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Africans and Native Americans as "Racial Deviants" in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe

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In this essay I propose to show that it was in the six-teenth and seventeenth centuries, rather than the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that a cogent concept of human "races" first appears in early modern European thought.[1] This emerging idea of "race," though imbedded in notions that today would most likely be characterized as "cultural" (such as religious belief and practice, division of labor along gender lines, clothing, economic system, and sexual prac-tices) rather than "racial," was very much associated with skin color. Additionally, because of the persistence of Greek, Judaic, and medieval Christian attitudes about skin color, guilt and sin, geographical distribution of various peoples, and the association of skin color and behavior with geography, non-white "races" that were not European in ori-gin began to be viewed as "abnormal," or deviant in this pe-riod. Every society determines, in some way, what it con-siders to be "normal" and what is "deviant." For the peoples of Europe, this fundamental social dichotomy of nor-mal/deviant had been characterized as "civilized/barbarian" or "Christian/heathen." The idea of "race" began to solidify in the fusing of the determinants of these older concepts into a single structure.

Increased social and geographical mobility in the six-teenth and seventeenth centuries and Europe's steadily more important participation in a world network of mercantile and

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slave trade with Asia, Africa, and finally the Americas, led a
growing number of Europeans to have contact with people
who differed from Europeans in ways that came to be identi-
fied as "racial." In looking at whether non-Europeans were
considered "deviant" and treated "differently" because of their
"racial" identity or for some other cultural reason, such as
religion, sexual practice, or food and clothing during this pe-
riod, it has been difficult to know where to draw the line.
The difficulty, as well as the need to separate these factors,
fades when one views the evidence that the structure of this
new category of "race," and the racialist thinking that
emerged with it, are partly the result of the collapsing of the
old categories into a single new one that is a mixture of cus-
tom, religion, geography, and color.

The legacy of classical and medieval Christian
thought that forms the foundation of sixteenth and seven-
teenth century European attitudes towards non-white, non-
European peoples, and the complex of ways in which these
older ideas are transformed and codified into conceptualiza-
tions of "race," are most clearly seen by examining European
notions about Africans and Native Americans (Indians). The
long period of contact between Europeans and Africans, since
Greek and Roman antiquity, allowed certain concepts of the
"primitive," "wild," "barbarian" or "heathen" to develop.
Because there was no pre-existing geographical or racial do-
main in which to place the New World or its inhabitants, the
"discovery" of Native Americans posed a number of serious,
intellectual dilemmas to European thinkers. In these dilem-
mas, born of the ambivalence of the classical and medieval
inheritance, the beginnings of the idea of non-white "races"
as "deviant" emerged.

The Classical and Medieval Background

Concepts from classical and medieval geography, the-
ology, and philosophy pervaded and helped to form early
modern European attitudes about the racial differences be-
tween themselves and Africans and Native Americans. Many
of the debates that ensued in the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries over the legitimacy of the enslavement, mistreat-
ment, Christian conversion, murder and conquest of Africans
and Native Americans hinged on the finer points of interpret-
ing classical and biblical texts that discussed non-Europeans.

The ancient Hellenic and Roman worlds vacillated be-
tween conceptualizing the world in two and in three conti-

nents. Hecataeus of Miletus (fl. 500 B.C.) describes only
Europe and Asia; Europe, of course, was Greece, and Asia
was what remained. The Mediterranean littoral of Africa,
known to the Greeks as Libya, was then considered to be part
of Asia. So the oldest division to the Greeks was between
Greeks and "barbarians"--between West and East. Herodotus
acknowledged a tripartite division of the habitable world,
into Europe, Asia (largely identified with Persia), and Libya
(Africa). Europe, that is to say, Greece, was the "civilized"
world. Asia became associated with "lavish splendor,"
"vulgarity," and "despotism"--with all that was, ostensibly,
not Greek. The Romans accepted the Greeks' three conti-
nents, renaming Libya "Africa," and extending their knowl-
edge of Europe as they extended their control over Spain,
Gaul, and Britain. "Asiatic," for the Romans, took on the
additional pejorative literary meaning of "bombastic" or
"overdone" writing.[2]

The assigning of group character to people on the ba-
sis of their geographical location, which would reach its
peak in Europe in the late medieval and early modern periods,
was already evident in the writings of Aristotle (fl. fourth
century, B.C.). In *Politics*, he saw Greece as somewhat apart
from Europe. As the "center of civilization" in the Hellenic
world it was naturally seen as having the most favorable en-
vironment for humans:

