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Print Seminar, Prof. J. Monteyne.

Theodor de Bry and His Postcolonial Critics.



Figure 1, CONSTANTIUS II, 337-361 AD. Æ-2, Emperor spurs a seated captive with foot. CONSTANTIUS II, 337-361 AD. Æ-2, (24mm, 5.0g). Struck 350-355 AD. DN CONSTAN TIVS P F AVG, Diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right. / FEL TEMP REPARATIO, Emperor in military dress advancing left, holding Victory on globe and a standard with Chi Rho on the banner, with right foot he spurs a seated captive. Γ/*TSΔ•, (mint of Thessalonica), 4th officina. RIC VIII, pg 418, #178. VF, glossy dark green patina.

Twelve hundred years before Theodor de Bry engraved Native Americans into the consciousness of Europe with his burin in copper, the Romans in Greece were minting (mostly copper) bronze coins with legend “Fel Temp Reparatio” wrapping around a scene depicting the Emperor Constantius II. Constantius II stands brandishing a banner with the Christian Chi-Ro in one hand while holding the angel of victory in the other, the emperor’s right boot planted firmly on the back of a miniature captive barbarian. The scale of the figures is directly analogous to their power in the scene. The huge emperor fills the vertical space of the coin and

controls the miniature barbarian. The lack of self-criticality is amazing to us today, especially the message in Latin, an abbreviation of felicitum temporum reparation, which translates to: The Restoration of Happy Times. Constantius II might respond to *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* with the words: Nihil novus sub sole, or there is nothing new under the sun. That perfect sense of continuity, however, is exactly what *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* **lacks**.

In 2004, Pope Benedict engaged in public conversation with the Frankfurt School philosopher Jurgen Habermas. He had this to say about the European experience during the discovery of America:

“Closer to our own times, we have the double rupture of the European consciousness that occurred at the beginning of the modern period and made necessary a new fundamental reflection on both the contents and the source of law. First, we have the exodus from the boundaries of the European world, the Christian world, that happened when America was discovered. Now, Europeans encountered peoples who did not belong to the Christian structures of faith and law, which had hitherto been the source of law for everyone and which had given this structure its form. There was no legal fellowship with these peoples. But did this mean that they were outside the law, as some asserted at that time (and as was frequently the case in practice)? Or is there a law that transcends all legal systems, a law that is binding on men qua men in their mutual relationships and that tells them what to do?”¹

This “first rupture,” that Pope Benedict spoke about with Habermas, disturbed the complete Christian world view. The discovery of the Native Americans, especially because their pre-literate culture, problematizes the Biblical origin myth of Adam and Eve, and in some ways set in motion a complex series of societal changes and intellectual paradigm shifts called modernism.

¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Dialectics Of Secularization* (Ignatius Press. Kindle Edition, 2010) 67-68. At the time Pope Benedict was still Cardinal Ratzinger.



Figure 2, Theodor de Bry, *Adam and Eve*, 1590. Engraving by Theodor de Bry after Joos van Winghe to accompany the foreword, 'To the gentle reader', before the plate section of de Bry's 1590 edition of *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*.

However, as Pope Benedict implicitly points out, the new discovery did not eliminate European metanarratives. It challenged and disrupted them, causing an epistemological earthquake which could pervert the actions of colonists. Some of the time this led Europeans to treat indigenous people as if they were “outside the law.”

De Bry wrestles with this “first rupture” in *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* by including engravings of the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (fig. 2) and the

Picts (fig. 3). By including the two forms of historical people he would have been familiar with: Biblical figures and those recorded by the Romans,² de Bry is clearly trying to include the Native Americans inside the narrative world-view which was crystalized **before** the discovery of the peoples of the New World.

