



OF CANNIBALS AND WITCHES

Monstrosity and Capitalism at the Onset of Colonial Visual Culture

INTRODUCTION

When Christopher Columbus arrived in Abya Yala, he was smitten by the barefooted, naked population he found there. ‘Naked,’ we must say, between high commas, since, as it is widely known, Amerindians are master of indumenta, embellishing themselves with plumes, pigments, piercing jewels and exquisite head garments. How can one be naked, dressed up in such a fashion? As Oswald de Andrade (2017) would declare in his 1925 poem *Erro de português* [Portuguese error]:

When the Portuguese arrived
Underneath a brute rain,
He dressed up the Indian,
What a shame!
Were it a sunny morning,
The Indian would have undressed the Portuguese.¹

The Portuguese, and, of course, the Spanish, Venetian, and European error in general, expressed itself in the carrying of their own ways of seeing. And, with that, the long and painful visual history of the now-called America, began. The Amerindian cul-

1. Quando o português chegou/debaixo duma bruta chuva/vestiu o índio/que pena!/fosse uma manhã de sol/o índio tinha despido o português (free translation by the author).

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tural practices that, deprived, even, of such a name, were seen by the Europeans as the expression and proof of the long-imagined existence of Earthly delights, savages, wildmen, anthropophagi, and monstrous civilizations. But they acquired a particular meaning, as these practices were increasingly connected to the phenomenal, i.e., material, concrete, existence of the native body, and became tightly connected to the colonial endeavor. Initially, this is expressed in the cartographic production of the Late Middle Ages, and, later on, in the names given to the 'discovered' locations within the continent: the Caribbean, the Amazons, Patagonia (Braham, 2016; 2017), that is, the cannibals, the monstrous race of lady warriors, the big-footed giants, as well as, as we shall see further ahead, the depiction of female individuals, especially.

Monstrosity, it seems, has long lingered in the European imaginary of Latin-America. As I intend to show, this process was constructed through a visual composition and interpretation of the Amerindian reality through European ways of seeing. By this, I mean the manner and fashion through which 'we' choose, consciously or not, what to see as much as how we see it (Berger, 2008). It means, also, the way we decide to portray, register, and interpret that which is seen. We do so, for a start, informed by our own trajectory, social formation, symbolic universe, and political stance. That is the case with colonial visual culture.

IMAGES OF AMERICA IN LATE MEDIEVAL CARTOGRAPHY

Lands beyond the limits of the world known to Europeans were imagined throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages. If we are to understand how colonial visual culture was built, we must go back to the marvelous imaginary of the medieval man. Thereza B. Baumann (1992) provides us with an interesting line of thought regarding the origins of the imagery of the Americas. According to her, it is in the cartographic depictions of the world that we will find the European imagination of alterity. Tightly connected to Late Antiquity and Medieval theological thought, lands beyond the limits known by the European were dreamt of as promised lands. The Indies were, of course, a promise of Paradise, of Heaven on Earth, the proof of Christian eschatology and of eternal life, as promised by the Holy Scriptures. The *Imago Mundi* that proliferated throughout European

culture until the late Middle Ages is the first clue to understand how the European colonizer begin to imagine 'the beyond,' and is connected to an imaginary regarding 'the other.'

In search of a terrestrial Paradise, the Europeans, especially the Iberians, set out to discover the Indies, to find the Promised Land within this our world, something long imagined and theorized by theologians. The encounter between the European and the native

projects [...] a past time, which boundaries are the imaginary instances of the conquistador. A time that we may understand as one of gestation, during which a worldview that included the existential possibility of an "other" being, as well as of another geographic space would be built. (Baumann, 1992: 58)

Such time and space would not be erected from a concrete reality, but from an inverse process, in which the imaginary itself, the symbolic world, would oversee representation.

When one looks back at Medieval culture, specifically on the Iberian peninsula, one must bear in mind the religious character of the time. It is of course, necessary not to ignore the not-so-clear distinction between historical periods, remembering that historical transformations happen within long durations, and changes juxtapose one another not by complete rupture, but, instead, by a dialectical relation. As Max Horkheimer (2010), for instance, discusses, Late Medieval culture was marked precisely by this critical overcoming of theological political hegemony to early humanistic worldviews and proto-scientific epistemologies. That being, the dynamics of medieval society is tightly connected to religious doctrines and epistemologies, in such a way that the Medieval man sees himself and the world through the lenses of Christianity.

