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**SAVAGES, WILD MEN, MONSTROUS RACES: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE IN THE EARLY  
MODERN ERA**

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by

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**Abstract:** This paper is a case study in the social construction of race. It focuses in particular on the development in the Renaissance and early modern era of the new images of “the savage” as they appeared during the first forty or fifty years of the European conquest and colonization of the Americas, and their racialization during this same period. I propose a genealogy of these racialized images that traces them to transformations in traditional medieval and Renaissance images of the Wild Man and the Monstrous Races that occur both before and during the early period of conquest and colonization, in response to very specific cultural, social and political pressures, including in particular changing conceptions of space that are created before and during the colonial enterprise.

The modern conception of race is often thought by philosophers to have developed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in response to a unique confluence of scientific, philosophical, and imperial forces; and in recent decades some impressive work has been done to excavate the details of its construction during this period.<sup>1</sup> Of course philosophers generally acknowledge, if only in passing, that this late modern construction has its roots in various medieval traditions, among which are typically mentioned the medieval versions of the Noachic legend, according to which the peoples of the earth can be divided into three broad groups (African, Asian, and European), each descended from one of the sons of Noah.<sup>2</sup>

I will argue, however, that an analysis of the visual images created by Europeans during the first half-century after 1492 reveals that the essential elements of the late modern conception of race are put into place during that period. In brief, the tremendous social, economic and political pressures that culminate in this comparatively brief moment yield the modern notion of *the savage*. I will suggest that from its inception this notion is an inherently racialized one; and that it is the nodal point from which, in broad outline and in much of its detail, the template is drawn for the more familiar 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century understandings of non-European races.

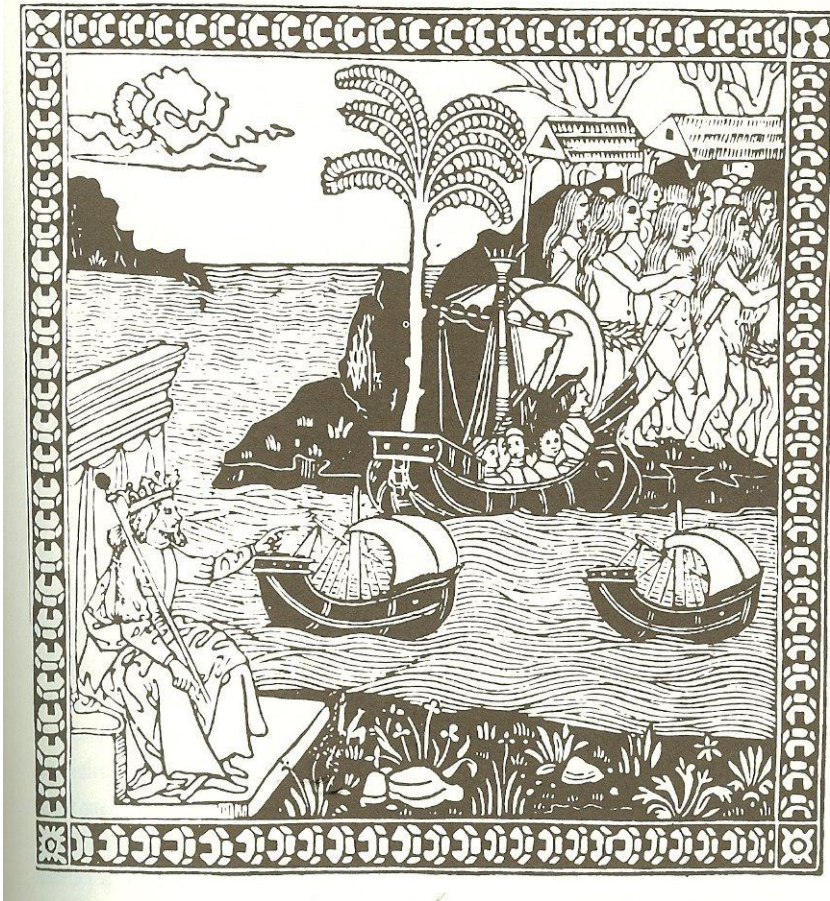
Moreover, I will show that the modern notion of the savage is synthesized, not directly from the Noachic legends, but from images drawn, sometimes literally, on the margins of medieval understandings of humanity: powerful and deeply-entrenched images of the wild man and the monstrous races. This synthesis is made possible by the ways in which the discovery and colonization of the New World simultaneously expand the boundaries of the world defined as European to include far-way places known previously only through rumors, legends, and the testimonies of medieval authorities; and at the same time realign these newly-familiar and redefined boundaries with the old margins of medieval mythology. It is this transfer of old, mythologized concepts to newly-discovered, living peoples, virtually completed in the very moment of discovery, that is the fountainhead of late modern conceptions of race. My investigation is preliminary, and much work remains to be done; but I hope it will be enough to convince aestheticians and historians of philosophy to venture beyond the well-worn paths of the late modern era to uncover the origins of modern ideas and images of race.

It is important to place the artwork discussed here in its art-historical context. The high art of the sixteenth century, often referred to as “mannerism,” has been characterized by one art historian as showing “an insistent cultured grace and accomplishment..accompanied by the

kindred qualities of abstraction from natural behavior and appearances, bizarre fantasy, complexity and invention.”<sup>3</sup> The most well-known images of the early colonization and conquest of the Americas, produced by the De Bry family at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, fit this characterization well. Even a cursory review of a representative selection of de Bry’s engravings, as they are published in Michael Alexander’s *Discovering The New World: Based on The Works of Theodor de Bry*, for example, will confirm that author’s claim that de Bry is “a mannerist in the heyday of mannerism.”<sup>4</sup> Our attention here, however, will be on the earlier images of America, produced under rather different circumstances. The history of the production of these earlier, pre-De Bry images points to artists and artisans whose work is, if not necessarily more immediate, then at least more free of the dominant mannerist conventions. Most of the images of America and American Indians discussed here are woodcuts, produced by artisans trained as cabinet-makers, rather than engravings, produced by artists or goldsmiths trained or supervised by artists.<sup>5</sup> With some notable exceptions, the work of these artisans was not regarded as highly among patrons of the arts, nor expected to conform closely to the high-art standards of the day. In many early cases it was intended only to increase the attractiveness of a book or pamphlet to a mass audience. These early pictures are often drawn hastily, in many cases by artisans whose only guide was the text, working under the commercial pressures of producing mass-market publications like the various editions of Columbus’s 1493 letter. One need not embrace a naïve realism to point out that it is characteristic of these works that they pay much less attention to fidelity to the text being illustrated (whatever one makes of the issue of its factual legitimacy), than they do to the exigencies of the printing process and, perhaps above all, to the marketability of what is produced.

The point of focusing on this earlier, artisanal work is not that, in so doing, we can catch a glimpse of what American Indian people were “really like;” but rather, one might say, that in so doing, we can catch a glimpse of what European people were “really like.” We glimpse, that is, familiar and less polished, workaday European preconceptions about strange peoples, not so heavily influenced, perhaps, by the dominant high-art conventions of the time.

To be sure, many of the earliest drawings already display the same political and economic motivations that are often drawn to our attention in commentaries on the later, more polished work of de Bry and others.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the explicit interest in colonization and subjugation is already present from the very beginning. This is clear, for example, in an image representing the reactions of American Indians upon first encountering Columbus and his ships that was repeated frequently with some variation or other in various editions of Columbus’s letter, which letter was itself widely and quickly reprinted in a number of European languages:



Here we see the islands described in the letter presented literally from the point of view of Europe, with Ferdinand himself in the foreground, seated upon his throne, holding his badge of authority and reaching out in an imperial gesture directly aligned with the gaze and movement of Columbus, who can be seen almost in the center of the frame disembarking from the largest of his three ships. The accompanying text remarks upon the richness of the land, the fearfulness of the natives, their rustic simplicity and childlike credulity, their willingness to give away gold, silver, and items that the Spaniards regard as valuable or have need of in return for trifles, and their potential as loyal subjects of the Spanish monarch and converts to Catholicism. The contrast between clothed Europeans and unclothed, long-haired and bearded natives, together with the related contrast between their naturally timid response and the authoritative and

unhesitating stance of Ferdinand and his representative, Columbus, coalesce in the his repeated comments in the letter and in his log about the Indian belief that the Spaniards had descended from heaven, underlining the Spanish commercial and political interests in a fantasy of blatantly self-serving religious terms.<sup>7</sup>