If de Bry was engraving *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* at the dawn of Modernism, many have argued that the time we live in today operates under other conditions. Jean-Francois Lyotard names the condition we live in postmodern. He described it as a reaction which recognizes the problems suggested above, writing: *“Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives.”*³

² *“All the Britons, indeed, dye themselves with glass (vitrum), which occasions a bluish color, and thereby have a more terrible appearance in fight. They wear their hair long, and have every part of their body shaved except their hair and upper lip. Ten and even twelve have wives in common to them, and particularly brothers among brothers, and parents among their children; but if there be any issue by these wives, they are reputed to be the children of those by whom respectively each was first espoused when a virgin.”* Julius Caesar, *Caesar’s Commentaries on the Gallic War and on the Civil War*, (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Norte Press, (AD 54-55) 20050 section XIV.

³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984) xxiv.



Figure 3, Theodor de Bry, *A true picture of one Pict*, 1590. Engraving by Theodor de Bry after John White, pl. 1 of the appendix to the illustrations of Indians after John White in Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*.

The contemporary scholarly discussion surrounding the engravings of Theodor de Bry in *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* is embedded inside of the larger discussion of Postcolonialism and Postmodernism. Postcolonial theory attempts to clear space in academic discussion in order to give multiple voices or perspectives recognition, especially (formerly) colonized people. Following Lyotard's simplified definition of postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives;" Postcolonial theory moves the emphasis to groups whom previously unable to speak, in now speaking, disrupt the metanarrative of European history. Oral cultures like the Native Americans, which left behind no written record, are emphasized in the act of rereading or decoding images like de Bry's engravings in a non-Eurocentric way.

Because *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* is an attempt at systematic depiction of Native Americans using the most advanced technology of 1590,⁴ and it was created for a European audience, it represents something bigger than itself to us today: a watershed moment for proto-colonial Europe regarding communicative technology on one hand, and an unfairly Eurocentric account of Native Americans on the other.

Two equations which frame scholarly writing regarding *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* consistently are: one, the relationship of objectivity to power, and two, the notion of progress inherent in the hierarchy of civilization when compared to primitive society. These two ways of critically approaching de Bry's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* are deeply embedded in another discussion, namely, early modern Europe's (proto-)Enlightenment project.

Knowledge is power, is a common misquote of Theodor de Bry's contemporary, the Elizabethan philosopher Sir Francis Bacon. Bacon actually wrote: "*Human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the cause is not known the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed; and that which in contemplation is as the cause is in operation as the rule.*"⁵ Bacon's empiricism can be described as the beginning of Enlightenment thought, which happened alongside the problematizing of the complete Christian world-view. Lyotard, again, has insight on why this could be: "*Science has always*

⁴ "Printing, gunpowder, and the compass: These three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world; the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have follower innumerable changes, in so much that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries." – Francis Bacon, *New Instrument*, 1620.

⁵ Francis Bacon, *Works of Francis Bacon, Essays*, (Mobile Reference, Kindle Edition, (1863) 2008) Book I Aphorisms, Section III.

*been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables.”*⁶

The cliché of “knowledge is power,” in expanding to the full aphorism, transforms from a banality into an early scientific epistemology. If we trace the Latin etymology it is interesting to note that the word for knowledge, *scientia*, has a broader meaning: knowledge, science, and skill. The Latin word for power, *potentia*, also has a longer definition: power, might, force; political power, dominion, command, influence, and efficacy.⁷ An alternative translation of the first sentence of Bacon’s famous phrase could be: Human science and human dominion meet in one.

If this retranslation of Bacon is apropos, then Adolf Bastian, a German doctor and ethnologist writing about the need to establish ethnographic museums, was expressing something important about science and political power when he wrote, roughly 300 years after

⁶ Jean-Fracois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) pxxiii.

Slavoj Zizek provides a clear demonstration of Lyotard’s claim that “science has always been in conflict with narratives,” with his analysis of dilemma the Shroud of Turin represents for Christians in the age of DNA analysis: *“The true problem, however, resides in the potentially catastrophic consequences of for the Church itself if the tests indicate again that the Shroud is authentic (from Christ’s time and place): there are traces of “Christ’s” blood on it, and some biochemists are already working on its DNA – so what will this DNA say about Christ’s FATHER (not to mention the prospect of CLONING Christ)?”* Slavoj Zizek, *On Belief*, (New York: Routledge, 2001) 98-99.