Pictorially, we may find the medieval worldview expressed in cartographies produced in the Late Middle Ages. As Baumann (1992) affirms, one may discern three medieval cartographic traditions that extend until the 16th century: first, the "ecumenical" type, which synthetically expressed a cohesion between the otherworld and ours; the second type would be the hemispheric, deriving from Crates' globe and presenting the world divided into two hemispheres, the North, which included the three known continents (Europe, Asia and Africa), and the South, 'terra

incognita.’ The third tradition would have developed in the 11th and 12th centuries, uniting elements from the precedent traditions and inserting an ethnocentric element, as the world was elaborated from the viewpoint of the author, mixing sacred and mundane geographies, and including the unknown, ‘terra incognita,’ as the space of danger, Gog and Magog, perhaps, as obstacles on the way of the Promised Land. Together, these traditions expressed theological, philosophical, and cosmographical theories of the Medieval man, and would become its main iconographic source. They do not represent the world as such, the factuality of the physical world, but Creation; they represent the quintessence of the world, incorporating the mythical repertoire, yes, but progressively adjoining acquired knowledge.

In these images, the Middle Ages created the space for the marvelous. *Hic sunt monstra* is the phrase inscribed in many maps of the Late Middle Ages, meaning that “here, in this place, there is something yet to show itself,” whether the color of the people, their language, their size, their sexual ambiguity, their dangerous and fabulous animal companions. The world is yet to be discovered, but the Medieval man is beware of its many dangers and obstacles, so it had been told by the fables of Aesop, the myth of Hercules, the quest for the Holy Grail, the Journey of Saint Brendan, and the Bible. In the great beyond of the known world, the “other” finds progressive representation, at first in the cartographic traditions of the Middle Ages and begins to be imagined as detainer of “fabulous riches, extraordinary beauty, horrifying ugliness, or supernatural gifts. It is both angel, and demon, monster, cynocephalus, mandragora, or, simply, ‘Indian’” (Baumann, 1992: 66–67). Monstrosity, then, exists, and is transposed to Abya Yala even before the arrival of the European.

EARLY DEPICTIONS OF AMERINDIANS: THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF EUROPEAN VOYAGES

“How did it happen, that whole regions of Latin America [...] are named for the monstrous races [...]?” asks Persephone Braham (2016: 62). Having quickly discussed how unknown and imagined lands beyond the limits of European knowledge were represented, we can start to think of such matter by going back to Colum-

bus. Upon arrival, as Colombian Anthropologist Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona (2017) shows, the European imaginary was mostly expressed through the letters written and sent by explorers. Therefore, they were textual, written accounts of the findings of the New World, descriptions of the lands and people who were long imagined, and now, known by the Iberian enterprise. As these letters were published, they were coupled with engravings that illustrated and endorsed the narratives there contained. This was, perhaps, the origin of Latin-American visual culture *per se*. From there on, textual narratives would be paired to pictorial representations, expanding the gaze of the observer, and expressing, in a broader sense, the interpretation of the reality encountered by the Europeans.

The problem with this cannot be resumed in the simple fact that, evidently, Europeans were informed by their own Judaeo-Christian ideology, imbued with moralistic tales of hellish perdition fueled by a conservative Counter-Reformation Papacy. We must also turn our gaze to the visual production of the time, which helped propel the meaning of Amerindian reality. We can begin to explore this matter once we know that the first illustrations of the European voyage to Abya Yala were made through second-hand accounts. The first artists to depict the voyages of Columbus and Vespucci, whom letters had been printed in book form, never really set foot in America.

Again, it is Chicangana-Bayona (2017), who reminds us that the first images of the New World natives relate to the description of Columbus' arrival to the island of Hispaniola, showing Taino people seemingly hiding behind trees and slopes next to two European figures, sent to disembark and make contact with the natives of the island (see fig. 1).

Upon closer look, however, it becomes evident that the woodcut image is prior to Columbus's trip, something that can be observed by the attributes within the image: first, the clearly Oriental, perhaps Turkish, shape of the hats, and the presence of a galley, instead of a caravel, which was used in the Atlantic crossing. At the same time, the banners of the kingdoms of Aragon and León, hoisted on the galley, and the superior subtitle naming the location as Hispaniola, bares the testimony that the image, though pre-existent, was readdressed and edited. This mere fact points out that the first images of the New World were, indeed, reproductions of pre-existent images, something usual in the late 15th century. Back then, one can

say that representations had no need for a similarity effect; they did not need to bare resemblance to the things represented. Even if they came closer to contextual matter-of-factness, as in the case of the Florentine edition of Columbus' letters from 1493, showing the three caravels used in the voyage, they still lacked in similarity regarding the natives, unable to depict any ethnic particularity, showing the Tainos covered in leaf skirts and bearded (the same image, by the way, was used in the Basel edition of Vespucci's letters in 1506).