> Those who live in a cold climate and in
> Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intel-
> ligence and skill; and therefore they retain
> comparative freedom, but have no political or-
> ganization, and are incapable of ruling over
> others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intel-
> ligent and inventive, but they are wanting in
> spirit, and therefore they are always in a state
> of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic
> race, which is situated between them, is like-
> wise intermediate in character, being high-
> spirited and also intelligent. Hence it contin-
> ues free, and is the best-governed of any na-
> tion...[3]

The medieval conception of geography and the peoples
who inhabited the world developed from Jewish, and then
early Christian scriptural views in close contact with the
Greco-Roman tradition.[4] The origins of the diversity of hu-

manity are described in the Judeo-Christian view in the ninth
and tenth chapters of Genesis. The tenth chapter is primarily
an elaboration of the dissemination of the progeny of the
three sons of Noah to the corners of the habitable world. It
is the ninth chapter, verses 18 through 27, that provides the
framework for the peopling of the earth and subsequent dis-
cussion in the Bible of God's trouble with the inhabitants of
various areas, such as the peoples of the Tower of Babel and
Sodom and Gomorrah. It is in these verses that the inequal-
ity of different groups of people, closely tied to what is con-
sidered to be "deviant" behavior, first appears, in God's hier-
archy of the son's of Noah:

> 18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the
> ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was
> the father of Canaan.
> 19   These three were the sons of Noah; and
> from these the whole earth was peopled.
> 20 Noah...planted a vineyard;
> 21   and he drank of the wine; and became
> drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent.
> 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the
> nakedness of his father, and told his two
> brothers outside.
> 23   Then Shem and Japheth took a garment,
> laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked
> backward and covered the nakedness of their fa-
> ther; their faces were turned away, and they did
> not see their father's nakedness.
> 24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew
> what his youngest son had done to him,
> 25 he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves
> shall he be to his brothers."
> 26 He also said, "Blessed by the Lord my God be
> Shem; and let Canaan be his slave.
> 27 God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the
> tents of Shem;and let Canaan be his slave."[5]

This passage from Genesis contains many of the ele-
ments which Europeans habitually used to define non-
Europeans. Ham is apparently guilty of having no shame,
for he saw his father's nakedness, and instead of covering
him, told his brothers outside. They, in turn, righted his
wrong, and covered their father. The progeny of Ham, under
the curse of Canaan, are relegated to the status of perpetual

slavery under the control of the progeny of the other two brothers. This biblical structure of morality and its punishment of perpetual slavery for transgressing it, combined with the Greco-Roman division of the habitable world into three continents provided the basis for European ideas about non-Europeans they encountered.

One of the first scholars to adapt this biblical material to the Hellenistic world view, and one of the earliest to refer to the precise continental locations of the progeny of the sons of Noah was Flavius Josephus, a Hellenized Jew who flourished in the second half of the first century, A.D. In the *Antiquities of the Jews* (A.D. 93) he wrote,

> Japheth...had seven sons; they inhabited... beginning at the mountains Taurus and Amanus, they proceeded along Asia, as far as the river Tanis, and along Europe to Cadiz; and settling themselves on the lands which they light upon, which none had inhabited before, they called the nations by their own names...

> The children of Ham possessed the land from Syria and Amanus, and the mountains of Libanus, seizing upon all that was upon its seacoasts and as far as the ocean, and keeping it as their own...of the four sons of Ham, time has not at all hurt the name of Chus; for the Ethiopians, over whom he reigned, are even at this day...called Chusites...Phut was also the founder of Libya...

> Shem...had five sons, who inhabited the land that began at the Euphrates, and reached to the Indian Ocean; for Elam left behind him the Elamites, the ancestors of the Persians. Ashur...named his subjects Assyrians...Aram had the Aramites, which the Greeks called Syrians... [6]

Josephus placed the three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, in a hierarchy with Europe in the dominant position, by virtue of their correlation with the biblical hierarchy of the three sons of Noah. This passage roughly identifies Europeans as the descendants of Japheth; in Genesis 9:27, Japheth is clearly intended to dominate over both his

brothers. The inhabitants of Asia are the descendants of
Shem, whose tents Japheth's growing clan "may dwell in."
The descendants of Ham, that is the descendants of Canaan,
who are to be the slaves of both Japheth and Shem, are as-
signed to Libya, that is, to the known part of Northern
Africa, along the Mediterranean. Africans, who do in fact
become nearly universally enslaved, are clearly identified as
the descendants of Ham/Canaan.