Another example is provided by Paul Boghossian, in his book *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructionism*, where Boghossian gives a clear critique of dogmatic (moral) theory with his story of Galileo: *“In 1543, Copernicus published his De Revolutionibus, which proposed that the known astronomical observations could be explained better by supposing that the earth rotated on its own axis once a day and revolved around the sun once a year... When Galileo’s telescope revealed mountains on the moon, the moons of Jupiter, the phases of Venus and a huge number of previously unsuspected stars, the stage seemed set for a radical reconception of the universe... Galileo was summoned to Rome in 1615, to defend his views against the charge of heresy. The Vatican’s case was prosecuted by the infamous Cardinal Bellarmine, who when invited by Galileo to look through his telescope to see for himself, is reputed to have refused, saying that he had a far better source of evidence about the make-up of the heavens, namely, the Holy Scripture itself.”* Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge: Against Relativism and Constructivism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p60.

⁷ S.A. Hanford and Mary Herberg, *Pocket Dictionary Latin*, (Berlin and Munich: Langenscheidt, 1966).

Bacon, in 1881 that: *“For us, primitive societies are ephemeral, i.e., as regards our knowledge of, and our relations with, them, in fact, inasmuch as they exist for us all. At the very instant they become known to us they are doomed.”*⁸

Bacon’s empiricism, however, only provides a partial method to approach de Bry’s engravings. I suggest that the most compelling explanation comes from the more nuanced version of modernity which Jurgen Habermas elucidates while presenting his case that: *“In sum, the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled.”* To summarize his position, he sees society reacting to the failure of the complete world-view provided by religion and metaphysics, and turning a complete world-view into **three separate fields**. These fields are then worked in by professionals: **theoretical knowledge (science), morality, and art**. He writes: *“Reification cannot be overcome by forcing just one of those highly stylized cultural spheres to open up and become more accessible.”* In the same essay he critiques the philosophers most associated with the decentered subjectivity of Postmodernism, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, as not being postmodern but as being antimodern, writing: *“To instrumental reason they juxtapose in Manichean fashion a principle only accessible through evocation, be it the will to power or sovereignty, Being or the Dionysiac force of the poetical.”*⁹

Essentially, Habermas believes in social progress within values similar to the Enlightenment. Lyotard agrees partially, that there is some form of progress, writing: *“That*

⁸ Adolf Bastian, *Die Vorgeschichte der Ethnologie* (Kindle Locations 1229-1236). Dümmler, 1881. *“Die Existenz der Naturvölker ist nur eine ephemere für uns, d. h. soweit sie unsere Kenntniss und unsere Beziehungen zu ihnen betrifft, soweit sie also für uns überhaupt nur vorhanden sind. Mit dem Augenblick, der sie uns kennen lehrt, weht der Todesengel sie an. Von ihm geschlagen, tragen sie fortan den Keim des Unterganges in sich.”*

⁹ Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity--An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti- aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983) 3-15.

*scientific and technical knowledge is cumulative is never questioned. At most, what is debated is the form the accumulation takes – some picture it as regular, continuous, and unanimous, others as periodic, discontinuous, and conflictual.”*¹⁰

The problem presented by de Bry’s engravings, especially because they veer into the scientific fields of ethnography or anthropology which study humans, is that, according to my reading of Habermas, modernity has separated morality from the other two professional fields: art and theoretical knowledge.¹¹ This becomes especially apparent when reading the history of colonized peoples.¹² In this way the engravings in *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* demonstrate the conflict of de Bry’s early modern method, and the problem when the complete world view of Christianity separates into Habermas’s three professional categories of art, science, and morality. By de Bry creating an ethnographic document presenting a people who, by existing, disturbed his world view, he posed problems that a normal **art** object or attempt at **scientific observation** would not.¹³ Especially because the way

¹⁰ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 7.

¹¹ Nietzsche might have said it best when, in a weirdly anti-chauvinist joke, he wrote: “Assuming that truth is a woman – what then? Is there not reason to suspect that all philosophers, in so far as they were dogmatists, have known very little about women?” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (New York: Oxford University Press, (1888) 1998) preface.