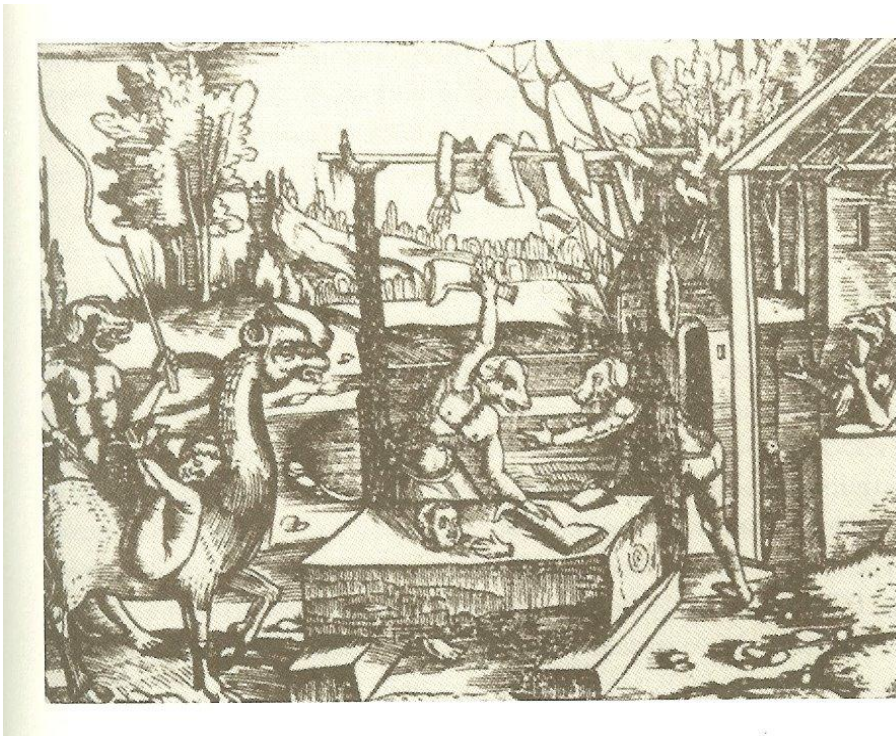
Thus it would not be accurate to describe these early drawings as more “innocent”, or less interested. What is true, however, is that, in addition to these sorts of often crudely explicit interests that echo the accompanying texts, many of the early drawings also reveal European attempts to assimilate the new and unfamiliar to old and familiar European ideas, expressed in tropes, symbols and metaphors that were pervasive throughout the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. This attempt, understood as itself an interested one, is all the more powerful because the viewer, as a member of a broadly-shared European culture, is encouraged to respond to what is represented as though it were just an instance of the old myths, familiar but now rendered incarnate.

Consider for example, the long, unkempt hair of the Indians in the 1493 woodcut just presented—a feature that reappears in several of the variant woodcuts representing this same scene. Olive Dickason remarks on the persistent European tendency to describe, and to portray, American Indians as hairy despite the near-unanimity of eyewitness reports to the contrary.<sup>8</sup> While some have claimed, I think rightly, to find more subtle and attenuated references to hairiness in many of the later engravings (in de Bry, for example), in the earlier representations that concern us here the hairiness of the Indians is a commonplace.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps as a result of the circumstances of production that these early woodcuts present American Indian figures explicitly as elaborations on familiar and easily-recreated icons such as the Wild Man. In the current case, as many authors have pointed out, depicting American Indians

as hairy and unkempt is a way of representing wildness that draws upon a centuries-old convention about those Others who live in the woods and mountains of Europe, where civilized people venture only when they have lost, or are in danger of losing, what makes them civilized.

The same is often done by calling on the tradition of the monstrous races. For example, the use of the *cynocephali*, the monstrous race of dog-headed people (described by Pliny and dozens of medieval texts that follow him) to depict the alleged cannibalism of American Indians in this illustration from a 1530 edition of Vespucci's *Carta Marítima*, published in Strasbourg, instantly made it a familiar instance of the medieval trope of the horrific practices of far-away and alien peoples.<sup>10</sup>



A great deal is communicated in these two pictures by a few simple strokes of the artisan's pencil, with no annotation or explication required, and no artistic sophistication or classical knowledge on the part of the observer presupposed. The stage is thus quickly set for the ordinary

Europeans (working-class and small-business owners) who make up many of the early colonizers to see American Indians as characteristically lacking in one or more of the qualities necessary for interactions governed by the *jus gentium*, or perhaps even the *lex naturalis* itself—in short, as “savages”, as they quickly came to be called in a variety of European languages. These two pictures thus serve as an introduction *en breve* to the transfer of mythic concepts to living peoples that is encapsulated in the idea of the savage, and that lays the groundwork for the racialized treatment of American Indians as essentially and irredeemably Other. It is a more detailed examination of this transfer that will occupy us here.

## **1. Old images**

We may begin to understand these details by examining briefly two strands deeply woven into the European mythology of the Middle Ages: the stories of the monstrous races and the images of the wild man.

### **1. a. The monstrous races**

#### **1.a.i Character of the monstrous races**

The monstrous races first make their appearance in ancient Greek writings; but the most influential source of information about them during the Middle Ages is unquestionably the *Historia Naturalis* of Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.)<sup>11</sup> Identical descriptions or obvious variations on Pliny’s appear repeatedly and with nearly-identical illustrations, from the important and widely-read work of Isidorus of Seville (560-636 C.E.) to the margins of the Hereford *Mappa mundi* (1290), to the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (circa 1357), which is sometimes claimed to have been an important reference work for Columbus.<sup>12</sup> They continue to appear with frequency in translations of Pliny and other works contemporary with Columbus’ voyages, as for example in this frontispiece from the German work, *Das Buch Der Croniken Und Geschichten*, published in 1500:



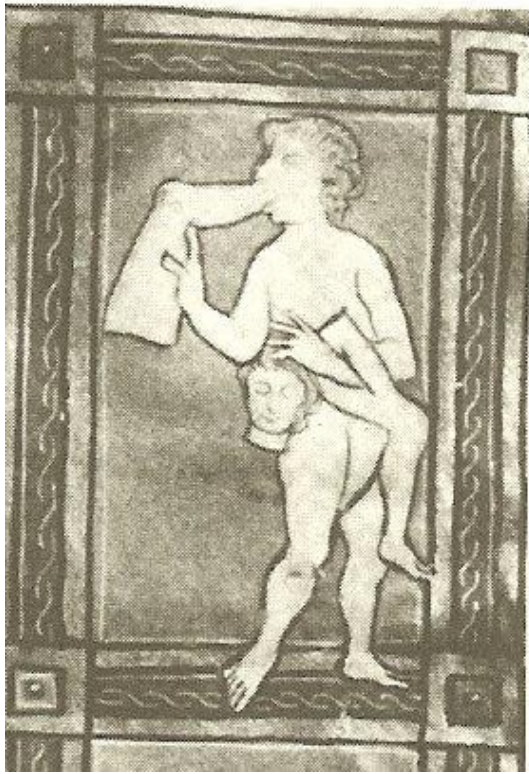
ben on einichen suchen des leibs. Item ein geschlecht der menschen sollte gerannt. die der fluß arabis von den inderen scheydt. kennen kein andere speyß dann der fisch die sy mit den n. gelen zerreylen. vnd an der sunnen dören vnd also prot bar auß machen. Item in den ey nöden Affrice kommen menschen gestalt auß den leuten entgegen vnd verschwinden in ein augenplick widerumb. als dann vil kriegischer geschichteschreiber von den hieno. geschit ben wunderperlichen vnd seltsamen gestaltnussen schreiben vñ meldung thun also das die sunnreich natur zu endöckung ires gewalts solche vnd der gleyche gestalt auß vnd form vns wunderperlich bedunckende gemacht hat. vnderden örtlich hernach entwiffenn gesehen werden.