This example shows us how the first depictions of the New World were, in fact, an expression of pre-existing visual conventions, as well as one of a completely different epistemology from that which would later be constructed regarding the visual representation of colonial society. It shows us, too, that the early Renaissance man was still infused with the Medieval imaginary which, on its turn, was a late representation of Antiquity, specifically translated into Christian-theological thought. That is why, for instance, we see the 1505 depiction of "Indians from the New World" represented precisely as medieval wildmen, or, in close relation to such archetype, Adam and Eve.

The trend to portray Amerindians as *homo silvestris* reflects the imaginative ethnographies of the 15th and 16th centuries, which pictured humans in a certain state of nature. One must not forget that we are temporally located in the passage of the Middle Ages to Renaissance, which dislocated the explanation of worldly life from the heavens to earth or, in other words, a passage from a theological explanation and dominion of knowledge to a humanistic and scientific one, giving rise to theories such as Hobbes' state of nature, Machiavelli's Prince, or Vico's thought on history and politics. As such, the image of the *homo silvestris* populated the Medieval and early Renaissance imaginaries as the prototypes of human savage life. It is important to note that, at first, such borrowing did not ascribe a sense of savagery as barbarity to the Amerindian, as indicated by Chicangana-Bayona (2017); the *homo silvestris* is an essentially European category, but its image, its appearance, its pictorial depiction, with the long fuzzy hair and beard, not seldom displaying a hairy body, seems to have provided enough elements for it to become a visual model for the early depiction of Amerindians² (see figs 2 & 3).

2. We cannot trace a robust comparative set of examples within the scope of this article, but we may cite images contained in the German edition

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Fig. 1. "Columbus disembarks at Hispaniola." Woodcut. *Letter from Columbus*. Basel edition, 1493. Wikicommons.

of the letters of Amerigo Vespucci, at The British Library, or in the *Voyages of Marco Polo*, Bodleian Manuscript 264, at the Bodleian Library, both of which make a pictorial connection between the wildmen and the Amerindians.



Fig. 2. Jean Bourdichon, *Les Quatre États de la Société* [L'Homme sauvage ou l'État de Nature]. XVIème siècle. Beaux-Arts de Paris, Wikicommons.

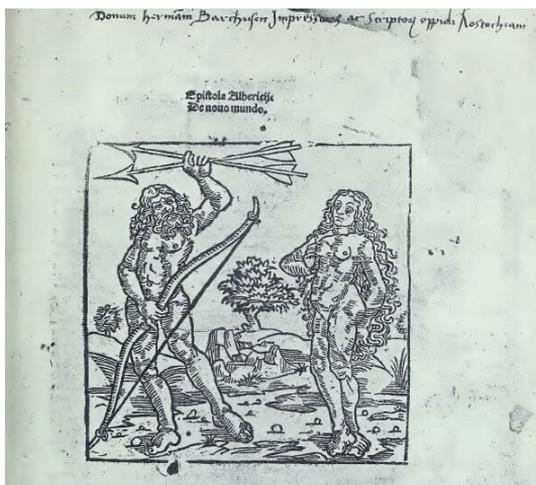


Fig. 3. "Couple of Indians from the New World." Woodcut. *Mundus Novus*. Rostock Edition, 1505.

With the passage of time, as reports and political and theological relations with and from the Americas grew, the native started to be less and less represented solely as a sort of imagetic *tabula rasa*. Their bodies, always deprived of local specificities, started to be more particular. Women started to be depicted maternally, sometimes resembling a type of Eve, which soon would imply luxuriousness and danger, and the landscape, too, was progressively introduced within the illustration, though not in a realistic manner. An important fact would, it seems, be key for a change in the depiction of Amerindians: that of anthropophagy.