¹² In my class notes from a particularly good lecture, Allegra de Laurentiis, a professor here in Stony Brook’s Philosophy Department, said when discussing Hegel and German Idealism: “*Human beings are not means to an end, they are an end in themselves.*” Class notes, Political Philosophy Seminar, SUNY Stony Brook, Manhattan Campus, Fall 2010. Also see: Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹³ Lyotard asks regarding the human power dynamics inherent in science: “For it appears in its most complete form, that of reversion, revealing that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?” Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 9.

many scholars now (re)read the engravings is through the lens of the **moral** tragedy that colonization was for the Native Americas.

Important voices against Eurocentric ethnography are also critics of Western power as embodied in secular rationalism. Thomas Kuhn and Richard Rorty claim that objectivity is impossible; and that the West justifies Imperialism through language which only creates the illusion of objectivity. Critics of the bifurcation of humanity into civilized and primitive, like Michel de Certeau and Johannes Fabian, argue that the division of people into civilized and primitive creates a hierarchy which justifies the West colonizing non-Western societies without truly understanding the displaced culture, or even worse, deliberately un-writing the displaced cultures history.

Part II, Every Scholar Loves a Victim

In academia something strange has happened. The noble impulse to identify subalterns, as a way to include multiple viewpoints and challenge metanarrative, has become a method. Perversely, instead of including everyone in the debate, it has become a pathway to exclusive authority. Slavoj Zizek captured this powerful dynamic working in the public conversation with his description of the US government following the September 11, 2001 attacks:

“The ultimate irony here is that, in order to restore the innocence of American patriotism, the conservative US establishment mobilized the key ingredient of Politically Correct ideology that it officially despises: the logic of victimization. On the basis of the idea that authority is conferred (only on) those who speak from the position of the victim, it followed the implicit reasoning: “We are the victims now, and it is this fact that legitimizes us to speak (and act) from a position of authority.” ... One can always play this game, which offers the player a double advantage: that of retaining his moral superiority over those (“ultimately all the same”) involved in a struggle, as

well as that of being able to avoid the difficult task of committing himself, to analyzing the constellation and taking sides in it.”¹⁴

This shift from inclusion to exclusion (and authority) is described by Hal Foster, in his essay *The Artist as Ethnographer*. In particular he describes scholars working in “quasi-anthropological art” when Foster writes about Pierre Bourdieu’s *Theory of Practice*:

“... long ago in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972) Pierre Bourdieu questioned the structuralist version of this textual model because it reduced “social relations to communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding operations” and so rendered the ethnographic reader more authoritative, not less. Indeed, this “ideology of the text,” this recoding of practice as discourse, persists in the new anthropology as well as in quasi-anthropological art, as it does in cultural history and new historicism, despite the contextualist ambitions that also drive these methods.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) 166. Maybe the most unsympathetic example of a critique of victimhood is captured in the opening scene of the movie *The Departed*, when the character played by Jack Nicholson, Frank Costello, says: “I don’t want to be a product of my environment, I want my environment to be a product of me... no one gives it to you, you have to take it.”

¹⁵ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) p181. I will quote the endnotes Foster has with this passage here, because they are germane to the discussion:

Footnote 27: “Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1. Granted, the “discursive paradigms” of the new anthropology are different-poststructuralist rather than structuralist, dialogical rather than decoding. But a Bakhtinian orchestration of informant voices does not void ethnographic authority. In “Banality in the Cultural Studies,” Meaghan Morris comments: “Once ‘the people’ are both a source of authority for a text and a figure of its own critical activity, the populist enterprise is not only circular but (like most empirical sociology) narcissistic in structure” (in Patricia Mellencamp, ed., *The Logics of Television* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990], 23.”