**U**on mancherley gestaltens der menschen schreyben Plinius Augustinus vñnd ysidorus die hernach gemeltenn dinng. In dem land india sind menschen mit hunds köpfen vñnd reden pellende. nöin sich mit vogel gefeng vñnd kley den sich mit thierhairen. Item örtlich habenn allein eyn aug an der stirm ob der nasen vñnd essen allein thierfleisch. Item in dem land libia werdenn örtlich on haubt geporen vñnd haben mund vñnd augen. Etlich sind bederley ge. chlechts. die recht purst ist in manlich vñnd die lunge weybisch vñnd vermischen sich vnderinander vñnd g. peren. Item gegen dem paradeys bey dem fluß Ganges sind örtlich menschen die essen nichts. dan sy haben so kleine münd das sy das getranck mit einem halm einfloessen. vñnd leben vom geschmack der öpfel vñnd plümen. vñnd sterbenn pald von bösem geschmack. Daselbst sind auch leüt on nasen eins öbren angesichts. Etlich haben vñden so groß leßzen das sy das ganz angesicht damit bedöcken. Item örtlich on jungenn die deüten einander jr meynung mit wincken als die closterleüt. Item in dem land Sicilia haben örtlich so große on das sy den ganzen leib damit bedöcken. Item in dem lannd Ethiopia wanderen örtlich nidergebogen als das vih. vñnd örtlich leben vier hundert iar. Item örtliche haben höner lang nasen vñnd geßfuß das sindest in sant Anthonius ganzer legend. Item in ethiopia gen dem nidergang sind leüt mie einem preytens fuß. vñnd so schnell das sy die wilden thier erfolgenn. Item in dem lannd Scythia habenn sy menschen gestalt vñnd pferds fuß. Item alda sind auch leüt sunff ölnpogen lanck vñnd worden mit krank bis zum tode Item in den geschichten des grossen Alexanders lisset man das in india menschen seyen mit sechs henden



There are many monstrous races; but even a modest effort at cataloguing the variations show the consistency of their descriptions across a great range of medieval sources.<sup>13</sup> To understand how the tradition of the monstrous races provided material for the emergent notion of the savage, I propose that we divide the monstrous races into two groups: those whose phenotype is identical to that of known humans, but whose behavior or culture is represented as strange and alien to European audiences; and those whose phenotype itself is so strange and bizarre as to be beyond the range of what is regarded as familiarly human, typically signaling bizarre or outré behavior as well. In the former category one group is of particular interest for the European response to the New World, namely, the *anthropophagi*. The *anthropophagi* are cannibals who are variously described as eating their enemies, their friends, their family members, and certainly any available strangers, as in this image of a phenotypically-ordinary *anthropophagus* from the Sion College Bestiary of 1277, produced in France:



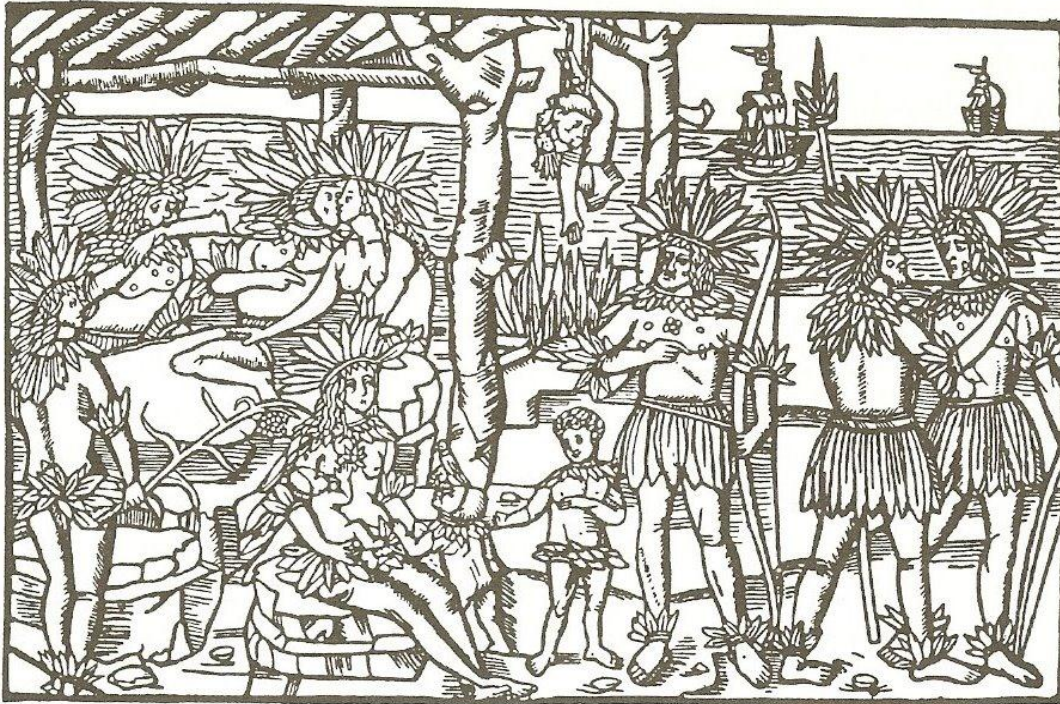
Depictions of cannibalism are of course standard fare in representations of New World peoples; but the earliest pictures published after 1492 are quite striking in their fairly direct reliance on the earlier traditions. The earliest extended account of cannibalism in the New World, and the earliest of the captivity narratives that later formed a staple of Puritan literature, is the story offered by Hans von Staden, who claimed to have been kidnapped by the Tupinambá of Brazil, and held captive by them for six months. A series of woodcuts depicting his experiences were executed in 1557, apparently under his direct supervision.<sup>14</sup> The following is representative:



Fig.23 A morte do escravo Carijó e como o comeram.

Though published a little later than the period under consideration here, this woodcut and its companions repeatedly re-enact the familiar device found in Mandeville's 14<sup>th</sup>-century narrative (widely reprinted and available during the period under discussion), though not in its accompanying illustrations, of the single, shocked European observer who encounters customs and cultures far removed from his own. In the von Staden illustrations, as often in Mandeville's tales, this device is used to frame the depiction of cannibalism. In many early depictions New World cannibals are represented as a group, to convey that their behavior is characteristic of a certain culture; and their behavior is interwoven with scenes of family and friendship, emphasizing the "normality" of these horrific activities for this monstrous race, as is suggested

by the presence of the child carrying a severed head in the lower right-hand corner of the Von Staden engraving, and also in this 1505 German woodcut by Johann Froschauer, accompanying a German edition of Vespucci's *Carta*:



Note that even when the Indians are portrayed as doing horrific things they are nonetheless represented at the same time as “normal” or even beautiful in appearance, as one would expect from a monstrous race whose distinguishing feature is behavior and culture, not phenotype.<sup>15</sup> Thus Columbus says, referring to information he claims to have garnered from his Taino informants:

In these islands I have found no human monstrosities, as many expected, but on the contrary the whole population is very well formed.... Thus I have found no monsters, nor had any report of any, except in an island [called] ‘Carib’... which is inhabited by people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who

eat flesh....They are no more malformed than are the others,  
except that they have the custom of wearing their hair long like  
women...<sup>16</sup>

This dissonance between phenotype and behavior may appear startling at first, until one realizes that it invokes the frequently-depicted contrast between two types of monstrous races adumbrated here. A Dutch woodcut accompanying the 1520 English version of Jan van Doesborch's *Of The Newe Landes* (originally published 1508-1510), reputed to be the first English book about the Americas, is typical:<sup>17</sup>



In the latter category of monstrous races—those who are phenotypically dissimilar as well as culturally or behaviorally alien—may be found the *donestre*, lion-headed people who pretend to understand the foreign languages of travelers, and then kill them, devour their bodies, and mourn over their heads, as in this 11<sup>th</sup>-century version of *The Marvels Of The East*:<sup>18</sup>



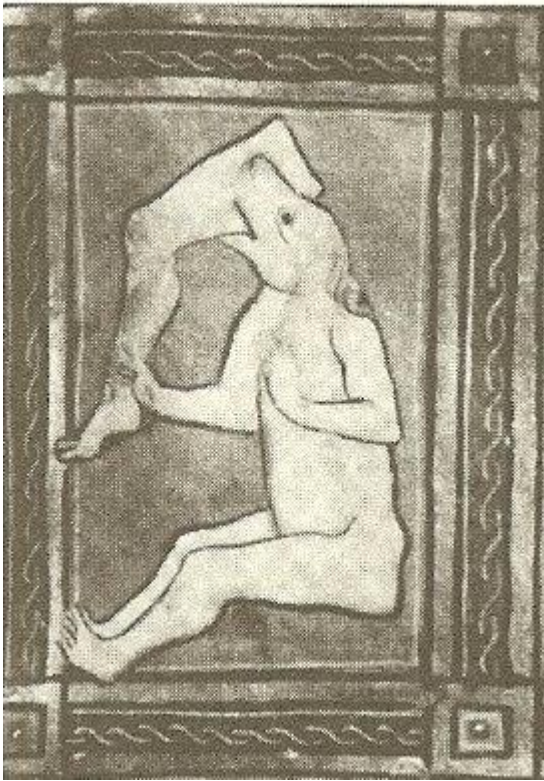
The particular traits and behaviors represented do not always remain firmly on one side or the other of the distinction I have drawn. The pretense of linguistic familiarity, and the friendliness it is used to express, reappear in one of the most familiar and horrific vignettes described by early European explorers of the New World, namely Vespucci's 1501 report on the seductive American Indian women, hardly monstrous in appearance, who lured one of his sailors into conversation, killed him, and ate him. Here is a representation of the scene from a 1509 German translation of Vespucci's letter:



Of even greater interest among the phenotypically-alien monstrous races, because of their more frequent appearance in New World settings, are the *cynocephali*, the dog-headed people, illustrated above in the frontispiece to the 1500 *Das Buch Der Croniken Unnd Geschichten*, and pictured in their New World habitat in the earlier illustration from the 1530 edition of Vespucci's *Carta Maritima*. Traditionally the *cynocephali* displayed two contradictory features. On the one



hand they were often described as cannibals, as they are here represented in the Siena College Bestiary of 1277:



On the other hand they were also often described either as Christians or as a people capable of being converted to Christianity.<sup>19</sup> One or the other or both of these features are, of course, often taken over in depictions and descriptions of American Indians, both earlier and later, a point to which I will return in section iii.c. below.