Ham is, as Hayden White has pointed out, one of the

> archetypal wild men of the Old Testament,
> great rebels against the Lord, the God-chal-
> lengers...their offspring are the children of
> Babel, of Sodom and Gomorrah, a progeny that
> is known by its pollution. They are men who
> have fallen below the condition of animality
> itself; every man's face is turned against them,
> and in general...they can be slain with im-
> punity.[7]

The association of this notion of Ham and his progeny as
"wild" and "uncivilized," and "acting against God," with the
idea that the descendants of Ham were Africans, and therefore
"black" lead to the linking of "blackness" with "wildness,"
and with "sin." This was, of course, to have dire conse-
quences with regard to social policies in European contact
with non-white peoples.

Interpretations of the above passage in Genesis carried
a lot of weight during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
in legitimating the Atlantic slave trade and the conquest of
Africa and the New World.[8] The Americas, of course, were
unknown to the ancient Greeks and Romans. And Native
Americans were not easily accounted for in the classi-
cal/biblical scheme of *three* continents and *three* sons of
Noah. The several different sixteenth and seventeenth cen-
tury views that the "Indians" present in the Americas were
"abnormal," or "deviant" by European standards, *because of
their race,* were formulated, as were those concerned with
Africans, on reinterpretations of Genesis 9:9-10 (and other
related verses about the dispersion of the nations and the de-
viance of the Canaanites) and a number of classical texts.

One of the strongest Christian influences from late
antiquity on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought on
the diversity of humanity was certainly Saint Augustine.
Picking up threads of both Hellenic thought and Josephus-

like interpretations of Genesis, the sections of Augustine's
City of God Against the Pagans where the sons of Noah are
discussed further cast the descendants of Ham, who have al-
ready been identified as Africans and slaves, into an abyss
where Christian love can not reach:

> ...Ham, whose name means 'Hot', Noah's mid-
> dle son, distinguishing himself, as it were,
> from both the others, and placed midway be-
> tween them, figuring neither among the first
> fruits of the Israelites, nor in the first harvest
> of the Gentiles, what does he signify but the
> hot breed of heretics?...It is not illogical,
> however, to consider Noah's middle son as a
> type not only of the most open dissenters, but
> of all who vaunt the name of Christian, de-
> spite the wickedness of their lives...Ham was
> cursed in his son's person...on the other hand,
> Shem and Japheth...denote circumcision and
> uncircumcision respectively, or as the Apostle
> identifies them... Jews and Greeks...[9]

There is an affirmation here that the descendants of Ham,
that is Africans, are denied entrance to Augustine's "City of
God" forever, that they are unredeemable. They are, as well,
neither Jews nor Greeks, that is, they are not "civilized."
    An example of this linkage of black skin with sin in
widely read Christian theological writings of the late me-
dieval period is the work of the English mystic Walter
Hilton (1340-1396). In *The Ladder of Perfection,* an essay
intended to give spiritual comfort to a friend, a "solitary
nun," he wrote of confusing the outer appearance with the
inner reality of a person, and succeeded in giving a picture of
prevailing attitudes toward the color black and the state of
the human soul:

> So the chosen soul is both lovely and ugly,
> and Holy Scripture says: I am black but
> lovely, daughters of Jerusalem...Meaning: do
> not despise me because I am black, for al-
> though my skin is as black as the tents of
> Kedar, inwardly I am lovely as the fleeces of
> Solomon... Kedar means black, and represents
> the devil: Solomon means peace, and repre-
> sents our Lord Jesus Christ...

> ...Although my body is outwardly blackened
> by sin, like an unregenerate soul that is the
> dwelling of the devil, yet by faith and good
> will I am inwardly beautiful as an angel from
> heaven...a chosen soul, reformed in faith, in-
> habits this sinful body...and acts outwardly in
> the same way as an unregenerate soul, so that
> people cannot see any difference between
> them...One might almost say that a man in
> this state does not so much carry this sinful
> image as be carried by it...[10]

There is another element of classical and medieval
philosophical and geographical thought which strongly bears
on our discussion of early modern European perceptions of
non-Europeans as inherently deviant--the so-called "Plinian
Races."[11] This term was coined by John Friedman to refer to
those semi-mythical peoples east of the Mediterranean to
whom the ancient Greeks and Romans ascribed fantastic or
monstrous characteristics. Inhabiting the outer frontiers of
the known world, they were largely the product of European
imaginations afraid of the unknown. There were improbable
types such as *Cyclops* (with only one eye), *Sciopods* (with a
large, misshapen foot used as an umbrella), and *Blemmyae*
(with their faces in their chests and no neck or shoulders).
Some of them, on the other hand, were quite recognizable as
real human beings, but seen through an exoticised mind.
There were the *Bragmanni*, or *Gymnosophisti* of India, liv-
ing in caves and standing in unusual positions--they were
clearly yogic Brahmans; there were Ethiopians, dark skinned
peoples of no particular locale, as long as it was to the East
or South, toward the equator; and there were various giants
and pygmies.[12]