Footnote 28: “See Frederic Jameson, *Ideologies of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989). As Jameson notes, the first textualist move was needed to loosen anthropology from its positivist traditions. In “New Historicism: A Comment” Hayden White points to a “referential fallacy” (related to my “realist assumption”) and a “textual fallacy” (related to my “textualist projection”): “Whence the charge that New Historicism is reductionist in a double sense: it reduces the social to the status of a function of the cultural, and then further reduces the cultural to the status of a text.” (in H. Aram Veveser, ed., *The New Historicism* [New York: Routledge, 1989] 294)”

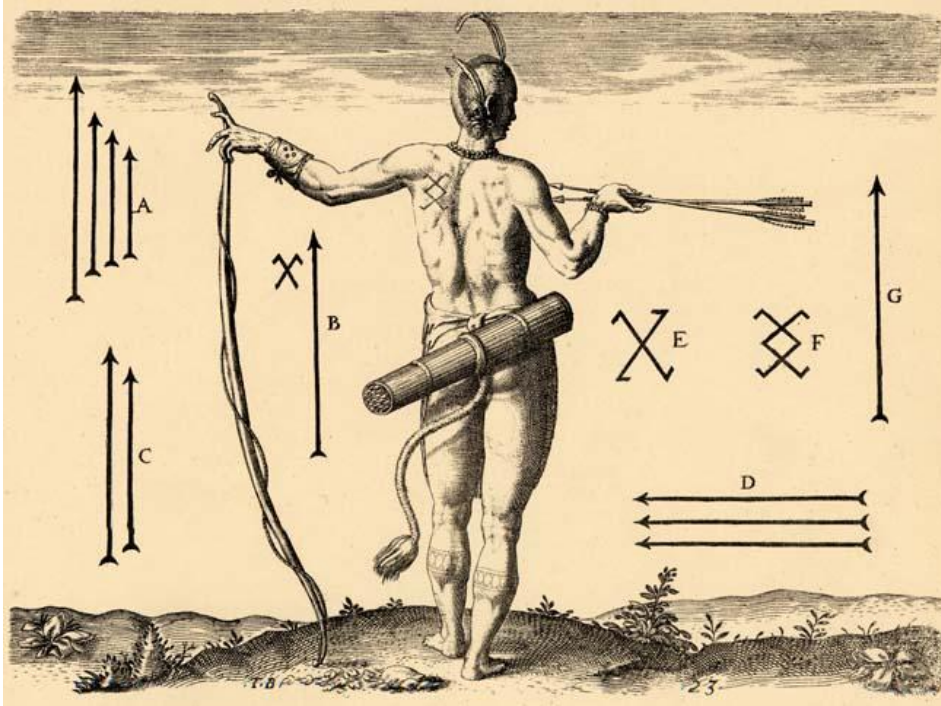


Figure 4, Theodor de Bry, 1590, Engraving, *The Marckes of sundrye Cheif men of Virginia*, from *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*.

Keeping the two quotes by Zizek and Foster in mind, I would like to examine Michael Gaudio's critique¹⁶ of *The Marckes of sundrye of the Chief mene of Virginia*, hereafter referred to as *The Marckes*. Gaudio describes *The Marckes* in this way:

"The Marckes of the sundrye of the Cheif men of Virginia is a sixteenth-century example of what W. J. T. Mitchell has called a "metapicture" – that is, a picture that cannot be reduced to a particular message but, instead, by simultaneously admitting opposing readings, offers a visual meditation on how meaning is produced through images."

This summary of *The Marckes* as a metapicture comes towards the end of the first section of the first chapter, entitled *Savage Marks*, over the course of which Gaudio builds a

¹⁶ Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 1-43.

case for analyzing *The Marckes* as a text. A focus of Gaudio's idea is that the Native American arrow tattoos are presented alongside and ordered by the Latin alphabet. Gaudio's motive for establishing the engraving as a text is that, he can then employ a method of linguistic analysis as a way to create a relationship between de Bry and the Native American he depicts. One problem with Gaudio's method is that it **has to offer** his first critique, which moves along the lines of an explanation of anthropology given by Johannes Fabian: "*By now it is generally admitted that all particular ethnographic knowledge we may have acquired is affected by historically established relations of power and domination between the anthropologist's society and the one he studies.*"¹⁷ Gaudio colorfully states that de Bry: "*stages a writing lesson on the body of an American Indian.*"¹⁸

However, Gaudio to his credit, offers a second reading which, regarding the relationship between tattoos and Latin: "*we could read the image as a collapsing of this binary.*"¹⁹ Wonderfully Gaudio hints that there was some empathic relationship between de Bry laboring with his burin, and the Native American tattooist with his puncturing tools.