### **Geography of the monstrous races**

Together with the distinction just discussed between two types of monstrous races, the geography of the monstrous races is key to understanding the transformation involved in the modern deployment of these stock figures of the European imaginary for the understanding of the living peoples of the Encounter itself. Even as late as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the monstrous races were typically located in “the East”, a region that seems to have included Central, Southern, and Eastern Asia.<sup>20</sup> This location is reinforced by medieval readings of the extremely popular fourth-

century *Alexander Romance*, which was interpreted as describing a wall built by Alexander the Great, or sometimes a chain of mountains, that blocked off the known world from the monstrous races to the east and north of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Minor.<sup>21</sup>

The location of the monstrous races in the East places them on the margins, far from the center of the world as Europeans lived it, in places with which Europe has no large-scale human interaction. More precisely, they are located in places regarding which Europeans have no *imperial interests*. That is to say, whatever Europeans want from the East during this period, they do not desire to occupy it; and whatever resources Europeans draw from it are drawn by trade or by travel, and not by conquest.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, this lack of imperial interests is reciprocated. From the 5<sup>th</sup>-century invasions of the Huns until the 13<sup>th</sup>-century invasions by the Tatars and Mongols, the residents of central, southern, and eastern Asia generally have no substantial imperial interests of their own in Europe. It is because of this reciprocal imperial disinterest that these places can easily be imagined by most Europeans as utterly alien and distant. And, in turn, it is because these locations are so alien that locating the monstrous races there allows them to function as a locus for imaginative European exploration and definition of the boundaries of being human. This placement allows the monstrous races to be imagined, not just as moderately different with respect to custom and phenotype, as, say, the Germans might differ from the French, but as radically different kinds of beings, who live in ways that are shockingly different and horrendous, and whose phenotype is often shaped in equally alien or monstrous ways.

### **1.b. The wild man**

The second inhabitant of the medieval European imaginary who comes somehow to life in the Encounter with the New World is the Wild Man. The Wild Man is described in some medieval sources as one of the monstrous races; but there are crucial differences. Setting aside

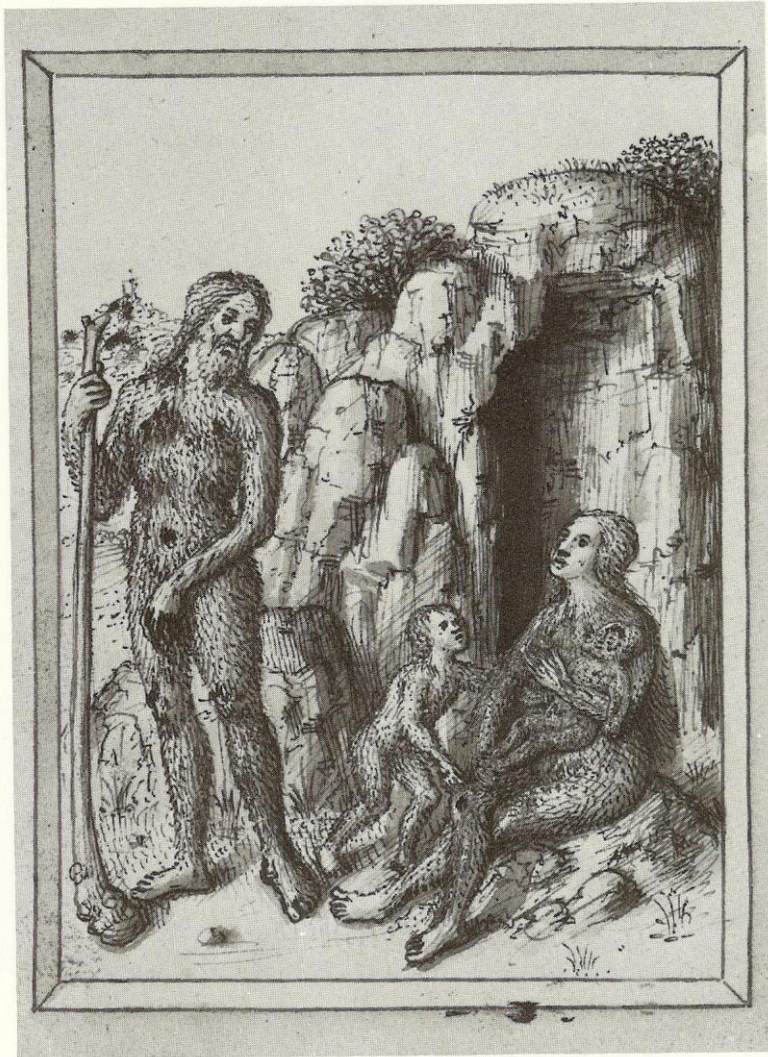
the special case of the ordinary person who becomes wild for some period of time,<sup>23</sup> it is clear that there is a long tradition of seeing the Wild Man as a naturally solitary figure who is violent and lascivious, often preying upon travelers or innocent women.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, his geography is unlike that of the monstrous races, for he inhabits the woods or the mountains comparatively close to European towns and villages.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is this bestial solitude in proximity to European culture and society that is the defining feature of the Wild Man, as Mary Shelley's use of the trope in *Frankenstein* reminds us.<sup>26</sup> A heraldic image from the 1480s shows a typical member of the genre:



These images of the wild man are very frequently taken over without significant modifications into early depictions of American Indians, where the standard medieval weapon of the Wild Man, namely, a club or tree limb, becomes the club or spear, or sometimes a bow and arrow, as in this 1505 Florentine edition of Vespucci's letter, *De Novo Mundo*:



In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, pictures of Wild Families become more common; and the figure of the Wild Woman, which had always had a separate trajectory with a rather different significance, now becomes part of the family ensemble, as in this 1500 edition of the French *The Four Conditions of Society*, “Ballade of a Wild Man”.<sup>27</sup>



Unlike the monstrous races, therefore, the Wild Man, whether accompanied or not, lives in relatively close proximity to Europeans. Like the monstrous races, however, the places he occupies are not the objects of imperial European interests. He lives in the mountains, or in the old growth forests that still covered much of Europe at least until 1250 C.E. or so. These are from the point of view of most Europeans *terra incognita*, vast and largely unknown islands,

right in the midst of Europe. They are therefore, like “the East”, suitable sites for the imaginative explorations of human nature.

## **2. The transformation of Europe**

Even a modest survey of the history of the three hundred years preceding the New World encounter will show that Europe underwent several radical changes during this period that directly impacted European thinking about the Other, as embodied in the mythologies of the monstrous races and the Wild Man. Taken together, these changes pave the way for an extension of the lives of the monstrous races and of the Wild Man from the realm of fantasy onto the realities of New World peoples.

### **2.a. Invasions from “the east”**

First, during the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries Europe is repeatedly under attack by waves of invaders from the east and the southeast. In the years 1220-1225 the Mongols encircled the Caspian, sacking the Genoese outpost in Crimea. They invaded Armenia and Azerbaijan, and they completed the conquest of Bulgaria and Ukraine by 1240. No sooner were the Mongol invasions over than the Ottoman Turks begin their rise to military and political prominence, *circa* 1299. In 1389 the Ottomans defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo, thus opening routes of military expansion from the East into Europe. In 1453 Constantinople fell to the Ottomans; and by 1529 they were at the gates of Vienna. From 1423 to 1571 (the Battle of Lepanto) they were a constant threat to the merchant states of Italy, particularly to Venice.

I have suggested that, prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at least, the Eastern location of the monstrous races ensured that encounters with them were largely imaginary rather than Encounters with living beings. As a result of the Tatar, Mongol, and Turkish incursions, however, the Eastern lands come alive for Europeans. This is certainly not to say that Europeans suddenly began to believe that these lands were really there and really inhabited. Because of the trade in silk and

spices, as well as the much older westward movement of religious ideas from India, Europeans were long aware of the reality of China, India, and the lands between there and Europe. But for a thousand years and more most of the peoples of what we now think of as Europe were familiar with peoples east of Asia Minor primarily through traveler's tales, or perhaps through the signs and symbols of the goods and ideas that came with those tales.<sup>28</sup> It is this dependence on travel reports, real and fictional, together with deeply-entrenched assumptions about how distance and travel unmoor the familiar, that make the location of the monstrous races in "the East" feasible.<sup>29</sup>

What is new in the 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, as I have already hinted, is that peoples from these places now make an undeniable and widespread appearance in Europe itself. In general it is difficult to overstate the importance of the centuries-long experience of the Ottoman presence in redefining European images and European geography of "the Orient;" but the present point is that, from the perspective of the three hundred years immediately preceding the New World encounter, the Ottomans constitute simply one more great wave of peoples from the East forcibly presenting themselves in Europe.<sup>30</sup> Together the Mongols, the Tatars, and the Ottomans irrevocably alter European understandings of the character of those regions.