Anthropophagy was a well-known habit. In Antiquity, anthropophagi were thought to live beyond the limits of the 'civilized,' i.e., Hellenistic, world: Scythia, Ethiopia, 'the Orient.' Inherited by Latin culture, the fantastic imaginary of unknown places was populated by monstrous races of barbarous habits. The thirteenth century *Arnstein Bible* depicts the worldview of the medieval man, portraying a geographic and ethnic division of the world. The document bears witness to the ongoing teratological tradition compiled in natural histories (which were not, and are not to be taken as scientific thought), ever since Antiquity: monstrous people with no head, faces attached to their chest or back, people with earlobes long enough to cover them, people with inverted feet or with dog heads, people with but one eye, whose figures expressed their conformation contrary to the order of nature.

This conception has been, of course, changed, challenged, and negotiated throughout time, but it had been present throughout time since Classical Antiquity, in works such as in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, and Augustin's *City of God*. In some way, it is the same conception we see in vogue during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, both in the 1634 *Traité des monstres*, by Fortunio Liceti, and in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (Lemire, 2017), which draw back to the Protestant enlargement of a moralizing of nature, understood as a part of the Revelation, and to Luther's idea of Monstrosity as a sign of catastrophe. In the same sixteenth century, Conrad Lycosthenes, an Alsatian scholar, would declare monsters as "things that have an appearance beyond the course

of nature”³ (*apud*. Lemire, 2017: sc. 376). Throughout the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, monstrosity becomes increasingly connected to the body proper, and to an accident of nature. One sees the recurrence presence of the hermaphrodite, for instance, in different medical and religious processes, connecting the idea of monstrosity not exclusively to a type of physical deformity or handicap, but to habits. Again, with Laurent Lemire (2017), one may cite cases such as those of Antide Collas, a woman with male habits, Marie le Marcis, who went through a religious and criminal process in 1601 for having the same ‘behavior,’ or, later, in 1761, the couple Françoise Lambert and Grand-Jean, the latter who was intersex, but judged as dominantly female by court, and forced to divorce and renounce to masculine gender performance. With these examples, we notice how, more than the physics, moral personality comes into play.

As such, the meaning of monstrosity is progressively reformulated throughout time, increasingly combining its marvelousness—physical and metaphysical—present ever since Antiquity, to its moral, religious meaning. This relationship, though only quickly presented, may explain how the visual culture of Iberian America originated; if, at first, the imaginary of the unknown world is cartographically depicted by making use of pre-existent conceptions of “the other,” the arrival of Europeans to Abya Yala set forth a new articulation of sources within this same tradition. If Amerindians were depicted by a reproduction of old illustrations largely based on religious and folkloric images of Adam, Eve, and wildmen, as social relations between native and invader deepened, the morality of European culture was quickly introduced in the matter, as the depictions of these natives progressively transformed from a physical imagined monstrosity to a moral one. This is clear if we look specifically at the depiction of the Amerindian woman, especially in its connection to anthropophagy and in the ways their bodies are signified.

One may notice the changes undergone the depiction of Amerindians in the works of Theodor de Bry. Born in 1528, de Bry was a Liègeois Protestant who became known for his engravings

3. *Chose qui apparaissent outre les cours de la nature* (free translation by the author).

of the voyage of Hans Staden to present-day Ubatuba, in the coast of São Paulo. As Chicangana-Bayona (2017) shows, he, too, used pre-existing depictions of Staden's text to come up with his images. Only, he did so by refining them, and emphasizing particular aspects of the happenings described in the report, especially the ritual of anthropophagy and the female role in it (figs. 4, 5 & 6). With de Bry, we see the Amerindian woman becoming a protagonist. Women are always present in his images: they pamper the captive who will be devoured, dance around him, clean his body, and wander about in crazy furor, biting their hands and arms, seemingly desperate for meat; one of them does so while subtly approaching one hand to her genitals. While such gestures are reproduced in the images of other artists, like Thevet, Delaune and Jean de Léry, they happen in depictions of war and battles between Amerindians, whereas in de Bry's images, they are put in the forefront of a clear, situational context.

Despite possible different interpretations, it is curious to notice that the gesture of biting one's own hand had been present before, a century earlier, in Fra Angelico's *Final Judgement* (image 7), connected to the sin of rage and, in the context of colonialism, gluttony.