However, most scholarly essays concerning de Bry's engraving endeavors come from other fields. While they share Gaudio's penchant for citing Derrida, De Certeau, and Fabian, they tend not to demonstrate the strength of character Gaudio displays by offering a second reading.

¹⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 28.

¹⁸ Michael Gaudio, *Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 6.

Two authors, Denise Albanese and Shannon Miller, have both addressed the images of Picts in the third section of *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*. Albanese suggests we should read them as images meant to distance the Native Americans backwards in time and space, in the process creating a sense of otherness about the Native Americans in reality. However, Miller reads them as both reminders to the British that they may have something in common with the Picts, as well having political relevance to the British as they simultaneously colonized America and Ireland.

Denise Albanese, in her book *New Science, New World* discusses *A true picture of one Pict* (fig. 3). She, strangely, seems to ignore the difference between her time and de Bry's, when she writes:

“By logical extension, the cultures of that the Pict and Algonkian represent, serve as points of entry for, are brought into contiguous narrative space. But not, of course, to argue for anything like their equivalent cultural value at the moment of contemporary seventeenth-century reading, since the juxtaposed illustrations use an ideologically loaded notion of temporality to deny the non-European specificity of the Virginia Indian and to reposition him in relation to European history.”²⁰

Later, on the same page, she admits that she is using “(Johannes) *Fabians... post-Enlightenment epistemology*,” but suggests that she chooses to because the problem Fabian makes: “...of “temporal distancing” also illuminates the hidden presumptions that inform colonialist discourse almost from its inception.”²¹ However, I disagree in the case of de Bry, who, judging by his written prefaces and images, did not attempt to disparage the Native Americans. There is something ironic regarding Albanese's theories, where she justifies lifting

²⁰ Denise Albanese, *New Science, New World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 28.

²¹ *Ibid.* 28.

de Bry up from 1590 to 1983 when Fabian wrote *Time and Other* to deal, not with art history, but with problems in his fieldwork as an anthropologist, in order to accuse de Bry of “temporal distancing.”

Albanese ignores what de Bry wrote in his preface: *Some Picture of the Picts which in the Old Time did Inhabit One Part of Great Britain*. Here, de Bry writes precisely why he chooses to include the Pict images:

“...in order to show that the inhabitants of Great Britain were in times past as savage as those of Virginia.”²²

Shannon Miller, in an essay regarding the British colonizing Ireland (simultaneously with North America), asserts that the images of Picts:

“... successfully assert a connection between the English and the Indians pictured on the previous pages, largely by assuring that the people are not so different, no so foreign. As a result, de Bry’s engravings encourage settlement. The ancient Britons in the text, then, serve as a literal bridge between the English viewer and the New World inhabitants of Virginia. The ancient Britons assume Ireland’s mediating role between role between England and the New World.”²³

Miller continues:

“The depiction of savagery and barbarism in the de Bry engravings draws the viewer to another set of images: depictions and engravings of the Irish that abounded in the late 16th century accounts. De Bry’s representations of the weaponry and appearance of these ancient Britons invokes not just an English past, but an English present: current battles with the Irish.”²⁴

²² Thomas Hariot and Theodor de Bry, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia: The 1590 Latin Edition, Facsimile edition accompanied by the modernized English text*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007) 73.

²³ Shannon Miller, *Invested with Meaning: The Raleigh Circle in the New World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) 56-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 56-7.