At first European observers try to place the invaders into the familiar categories. Consider for example this depiction of the Tatars from Matthew of Paris' *Chronica Majora* for the year 1240 C.E., which reflects common belief in much of the Europe of his time, and which appears in a section significantly entitled, "An Irruption of the Tatars":

In this year, that human joys might not long continue, and that the delights of this world might not last long unmixed with lamentation, an immense horde of that detestable race of Satan, the Tatars, burst forth from their mountain-bound regions, and making

their way through rocks apparently impenetrable, rushed forth, like demons loosed from Tatarus (so that they are well called Tatars, as it were inhabitants of Tatarus); and overrunning the country, covering the face of the earth like locusts, they ravaged the eastern countries with lamentable destruction, spreading fire and slaughter wherever they went. Roving through the Saracen territories, they razed cities to the ground, burnt woods, pulled down castles, tore up the vine-trees, destroyed gardens, and massacred the citizens and husbandmen....The men are inhuman and of the nature of beasts, rather to be called monsters than men, thirsting after and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and human beings....they drink the blood which flows from their flocks, and consider it a delicacy....They have no human laws, know no mercy, and are more cruel than lions or bears....and when they have no blood, they greedily drink disturbed and even muddy water....[T]hey know no other country's language except that of their own, and of this all other nations are ignorant. For never till this time has there been any mode of access to them, nor have they themselves come forth, so as to allow any knowledge of their customs or persons to be gained through common intercourse with other men....The Saracens, therefore, desired and begged to be allowed to enter into alliance with the Christians, in order that they



might, by multiplying their forces, be enabled to resist these human monsters.<sup>31</sup>

Similar descriptions and depictions of the Turks as a monstrous race may be found in Montaigne and Rabelais several centuries later.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, despite early attempts to demonize their outward appearance, the Tatars, the Mongols, and the Turks were initially understood as monstrous races of our first type, whose distinguishing characteristics are extremes of behavior—cannibalism and extreme cruelty, for example—rather than bizarre or alien phenotype.<sup>33</sup>

For these very reasons, after the invasions of the Tatars, Mongols, and Turks the peoples of Asia can no longer be seen as mythological, but must be regarded instead as some type of really existent beings. When the monstrous races from the east are incarnated in phenotypically-familiar forms, and relocated from Asia to Europe itself, they are after the first shock no longer monstrous races but real and horrible enemies. These invasions from the East thus force a new place in the European imaginary: a place for living beings from the East who leave their distant abodes and intrude into Europe itself. The humanity of these invaders may or may not continue to be in question as they are re-constructed as hordes, heathens, idolaters, barbarians. That is a question for another occasion; but they clearly are monstrous races no longer.

It is precisely the distance from direct observation and constant contact which permits imagination to be the definer of the monstrous races. The monstrous races, whether through behavior or through phenotype or through their juxtapositions, serve as vehicles for imaginative probings of the limits of humanity. This is what Matthew of Paris' first-generation description of the Mongols does. But over time, those who are phenotypically familiar and who irrupt into the

central places of Europe, can no longer be constituted entirely by the imagination. The places they come from therefore can no longer be properly regarded as the source of monstrousness.

In short, the comparatively familiar phenotypes of the invaders from the East, together with their presence in Europe itself, disrupt their identity as monstrous; and so, after the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes more and more difficult to define the East as the home of monstrous races. If the function of the monstrous races as a locus for the European imagination's meditation on the limits of being human is to be maintained, therefore, the monstrous races have to be relocated away from the center of European experience to some new and distantly-imagined periphery from which, as before the invasions of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, they do not threaten the European center. The monstrous races from the East thus gradually become mythologies in need of a new location—a location which the Americas must have seemed, at least at first blush, to offer.

## **2.b. Deforestation of europe**

With respect to medieval ideas of the Wild Man, there is another significant set of pressures at work. Beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but peaking in the period 1250-1500 C.E. , much of Europe experiences deforestation on a massive scale as a result of population growth and the widespread use of wood as fuel. Deforestation involves the destruction of many of the places in which the wild man abides.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the urbanization of Europe is underway by 1300. Indeed, “the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries ...saw the founding of more new towns than any time between the fall of Rome and the Industrial Revolution.”<sup>35</sup> Deforestation and urbanization, taken together, remove the experience of living near and around wild places from the quotidian lives of more and more Europeans.

In sum, during the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries the old imagined places become more and more populated. In the case of the local forests they are now populated with familiar peoples and ways

of life, as the forests shrink and the cities expand; and in the case of the lands to the East, they are populated with strange peoples who are actively and aggressively involved (as opposed merely to being imaginatively represented) in the lives of Europeans. The result is that both the wild men and the monstrous races are in different ways displaced. They began the 13<sup>th</sup> century as mythologies that were each in their own way essentially tied to certain kinds of locations; but during the period in question they become dislocated mythologies. The wild man's "habitat" vanishes as the nearby forest shrinks, and the monstrous races ride the roads of Europe instead of remaining far away, where they belong. Both have become mythologies in need of relocation.

### **3. The construction of "the savage"**

#### **3.a. The relocation of the monstrous races**

We are now in a position to appreciate how it is precisely such a relocation that is provided by the New World Encounter. Consider first the monstrous races. If they are relocated to the New World, they revert at first glance, at least, to the status of strange, far-away beings who have no imperial interests in Europe. Perhaps this is why it is so natural for Columbus and other early explorers to speculate, as they do constantly, about which of the monstrous races they will find in various parts of the Americas.<sup>36</sup> In the New World the monstrous races are properly restored to their natural place, so to speak: far away, setting boundaries to the human world, its geography, and the diversity of its inhabitants—boundaries that are, at least in the first decades after 1492, explored largely through the work of the European imagination.

The newly-emerging logic of colonization quickly complicates this relocation, however. For the Americas are not simply a substitute for the central Asian steppes, or the river valleys of India. Instead Europeans come to see various parts of the New World as objects of imperial interest. The "neue landes" become, not simply places to be visited, travelled through, or traded with, but instead colonies, places to be acquired. The relevant use of the term "colony" in

English begins in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. In this usage, the *Oxford English Dictionary* says, a colony is “a settlement in a new country; a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connexion with the parent state is kept up.”<sup>37</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, then, at least in English, a colony becomes literally a place that is now claimed and settled by Europeans. Moreover, the “connexion” with the parent state is not a merely formal one. One recalls that the irresolvable conflict generated by the *pid noir*'s dual loyalties to France and to Algeria were grounded in one fundamental fact, namely, that Algeria was a *department* of France, and so, literally, French soil, a part of France. There is a way in which all colonies are like this, however; whether they are formally named as lands “subject to or connected with” the “parent state”, or whether they are formally understood to be part of it, like unfortunate Algeria. This is the social and cultural significance of the elaborate disembarkation ceremonies, in which land is claimed “in the name of the King and Queen.”<sup>38</sup> It comes out with particular clarity in that strange and ephemeral Spanish institution, the *requerimiento*, by which Indians were informed (in Spanish or Latin) that they were subjects and their lands were possessions of the Spanish crown, and that violent resistance would result in destruction and enslavement, as constituting rebellion upon the part of “vassals” from whom loyalty was to be expected.<sup>39</sup> The logic was the same as the logic the Castilian monarchs might have imposed on a rebellious town in Extremadura or León.

A colony is in this way a reflection of the metropolis (literally, the “mother country”) itself. The imperial interests that create the colony draw the metropolis out of its original location; and its peoples, its revenues, and its culture are adapted, if not replicated, in a new place. The new place, distant though it may be, is therefore no longer the proper possession of the Other. It is no

longer “theirs”, but, in the eyes of the colonizers, “ours.” Seen in this way, the logic expressed in the *requerimiento* is much easier to understand.