The direct connection between this habit and the female figure points to the above-mentioned moralization of the human body, which, informed by Neoplatonism, implies that the body, understood as a sensible form, expresses the essence of the being. In the first century of European presence in Abya Yala, the Late Medieval imaginary started to mix with the Early Renaissance forms, which rescued Classicist epistemology by expressing it visually through mathematical anatomy and perspective. The female figure plays an important part in the emergence of this new art. Voluptuous bodies and long hair are central elements for the depiction of femininity crowned by, amongst others, Alberti's work on painting. The attributes ascribed to women endorse the Classical reference, but also the Biblical one, and the *schemata* of female images would refer both to Artemis, the goddess of love, and Eve, and, with it, the surreptitious morality of their essences. Ever since the Middle Ages, Eve, for instance, was a counterpoint to the Virgin Mary, a symbol of purity. Her image, therefore, links the long-haired, voluptuous woman to the Fall, to sin.



Fig. 4. Theodore De Bry, "Porridge Preparation." Metal engraving. In *America Tertia Pars*, Frankfurt, 1592.

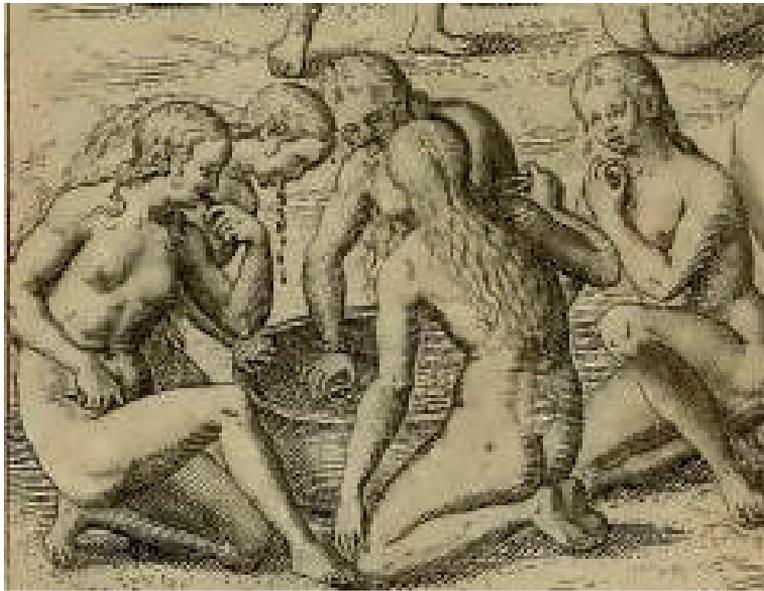


Fig. 5. "Porridge Preparation," detail.



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Fig. 6. Theodore de Bry, "Hans Staden watches the preparation of a victim's corpse." Metal engraving. In. *America Tertia Pars*, Frankfurt, 1592.

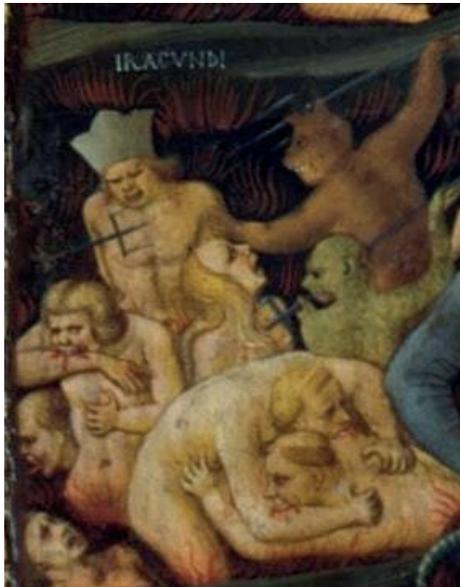


Fig. 7. Fra Angelico, c. 1395. *Final Judgement* (detail of the Sin of Rage) .
Gemäldigegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

[The] association between the indigenous women and Eve is not gratuitous, being connected to a negative connotation, such as temptation and luxuriousness. That is why the “new Eve” natives have an active participation in the images depicting cannibalistic rituals. (Chicangana-Bayona, 2017, p. 139)

As such, to the figure of the Amerindian woman depicted through classicist *schemata*, artists such as de Bry added a negative connotation insinuated by the biblical narrative. Yet, the engendering of political meaning within the female image did not end there. Prior to the time during which the letters of Vespucci, and Columbus were being illustrated, or de Bry, de Léry, Thevet or Delaune were structuring a more meaningful and interpretational visual culture of the colonial enterprise, the Northern European tradition had also developed a set of denotative and connotative symbolisms that ascribed a particularity to the female figure.