Clearly, depending on the emphasis you would like to create, de Bry's choice to compare Pict and Native American imagery could be read as displacing the savage Native Americans in time, or as propaganda either to encourage settlement, or to consolidate the Irish and Native Americans identities. In my opinion the more likely meaning is empathic – that the British reader should be aware that the Native Americans are like them **despite** the obvious differences.²⁵

In the end, the analysis of de Bry's work that I most agree with is delivered by Patricia Gravatt, in her essay *Rereading Theodor de Bry's Black Legend*:

"De Bry's readers are European, educated people and collectors, perhaps merchants but also members of the bourgeoisie interested in the adventures of the New World. They are presumably Protestant but not shown as the chosen, saved and without sins and thus entitled to judge others and to colonize and evangelize the Indians. Rather, they are human beings who should learn lessons from the New World. In his prefaces, de Bry does not portray things in black and white. Neither does he project onto the New World the suffering of the Protestants. Rather, he sees the New World as a sort of mirror, a means of self-reflection, for the Europeans, who might thus examine their own nature."²⁶

²⁵ Take for instance the incredibly crude description Ammianus Marcellinus gave of the "Huns" circa the 4th century A.D. as a literal example of a negative proto-ethnographic description: *"The people of the Huns, who are mentioned only cursorily in ancient writers and who dwell beyond the sea of Azov (Palus Maeotis) near the frozen ocean, are quite abnormally savage. From the moment of birth they make deep gashes in their children's cheeks, so that when in due course hair appears its growth is checked by the wrinkled scars; as they grow older this gives them the unlovely appearance of beardless eunuchs. They have squat bodies, strong limbs, and thick necks, and are so prodigiously ugly and bent that they might be two-legged animals, or figures crudely carved from stumps which are seen on the parapets of bridges... You cannot make a truce with them, because they are quite unreliable and easily swayed by any breath of rumor which promises advantage; like unreasoning beasts they are entirely at the mercy of the maddest impulses. They are totally ignorant of the distinction between right and wrong, their speech is shifty and obscure, and they are under no restraint from religion or superstition."* Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire (AD 354 – 378)*, (England: Penguin Books, 2004) Book 31, Chapter 2.

²⁶ Patricia Gravatt, "Rereading Theodor de Bry's Black Legend," in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, ed. Margaret R. Greer; Maureen Quilligan; Walter D. Mignolo. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 225-226. Kindle Edition.

I prefer Gravatt's analysis, if for no other reason than she refuses to reduce de Bry to either extreme, a hero or goat of the proto-colonial endeavor, but instead takes him at his word and image.

Conclusion

This essay started with the Romans, let me end with NASA. NASA and Google are two of the sponsors for the new Singularity University in California, reminiscent of Queen Elizabeth sponsoring Sir Walter Raleigh who provided the logistics which set in motion the people, John White and Thomas Hariot, who started *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*. Daniel Reda, a lecturer at the Singularity University, offers a course which summarizes biotechnology quickly for busy professionals who pay 10,000 dollars for a six week long series of lectures. During the course of one lecture, Reda brings up that researchers have manufactured a three-dimensional printer which prints DNA (the human genetic code) using Amino Acids. He suggests that while they have not yet printed a complete human DNA sequence, it is only a matter of time.²⁷

This printing of the human DNA molecule, and de Bry's printed engravings have something in common. They both reproduce images of humans. They are extremely controversial because they deal with aspects of what it means to be human. They both are tied into the debate of objectivity, and the possibility of one person having any real insight or perspective on another. They both illustrate the complexities of what it might mean to progress.

²⁷ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt83JKAxejM&feature=player_embedded

In this paper I first presented the history of philosophy which grounds my argument of de Bry's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*. I started by quoting Pope Benedict regarding what he describes as the "first rupture." Habermas's theories present a coherent sense of social progress within philosophy, and I included it as a way to offset the relativism of most of de Bry's critics. Lyotard accurately describes what Postmodernism is, however, I do not believe it describes our society. Lyotard's description of Postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarrative" is extremely helpful as a way to understand the critiques which *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* faces when it is categorized as ethnography.

I did benefit greatly from my classmates and Professor Monteyne's critique of my original argument, which was not aware of many facets of the conversation regarding the early modern period. Hopefully I was able to address more of these points with some integrity.

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