It is therefore all but inevitable that, in the first New World Encounters, American Indians are frequently portrayed as “human monsters”, to use Matthew of Paris’ vivid phrase quoted above, who invade the newly-established European spaces.<sup>40</sup> Like the Tatars and the Turks they are cannibals, they easily become violent, and they lack an understanding of the morés of “civilized” peoples.<sup>41</sup> The paradox of seeing the original inhabitants of “the newe lands” as intruders or invaders of European space is no doubt striking to us; but the logic of colonial discourse makes it self-evident to the European writers and illustrators of the period.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it is precisely this idea for which a familiar European argument of the sixteenth and seventeenth century serves as propaedeutic, namely, the argument that, as Robert Gray put it in 1609, prefiguring Locke’s notorious arguments in the *Second Treatise of Government*, “these Sauages have no particular proprietie in any part of parcel of that Countrey, but only a generall residencie there, as wild beasts haue in the forrest, for they range and wander up and downe the Countrey...”<sup>43</sup>

### **3.b. The relocation of the wild man**

The identification of the Indians as monstrous races is very quickly placed in tension with their very proximity to newly-Europeanized space, however. Because of the logic of “the colony”, they are now located in spaces that have been redefined as immediately adjacent to, if not overlapping with, “our” places. They are now as close to “our” spaces as the forest at the edge of the settlement. In this respect they are better understood as Wild Men; but only because “our” places have been extended to include the colony.

On the other hand, unlike the Wild Man himself, the Indians are social beings. They do not live as solitary creatures of the woods, but have their own communities, traditions and values, as

the Europeans understood from the very beginning. Nor are the Indians a fantasy like the Wild Man. They do not magically retreat as the land is deforested, or as it comes under “civilized” European control, leaving behind nothing but legends. Instead, they increasingly come out of the forest, into the settlement itself, bringing their raw and wild habits with them, just as Europeans always feared that the Wild Man might. In the European imaginary, the fantasy in Lucas Cranach’s horrific depiction of the “cannibal or werewolf”, published in 1510, has become real.<sup>44</sup>



Fig. 65 Cannibal or werewolf, no. 25

At the same time, because it is the Europeans who have the imperial interests this time, the colonizers must see the Indians in a different light, namely, in relation to the imperial resources they are seeking. At first the Indians are seen as the key to the exploitation of resources, as the

early entries of Columbus's log illustrate so powerfully. Then, over time, they come to be seen themselves as a natural resource that must be tamed to be utilized. In either case their wild behavior is a real threat to imperial interests; and they must be either Christianized and civilized, or, ultimately, exterminated.<sup>45</sup>

In short, the identity of the Indians cannot easily be fitted into the traditional categories of the European imaginary that we have discussed. They are too close-by to be constituted as the far-away monstrous races, and at the same time too highly-social, and too active in the lives of European colonies, to be classified simply as the Wild Men of old. The circumstances and the logic of colonization create a tension in the application of the old categories that is resolved by the invention of new ones.

### **3.c. Race and the concept of the savage**

It is during this time that the concept of the savage emerges as a new idea, a resolution of these tensions, built out of old materials, recent pressures, and new experiences. It should come as no surprise that the term "savage", in its uses as a label for a kind of person or group of people, emerges for the first time during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in English, Spanish, and probably other Romance languages as well.<sup>46</sup> The "savage" is constituted not as a solitary individual, but as a member of a culture or "race" who is set apart from Europeans, typically by extremes of behavior and character, including cannibalism, sexual perversion, and the propensity to violence. The savage naturally occupies lands far from the center of civilization, Europe itself; but through the mystification of colonization, appears from the forests and the hills to directly threaten European places, peoples, and interests.

The term "race" (in the usages relevant to racial ideology) emerges for the first time during the 17<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>47</sup> but here the concept named, that of a group originating from a particular geographical area, united by descent, and characteristically displaying certain phenotypic or



characterological traits, is certainly far older.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the power of the concept, once “named”, is greatly augmented. Beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the term “race” can be used to draw attention to the cluster of features just mentioned to make them salient in explanation and understanding, and to tie them to other explanatory concepts and hypotheses. The key seventeenth-century transformation engendered by this early modern naming of old race concepts is what I would call the *interiorization* of race, and the image of the savage plays a crucial role in this transformation. It is to a brief discussion of this role that I now turn.

The imperial confrontation with the now-savage races of “the newe lands” raises a question about their humanity that is much more immediate and pressing than questions about the humanity of the monstrous races. It is almost unanimously agreed from the time of the very earliest reports that American Indians are not significantly different from Europeans with respect to phenotype.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, that there are vast differences in culture and behavior that distinguish them from Europeans is generally taken to be indisputable. But are these behavioral and cultural differences superficial, or do they indicate some deep essential contrast between known peoples and the inhabitants of “the newe landes”?

The older version of this question is raised frequently during the Middle Ages in debates over the human status of monstrous races. On the one hand, the behavior of monstrous races like the *cynocephali* is marked by habitual, even uncontrolled, violence, cannibalism, and sexual perversion. On the other hand, even the *cynocephali* can be converted to Christianity, and so redeemed. Indeed, one medieval tradition has it that St. Christopher himself was a *cynocephalus* prior to his conversion.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Augustine says, “whoever is anywhere born a man, that is, a rational, mortal animal, no matter what unusual appearance he presents in color, movement, sound, nor how peculiar he is in some power, part, or quality of his nature, no Christian can

doubt that he springs from that one protoplast [Adam's seed]. We can distinguish the common human nature from that which is peculiar, and therefore wonderful.”<sup>51</sup>

Their status as imagined groups whose function it is to allow the free play of questions about the nature of humanity ensures that in the case of the monstrous races this question remains fundamentally contentious. In the case of the savage, however, the imperial pressures of dealing with living beings who have ideas of their own about how the Encounter should proceed mean that the question is quickly closed. The general supposition of the imperial enterprise is that Augustine is mistaken, and American Indians are, though phenotypically within the range of the familiar, radically different, and inferior, in their deeper nature. To be savage is to have a certain essential nature, which defines American Indians as sub-human, or, at best, a lesser breed of humans.

To be sure, commingled with imperial projects of enslavement, exploitation, and extermination, is an imperial project of what we may call mass Europeanization that attempts radical religious and cultural rehabilitation of savage life. Although it has its precedents (e.g. in the Spanish colonization of the Canary Islands in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), the scale of this project is probably unequaled in European history.<sup>52</sup> But even supposing the rehabilitation of “savage” behavior, language, and *morés* is successful,<sup>53</sup> the question remains of how the relation between this change in outward behavior and the inward nature of the savage thus rehabilitated is to be understood.

The common view that generally grounds the imperial projects of this and indeed much of the succeeding imperial and post-imperial periods is that it is impossible even by Europeanization to transform (or to transform fully) savage nature.<sup>54</sup> On this view, savage nature is irredeemably savage; and even changes in language use and outward behavior should not be

taken to indicate that what lies beneath the rehabilitated surface has truly changed at all.<sup>55</sup> Here another element has been added to the Frankensteinian creation that is the idea of the savage: the medieval incarnation of the very old idea of an inherited curse that cannot be altered, perhaps not even through the magical transformative power of conversion and baptism.<sup>56</sup> Through the mediation of this notion, the idea of the savage is completed. It is not merely that their appearance belies their monstrous behavior, as in the case of monstrous races like the *anthropophagi*. Instead their appearance, as well as their Europeanized behavior and morés all give the lie to the monstrousness they carry within.<sup>57</sup> The liminal status of the monstrous races, underwritten by their wholly-imaginary existence, gives way to the notion, shaped by imperial interests, of the fixed status of the savage. Their status as humans is no longer uncertain and debatable, but fixed as inferior by something they carry within, something that cannot be changed.

In short, the newly-minted idea of the savage, completed by the familiar idea of an ineradicably depraved inward nature, enables Europeans to relocate or reconceive the traits that mark the savage as inward when, thanks to the project of Europeanization, they are not observable in outward comportment. This relocation is marked by the deployment of an old idea, race, newly-articulated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and reinscribed in succeeding eras as *interiorized savagery*. “Race” draws attention precisely to this understanding of the people of the Americas: it picks out a savage nature that is heritable and unalterable, no matter how outward behavior is changed, that is revealed to the eye, at least, perhaps only by an unchanged and unchanging skin color. The savage of the New World thus becomes a Caliban indeed, the doomed offspring of the

wild man and the monstrous races, midwifed by imperial interest, cursed, marooned in isolation from the metropolis and enslaved by his putative master through the magic invocation of “race.”

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I have in mind particularly the important work of Robert Bernasconi. See for example his “Who Invented The Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race”, in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Race (Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy)* (Wiley Blackwell, 2001). See also his magisterial *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2001), and *American Theories of Polygenesis (Concepts of Race in the Nineteenth Century)* (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> A notable exception to this cursory philosophical treatment of the pre-18<sup>th</sup> century development of the idea of race is the work of Alison Bailey. See her “Thinking About Race and White Supremacy as if Gender Mattered,” presented to the California Roundtable on Philosophy and Race, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> John Shearman, *Mannerism* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 23. The term “mannerist” is a vexed one among art historians, however, as Linda Murray notes. She herself restricts its use to “works produced in certain parts of Italy.” *The High Renaissance and Mannerism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 124-125.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Alexander, ed., *Discovering the New World: based on the works of Theodor de Bry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), ref. on p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See Alen Shestack, *Fifteenth Century Engravings of Northern Europe From The National Gallery of Art: December 3, 1967-January 7, 1968* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art), preface by Lessing Rosenwald, n.p., and introduction by Alen Shestack, n.p. Compare Arthur M. Hind, *A History of Engraving & Etching From the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to The Year 1914* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1923, reprinted by Dover Publications, 1963), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Kim Sloan’s discussion of the propaganda agenda behind de Bry’s renderings of the John White watercolors. Kim Sloan and others, *A New World: England’s first view of America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 86-92. This is the catalogue accompanying a recent American showing of the British Museum’s collection of John White’s drawings, which the catalogue often juxtaposes with the corresponding de Bry engravings.