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Hans Baldung (c. 1485–1545) were Northern Masters whose work involved gothic symbolism and mysticism in the passage between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In both cases, female figures were highly suggestible of eroticism, counting with great ambiguity, something that can be observed, also, in the works of Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538) and Lucas Cranach (1472–1553). In the Northern tradition, the political and theological symbolism of the woman as a perpetual reminder of ‘the fall,’ incorporating the beauty and sensuality of Eve, encounters the early Renaissance revivalism of Classical standards and are transposed to the Amerindian woman. In this movement, the representation of the Amerindian woman is shifted from a sort of being living in a “natural state,” to a deceptive, erotic being, beautiful as Artemis, but dangerous as Eve, in the prime of their age, until they become hexes, monstrous old ladies who keep on biting their own arm, delighting in cannibal feasts. The hex appears, then, as another form of representing the female native.

In Dürer’s images, for instance, the hexes follow pictorial models that represented humankind’s ages of life, and the mythological *Graces*. They are, as such, represented both young and old, sensual and erotic, in the former, and deceptive and child-eating, in the latter. Hexes were associated with luxuriousness and gluttony. Since they were devil worshippers, their beauty was, of course, deceptive,

and, as Chicangana-Bayona (2017) observes, they were connected to Hippocrates' theory of humors, specifically the black bile, which, once unbalanced in the organism, caused melancholy, turning people who suffered from it into great minds, but also easily giving in to the worse kinds of vices. The regent planet of such melancholy was Saturn, whose nocturnal house is the star-sign of Capricorn, which representation is usually the same as that of the devil; 'the unbalance of humors would explain the vengeful fury of the cannibal and the vicious tendencies of the hex and, consequently, of the woman.' (Chicangana-Bayona, 2017: 145). In a context when women were persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike, accused of heresy and witchcraft, it seems rather logical that the meaning of "womanhood," of being a woman, could easily be transposed to colonial territories. The naked, long-haired, classically beautiful Amerindian women mirrored humanity's fall into temptation, and the decrepit, saggy-bosomed, old women were a proof of the deceptive beauty of the native which, in turn, had to be avoided (figs. 8, 9 & 10).

It is interesting to observe, however, that the depictions of both young and old Amerindian women, but especially those of the elderly, does not always match the written reports. This is the case with Staden's writings, where no difference is made between ages. Jean de Léry's, however, whose text would serve as the base for de Bry's images, makes explicit reference to the habits of the elderly women. This is the case, too, in the *Chronica da Companhia de Jesus*, written by Simão de Vasconcelos, a Jesuit priest from Porto, who even compares them to the mythical harpies (cf. Chicangana-Bayona, 2017: 147 and further). In these differences, we see the rise of protagonism in elderly women, which provides us with interesting reflections on the ideology permeating the pictorial production of colonial visual culture. There are contradictory accounts on the role of men and women in the anthropophagous rituals, and the images produced many times go against such accounts, increasingly showing women as nothing but negative. The Amerindian woman is not only progressively turned into a protagonist of colonial reality, but also increasingly connected to the sins of lust, luxuriousness, and gluttony, as well as to the image of Eve and of the hex.



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Fig. 8. Theodor de Bry, "Cumana Amerindian bringing gifts to the prefect." Metal engraving. In. *Americae Pars Quarta*. Frankfurt, 1594.

