou l’on croit que tout les homes le sont. Il en existe encore en Amérique deux classes qui ne le sont pas. L’une entierement esclave, ce sont les negres. A la vérité plusiers, & meme la plus grande partie des Colonos, ont toujours été opposées à leur importation, & souvent ont fait des loix pour l’empécher; mais comme le consentement de la Couronne etoit nécessaire pour la confirmation de ces loix, elles n’ont jamais pu etre établies, le Roi les ayant toujours rejettées comme contraires aux intérêts de la Compagnie Angloise
d’Afrique: aussi la defense d’importer ces malheureuses victimes de l’avarice Européene a telle été une des premieres operations du Congrès général; & l’on doit croire qu’il ne tardera pas a statuer sur se sort des negres actuellement existans dans l’étendue des Treize Etats-Unis” (Regnier, Recueil des loix constitutives des colonies angloises, confédérées sous la dénomination d’États-Unis de l’Amérique-Septentrionale [À Philadelphie, Cellot & Jombert, et se vend à Paris, 1778], 56–57).

96. Barker, 147.
100. ADIM, 3:303.
101. ADIM, 4:398.
102. ADIM, 2:53.
103. “Se libertasse vinte negros ficava sem ter com que trabalhar” (ADIM 2:53).
104. Costa demonstrates, for example, great admiration towards Churches of black brotherhoods (“belissimamente paramentadas,” or “beautifully adorned”), and refers to how through its different ordinances, divided into white, black, and pardo or brown, “desta sorte faz as Minas, com os seus habitantes em huã boa civilidade,” or “in this manner Minas is made, with its inhabitants in good civility” (Notícias da Capitania de Minas Gerais por Cláudio Manuel da Costa, Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro [Rio de Janeiro], DL 828.14).
107. See Dain on Phillis Wheatley’s “Thoughts on the Work of Providence” and “To the University of Cambridge, in New England” (8).