<sup>7</sup> See S. Lyman Tyler’s edition of the log, *Two Worlds: The Indian Encounter with the Europeans 1492-1509* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1988), ref. on p. 41. It is shortly after making this claim in the log that Columbus comments several times that he and his crew do not understand the language of their Indian hosts, and that many mistakes and misunderstandings occur as a result. See *id.* p. 65; cf. pp. 48, 53.

<sup>8</sup> Olive Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), pp. 77-80.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of The Other* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 49-50, provides a series of examples in which printers of the day simply borrow images out of context when it suits their purposes.

<sup>10</sup> A very useful survey of the presence of the monstrous races in the New World, may be found in Mason, *ibid.*, ch. 4.

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<sup>11</sup> The canonical work on the history of the monstrous races remains John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000). Pliny and his Greek and Roman antecedents are discussed in ch. 1. Pliny's catalogue of the monstrous races appears in Book VII of the *Historia Naturalis*. A translation of Book VII roughly contemporary to the period under discussion is *The Naturall Historie of C. Plinius Secundus, Translated into English by Philemon Holland, 1601* [book on-line] (accessed April 22, 2008); available from <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/holland/pliny7.html>.

<sup>12</sup> *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006). This edition includes a series of woodcuts from the second Augsburg edition, 1481. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 92 n.1 discusses the evidence and concludes that it is very likely that Columbus was familiar with Mandeville. Flint confirms that Columbus read (and annotated) a 1489 Italian translation of Pliny, even if he had not read Mandeville. Flint, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 53.

<sup>13</sup> For one catalog, along with very interesting speculations about the underlying principles of classification, see Mason, *op. cit.*, chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>14</sup> See Alexander, *op. cit.* n. 3, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Compare the woodcuts of some of the monstrous races in the 1481 second Augsburg edition of Mandeville, *op. cit.*, who are very ordinary in appearance. E.g. p. 120 (the Lamarians, who "go all naked and they scorn when they see any strange folk going clothed...they eat more gladly man's flesh than any other flesh...Thither go merchants and bring with them children to sell to [the Lamarians]...and if they be fat they eat [these children] anon"); p. 130 (the Tracodans, who "eat flesh of serpents, and they eat but little. And they speak nought but they hiss as serpents do").

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Flint, *op. cit.*, ref. on p. 144.

<sup>17</sup> For a description of the contents and provenance of *Of the Newe Lands*, see Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I: The Century of Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 163-164.

<sup>18</sup> See Jerome Cohen's discussion of this picture, "Monsters, Cannibalism, and the Fragile Body in Early England" (accessed May 28, 2008); available from <http://www.gwu.edu/~humsci/facpages/cannibal.html>. For an analysis of a well-known 19<sup>th</sup>-century version of this traveler's tale of pretended friendship, betrayal, and ritualized killing by a strange race, see Martine van Woerken's discussion of the cult of Thuggee. Martine van Woerken, and Catherine Tihanyi, transl., *The Strangled Traveler: Colonial Imaginings and the Thugs of India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> See Friedman, *op. cit.*, ch. 4.

<sup>20</sup> See Friedman, *id.*, pp. 8, 39. Cf. Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods", *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (January 1997): 103-142, p. 109. Both these sources point out that the monstrous races were also sometimes located in "Ethiopia", used as a general term for those parts of Africa known or imagined to be inhabited by black Africans. In this paper I concentrate on their location in the East.

<sup>21</sup> David Gordon White says that "the Alexander Romance, or the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, first composed in Alexandria before the fourth century, was the blockbuster bestseller of the entire Middle Ages," and "the prime vehicle for the medieval lore of the monstrous races." He claims that the descriptions of "barbarian tribes" in the *Romance* were conflated with the ancient "commonplace" of barbarian races who are walled off from the civilized world by a mountain

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range “running from the Caucasus in the West across all of Asia to an Eastern Sea, identified with the coast of India.” David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 52-54.

<sup>22</sup> The Middle East and portions of Asia Minor are probably the first areas in which Europeans had imperial interests. For this reason, among others, the contrast between European relations with the East and their relations with the Middle East, Asia Minor, and northern Africa during the same period is dramatic. Because the latter regions are and always have been part of the Mediterranean world, they are to my knowledge rarely if ever described as possible locations for the monstrous races. They are too close and too intertwined with European experience to serve that function, either before or after the rise of Islam.

<sup>23</sup> I have in mind here both the saints in the very early “Hairy Anchorite” tradition, as well as the individuals in somewhat later medieval tales, for example Orlando in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* who go mad from being spurned in love, or for other reasons. For a useful introduction to the early thematic of the “wild hairy anchorite”, see Roger Bartra, *Wild Men In the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 53f. See also Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men In The Middle Ages: A Study in art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 8. (Bernheimer actually thinks that, in the Middle Ages, the wild man is understood in general to be nothing more than a human being who has suffered some kind of (reversible) degeneration or derangement.)

<sup>24</sup> See Bartra, *ibid.*, p. 100f; Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), p. 3. Bartra summarizes the character of the wild man neatly as, “gloomy isolation, unrestrained aggression, and perverse lasciviousness.” *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> See Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 23; and Husband, *id.*, pp. 2, 119.

<sup>26</sup> In Shelly’s novel, “The Monster” lurks alone in the woods for several years, and first speaks with his creator in the Alps. Compare Sir Walter Scott’s use of the trope of the Wild Man in his story, “The Black Dwarf”, [online short story] (accessed February 23, 2009); available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1460>. The figure of the solitary Wild Man is powerfully persistent, as the contemporary myths of the solitary Bigfoot or Sasquatch should suggest. In fact, these creatures are often labeled “Wild Man” or “Wild Man of The Woods” in contemporary popular accounts, as even a casual search on the Web will verify.

<sup>27</sup> See Bartra, *op. cit.*, p. 104, and the woodcuts and engravings following; and Husband’s comments on late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century engravings of the wild family, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-133. On the medieval history of the image of the wild woman, see Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-40.

<sup>28</sup> Consider for example the medieval association of myrrh, one of the traditional gifts of the Magi to the infant Jesus, with the Far East. See Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 123-125.

<sup>29</sup> Nothing in my discussion should be taken to imply that “the East” was univocally or solely understood as the abode of the monstrous races. Thus the narrative, geographical, and social-political distance I have described also sustains a variety of other images of “the Orient.” In particular, the “Marvels of the East” tradition represented “the Orient” as containing fabulous wealth, exotic (but not monstrous) phenotypes, cultures and practices recognizable as variants on familiar European ones. The Prester John tradition and the notion that the earthly paradise lay in “the East” should also be mentioned. These images of a paradisiacal Orient form the main

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subject of discussion in Moffitt and Sebastián, *op. cit.* These images are sometimes mixed and blended into the imaginary of the monstrous races in the descriptions of groups like the *brahmani* or *bragmanni*, “a race of naked wise men who spend their days in caves,” discussed by Friedman, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 164-166.

<sup>30</sup> The alienness of the Turks—in contrast, say, with the familiarity of their Byzantine predecessors—has of course to do in large measure with their status as Muslims invading what is seen as a Christian world. See Robert I. Moore, *The Formation Of A Persecuting Society: Power And Deviance In Western Europe, 950-1250* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) on the integration of Christianity into European identity. In this respect, the rise of the Ottomans clearly redefines for Europeans of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century where “the East” begins, as Asia Minor is transformed from a place of trade and quotidian interaction and into a site of military conflict. But an examination of the place of Islam and the Ottoman Empire on European conceptions of the Other must await another occasion.

<sup>31</sup> J.A. Giles, transl. & ed., *Matthew Paris’s English History from the year 1235 to 1273* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), vol. I, pp. 312-313. This vivid description is accompanied by a lurid woodcut, frequently reprinted, of Tatar cannibalism and rapine. See Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 282-287. Cf. Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 192-194.