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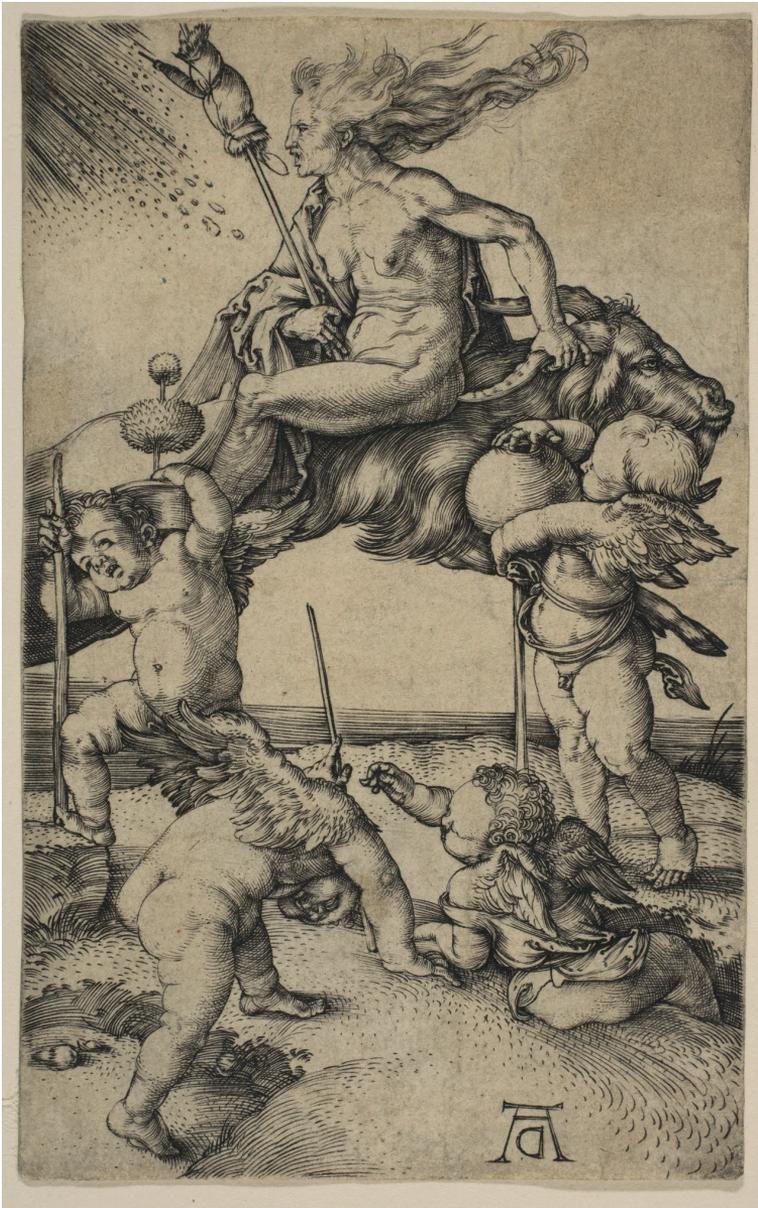


Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer. c. 1500. *The Hex*. Woodcut, 11,4 x 7,1cm. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



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Fig. 10. Hans Baldung, 1541-1544. *The Ages and Death* . Oil on wood, 151 x 61 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

There are many possible examples one may look at to inquire and speculate on the origins of a colonial visual culture in Brazil. As discussed in the opening of this article, an idea of monstrosity permeated the imaginary of *terra incognita* ever since the Middle Ages and, perhaps, Antiquity, which can be testified by cartographic history. Believing to have arrived in the Indies, European man quickly began exploring the people he found in Abya Yala by portraying them according to such imaginary. At first, these were portrayed as mostly docile people, living in a state of nature that could easily be thought of as belonging to an Earthly Paradise. As time went on, the increasing amount of information and the deepening of social relations between the Amerindian and the European provided further elements for a new set of attributes and symbolisms to be ascribed to the former, who began to be portrayed not only as wild, “natural” humans, but closer and closer to the monstrosity referred to unknown people throughout European history.

Assuming that the European who arrived in Abya Yala was a man passing through a cultural shift, which convention taught us to indicate as that of the passing from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, we have taken the image of the Amerindian woman to quickly discuss how the Amerindian—and Abya Yala itself—was visually unified and conformed through negativity, as a mirror of European Judaeo-Christian morality and eschatology.

Anthropophagy, later called ‘cannibalism,’ a term derived from the name of the Carib people whose habit of eating human flesh was informed to Columbus by the Tainos, became a central moral reference in the accounts of travelers. It allowed Europeans to certify the Amerindians as monstrous, amoral, Godless people, much like the ancient accounts and maps of distant lands and people. The reality of this habit became present in many pictorial accounts, sometimes contradicting the written ones, and Theodor de Bry’s works provides us with one interesting example of how, in the building of a colonial visual culture, cannibalism turned into a reference for the creation of an imaginary exclusively dedicated to the colonial territories. This is clear, as we have quickly discussed, by the increasing protagonism of female figures, who transpose, in their attitudes and body language, a sense of negativity, danger,

sinfulness, and death. If men were portrayed as savage Apollos, women were pictured as lustful, beauty-deceptive hexes, eager for blood and human flesh. Young or old, women became inscribed with the sign of sin and devilishness.

As a closing remark to this exploratory essay, although not being possible to retrace an overarching trajectory of colonial imagery in the first century of the Iberian colonial enterprise, de Bry's work seems to be a rich ground for exploring the beginning of a visual culture proper to colonial territories. Besides his history of the exploration of the Brazilian colony, in *Americae Tertia Pars* (1592a), his *Americae Pars Quarta* (1594a), dedicated to the voyages of Girolamo Benzoni, reinforces the meaning conveyed in the portrayal of Amerindians and, more specifically, of the Amerindian woman. The attention to cannibalism, and to the role of women in it—whether real or not—engenders a symbolism that would be endorsed over and over regarding Amerindian reality. The key, in this exploration would be understanding why it is the woman, specifically, that is progressively put in the center of attention.

The path opened by such preliminary exploration points to the relationship between the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the colonial endeavor. How the visual expresses and produces the surreptitious ideology present in the historical development of the productive forces seems to be the key in understanding how the European created a visual culture for the colonized territories. In this sense, Karl Marx (2011) and Silvia Federici (2004) provide us with important reflections on the history of modernity and the development of capitalism, there included colonialism and gendered relationships. In his analysis of the process of primitive accumulation of capital, Marx emphasizes the distinction made in political economy between two different kinds of property: one based on the producer's own work, and one grounded in the exploitation of someone else's labor. If the process of primitive accumulation had (somewhat) ended in Europe, in the colonies reality was rather different. There, the capitalist regime stumbled upon different productive relations which allowed the capitalist to understand further the capitalist relations in their home country. In short, colonialism was in service of ameliorating the capitalist process within capitalist societies, something that could

not have been accomplished by the exploitation of alienated work in the colonies themselves, through the creation of a massive wage class that could not be allocated in European internal market. As such, colonialism was an experiment in exploiting the surplus of salaried workers that could not find a place in the market, and it also allowed Europeans to create a new mass of potential laborers who could explore the New World, under European surveillance, bringing back the riches to the continent under the auspices of a capitalist. Colonialism was, then, an economic solution fueled and dressed by a proto-humanistic and late-theological mission of civilization and completion of the Gospels. If culturally, as it was assumed here, the colonial endeavor was comprised by a Late-Medieval culture, then, economically, this too fits, as we see in such endeavor the movement that would substantiate the completion of the primitive accumulation of capital and, with it, the consolidation of capitalism *per se*.

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But there is more than purely political economy for understanding the grounding of colonial visual culture as it has been discussed here—and, again, we reaffirm the early, exploratory and speculative character of this reflection. If Marx provides us with the infrastructural settings of the colonial endeavor, it is Federici (2004) who expands this to everyday life and cultural reality of the Late Middle Ages in the onset of primitive accumulation, showing us how gender, and the erasure of women from Feudal society, was central for the beginning of the expropriation of labor in Europe, setting the foundations for the phenomena explored by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy*. In her seminal work of historical anthropology, *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici shows how the creation of capitalist workforce was accomplished by the changes occurred within the social position of women in the Late Middle Ages, for which the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (which happened not only in Europe, but in the Americas as well) was central, adding to the expropriation of land and the colonial enterprise.

With these observations, the path opened by this preliminary exploration of colonial visual culture unfolds into an overarching question relating to the colonial process itself in light of the development of capitalism. But it does so by pointing out to the need

for understanding culture as part and parcel of the development of productive forces. The unfolding of colonial European imagery seems to mirror—in expressive correspondence (see Benjamin 1999)—the development of European colonialism not ‘because of’ capitalist political economy, but ‘as a part of’ it, retroactively produced by, and producing it. It is still necessary to further explore, under a materialist perspective, the relationship between colonialism and primitive accumulation, on the one side, and visual culture and early Amerindian-European contact, on the other. Nonetheless, in this article, I have focused on providing readers with introductory historical and anthropological sources that allow grounding a preliminary take on the issues comprising a subject that has not yet been explored to exhaustion.

As a concluding remark, the ideas developed in this short essay allow us to state that there seems to be a linear—if not evolutionary—rationale present in European epistemology, which, inheriting the imaginary of late Antiquity and Medieval marvelousness, engenders an increasingly derogatory and racialized depiction of Amerindian reality. Representing the Amerindian close to the medieval wildmen, living in a state of nature, European visual culture quickly gave central position to the female figure, moralizing Amerindian reality according to Judeo-Christian theology, imbuing such a figure with teratological meaning, a process that can be testified by de Bry’s work by the late sixteenth-century. These processes seem to be tightly connected with Marxist thinking on the development of capitalism, as observed by Karl Marx and Silvia Federici, and further exploration on such topics will provide further understanding on how America was invented, not discovered; a place inhabited by and named after monsters, waiting to show themselves, for the horror of the white man.

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