<sup>32</sup> I am told that there are still seaside villages in Italy where small children are induced to come in from the shore with the admonition that, “it’s getting dark, and if you don’t come in the Turks will eat you.” (“*Ti mangiano i turchi.*”) It is claimed by some sources that Allied soldiers were told by their commanders during the Gallipoli campaign in World War I: “If the Turks catch you they will eat you.” “The Gallipoli Campaign 1915: All the King’s Men and 1/5 Norfolk Regiment”, (accessed May 28, 2008), available from: <http://www.canakkale.gen.tr/eng/closer/closer.html>.

<sup>33</sup> The very absence of references to phenotype in Matthew of Paris’s description confirms this.

<sup>34</sup> See Bartra, *op. cit.*, pp. 81, 134. At the same time, the inevitable accompaniment of deforestation during the period in question is the near-eradication of wolves, the most powerful living representative of the wildness of the forest. This is particularly dramatic in Britain, where, notoriously, Edward I ordered in 1281 the extermination of all wolves in England. It appears that they did indeed become more and more scarce after this time. On the other hand, it must be said that the eradication or radical reduction in wolf populations occurred much later—indeed, into the 19<sup>th</sup> century—in many other parts of Europe, including Germany, which is the source of many of the early woodcuts and drawings under discussion. See *New York Times*, May 25, 2001 (accessed May 29, 2008); available from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E07E6D6133AF936A15752C1A9679C8B63>.

<sup>35</sup> “City”, *Encyclopedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite* [CD-ROM] (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> See for example materials cited above, n. 10. Flint confirms that Columbus read and annotated a copy of Pierre d’Ailly’s widely-distributed compilation, *Imago Mundi*, published between 1480 and 1483. *Op. cit.*, p. 54. She comments that Columbus’ annotations evince his particular interest in cannibalism among the monstrous races.

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<sup>37</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the earliest relevant uses as follows: “1548-9 *Compl. Scot.* x. (1872) 82 To preue that scotland vas ane colone of ingland quhen it vas fyrst inhabit. 1555 *Eden Decades* II. I. 56 (fr. Latin of Peter Martyr 1516), Vppon the bankes. . . they [Pizarro, etc.] entended to playnte their newe colonie or habitacion. *Ibid.* 252 (fr. Italian) Which thyng they [Christian Princes] myght easely brynge to passe by assignynge colonies to inhabite dyuers places of that hemispherie, in lyke maner as dyd the Romanes in provinces newly subdued.” Even the English use of the term in descriptions of Greek or Roman settlements is documented by only one reference prior to this time. Edmund C. Weiner and John Simpson, eds., *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), hereinafter *OED*.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Columbus’ description of his very first landfall in Tyler, *op. cit.* n. 7, p. 37-38.

<sup>39</sup> The absurdity of reading such a document to Indians who spoke neither Spanish nor Latin was too much even for the Spaniards, and the practice was abandoned before the end of the period under discussion. A Spanish-language version of the *requerimiento* may be found at: Luis Lopez Nieves, “Requerimiento [Ficción jurídica: Texto completo] Monarquía Española, Redactado por Juan López de Palacios” (accessed May 29, 2008); available from <http://www.ciudadseva.com/textos/otros/requeri.htm>. An English translation is given by *Wikipedia*: “Requerimiento” (accessed May 29, 2008); available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Requerimiento>.

<sup>40</sup> The visual images represent the humanity of the Indians very clearly and unambiguously, as the included representations should indicate, even though contemporary commentators of the early the encounter remain divided on the question of their humanity. Needless to say there are other, conflicting images of the Indians, for example in Columbus’ and Las Casas’ well-known portrayals of the Caribbean Indians as innocent and childlike. Fairly early versions of the image of the “noble savage” may also be found. I do not discuss the construction of those images of the “childlike savage” or “noble savage” here, nor their complex interweaving with the images of the “bestial savage”, which strictly speaking is our topic here.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Hulme points out that the very act of violent resistance to the establishment of trading outposts and colonies was often regarded by early Europeans as a violation of the *jus gentium*, which required all nations to allow free entry and access to peaceful trading expeditions. Thus by resisting European settlement, the Indians placed themselves outside the protection of the law of the peoples. *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen & Co., 1986), pp. 161f. As Hulme intimates, this argument was made by Francisco de Vitoria, the great natural lawyer and a well-known defender of the rights of the Indians, among others. See Dickason, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131 for a succinct summary of de Vitoria’s views on these matters.

<sup>42</sup> Compare Hulme’s analysis of how the 1622 massacre of Virginia colonists is understood by contemporaries as a slaughter of the natural inhabitants of the land by the Indians, who are cast as “unnatural Naturalls.” ), *id.* p. 160. Hulme seems to me to miss the point, however, since he thinks that this reversal of the roles of native people and intruding colonists is only made possible by the massacre. It seems to me on the contrary that it is impossible to understand the response of writers like Samuel Purchas to the massacre (quoted by Hulme) unless one posits that, prior to this event, the English already saw themselves as the true “Naturalls” or native inhabitants of the land.



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<sup>43</sup> Quoted by Hulme, *id.*, pp. 158. It is noteworthy that the wild man is usually conceived as having no property or possessions.

<sup>44</sup> See Husband's brief discussion of this image and the relation between the wild man and the werewolf, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> Compare Patrick Brantlinger's brilliant analysis of a much later European understanding of the logic of extermination in his *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> The *OED*, *op. cit.* n. 34, records 1588 as the first time the term is used in this way, contemporaneous with its first use as an adjective to describe "uncivilized" persons. Other related uses in reference to persons, character, or behavior are either contemporaneous as well, or later.

<sup>47</sup> See the *OED* entry on "Race n<sup>2</sup>", *op. cit.* Ivan Hannaford provides detailed examples of the use of the term as it evolves from older meanings in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of An Idea in The West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 175ff.

<sup>48</sup> See for example the evidence cited in Hannaford, *id.*, chs. 1-5. Hannaford himself claims that the idea arises in the early modern period, but he appears to conflate the question of when the concept originated with the question of when the relevant usage of the term began.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Columbus says of the people of Hispaniola: "Both sexes were handsomer than any they had hitherto seen, their color light, and, if clothed and guarded from the sun and air, would be nearly as fair as the inhabitants of Spain." quoted in S. Lyman Tyler's edition of Columbus' log, *op. cit.* n. 7, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> *City of God*, [book on-line] (accessed February 23, 2009); <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120116.htm>; Book XVI, ch. 8. See Friedman's discussion of this passage, *id.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>52</sup> The project of Europeanization has its counterparts in Europe itself, most obviously in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain, where the *reconquista* involves the re-socialization and, of course, religious "re-education" of Jewish and Muslim populations. See below n. 51.

<sup>53</sup> For a history of one of the early explicit attempts at Europeanization and the general 16<sup>th</sup>-century response, see Lewis Hanke's account of Las Casas' unsuccessful efforts to establish utopian Indian communities in Hispaniola and Cuba. Lewis Hanke, *First Social Experiments in America: A Study in The Development of Spanish Indian Policy in The Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935).

<sup>54</sup> A parallel understanding obviously defines much of the trajectory of the Europeanization project in Spain, as the contemporaneous development of the idea of *limpieza de sangre* (literally, "purity of blood") shows. The descendants of converted Jews are excluded from public office and most universities in Spain at least through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, merely on the grounds that they carry something "in the blood" that cannot be altered even by centuries of "civilized" behavior.

<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, in many parts of Latin America today someone who has lost their temper will say, "*Me salió el Indio*"—"The Indian in me came out."

<sup>56</sup> On the medieval and modern history of the idea of the inherited curse, see Hannaford, *op. cit.* n. 41, pp. 91f.

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<sup>57</sup> In the case of the Indians at least, the trope of skin color is sometimes employed to mark this inward continuity in monstrosity. Though Indians are almost universally not seen as black by Europeans of the period under discussion, they are nonetheless almost always marked as different in appearance from the Europeans themselves, who in this period are paradigmatically seen as white, whether they be English, Spanish, or Portuguese. Notice that here I am speaking of the deployment of this trope with respect to those non-European peoples who are not seen as “black.” Columbus and other early European explorers often contrast the bronze or “red” color of American Indians (and Canary Islanders) with the black color of Africans. During his first encounter with the Taino in October of 1492, Columbus says, “...they are of the color of the Canary Islanders, neither black nor white....None of them are black....” Regarding the Taino women of Hispaniola, he remarks in a December, 1492 entry that, “As to beauty, [Columbus’] men stated that they exceeded the [women of the other islands] beyond comparison, both men and women being of a much lighter color, and that two young females were seen as white as could be found in Spain.” Tyler, *op. cit.* n. 7, pp. 38-39, 73. In contrast, at least since the late medieval era—and perhaps well before—those who are seen as having black skin are often placed thereby beyond the pale of humanity. The significance of black skin in the history of race is of course a complex matter, deserving of its own study. See my “Images of Africans and Blackness in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe”, in Peggy Zeglin Brand, ed., *Beauty Revisited* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming 2009).