Of the medieval works which reflected the classic,
Plinian view of human variation, the most widely read was
Travels, ascribed to Sir John Mandeville. It began circulat-
ing in manuscript form in French and Anglo-Norman between
1356 and 1366. By 1400 it had appeared in every major
European language. By the early sixteenth century there
were a number of printed editions of the work as well. This
work was part of a genre of travel literature written by real
travelers, but embellished and validated by recourse to fantas-
tic accounts from classical sources. The explorers
Christopher Columbus and William Frobisher were known to
have read it. Richard Hakluyt's first edition of *Principall*

navigations (1589) incorporated it, but the second edition (1598-1600) omitted it, reflecting a more critical assessment of Mandeville's work in light of more recent voyages.[13]

An important aspect of Mandeville's writing is that his narratives combine elements of both the civilized/barbarian and the Christian/heathen schemas, though color is not an over-riding concern yet. His *Travels* are partly the journey of a Christian pilgrim to the Catholic Holy Land and its surrounding environs. The "physical and cultural Greek image of difference" and the "metaphysical and moral Judeo-Christian image"[14] come together to set a tone that is carried directly into the sixteenth and seventeenth century justifications for colonization and slavery of Non-Europeans:

> This is the land that is promised to us as heritage;...each good Christian man who is able, and has the means, should set himself to conquer our inheritance, this land, the Holy Land, and chase out therefrom those who are misbelievers...if we be true children of Christ, we ought to lay claim to the heritage that our Father left to us, and win it out of strange men's hands.[15]

"Plinian Races" continued to be reported by fifteenth and sixteenth century European voyagers to Africa, Persia, and the Americas. But as more and more voyages were made and additional empirical evidence was gathered against their existence, their popularity in literature began to decline. There was, as John Friedman has stated, a "shedding of Plinian glasses" beginning in the sixteenth century. The fantastic played a diminishing role in analyzing the differences between peoples. But as the old categories were shed, they would be replaced with new ones, often synthesized out of the old ones--constructed out of the feedback between established notions and new experiences of the voyagers, and the economic and social desires of those in positions of power.

Africans and Native Americans as "Racial Deviants"

Early modern Europeans conceptualized non-Europeans as "deviants" due to characteristics that lie inside the parame-

ers of an emerging idea of "race." By examining European responses to both Africans and Native Americans in the six-teenth and seventeenth centuries, a number of fundamental elements of the white European perceptions of non-white, non-Europeans come to the fore, very much interdependent and still somewhat diffuse.

Because Africans were known to the classical world, there is a long history of European thought about their ori-gins, characteristics and nature, and relationship to Europeans. The categories for Europeans and Africans also have a long history of dichotomy, reaching deeply into their biblical and classical origins. What is most obviously dif-ferent between the *average* European and the *average* African in the classical period, in the sixteenth century, or today, is skin color. Frank Snowden has described ancient Greeks and Romans as measuring all people of color by the yardstick of the Ethiopians. In art and literature, the Ethiopian repre-sented "blackness."[16] While there were certainly instances of white fear of and prejudice against the black color of Ethiopians in the classical world, there was a range of feel-ing, from fascination with the exotic, through normalcy, to dread. Snowden believes that a wide-spread, modern racial prejudice was not apparent.[17]

The early modern European inherited the medieval no-tion of black as representative of the Devil, the sinister, and the negative. White symbolized light, brightness, purity, and holiness. Taking this into account, the color of the Africans that Europeans saw in the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-turies, even with increased contact, could not go unnoticed. Sometimes it was the only feature of a people's appearance mentioned in a narrative, as in Englishman Richard Eden's account of M. Thomas Windam's voyage to Guinea and Benin in 1553: "The chief city of Ethiopia, where this great em-peror is resident, is called Amacaiz, being a faire citie, whose inhabitants are the color of an Olive. There are also many other cities...."[18] The issue of color could not be avoided with regard to the African, even when saying little else.

The greatest contact that Europeans had with Africans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was concerned with the Atlantic slave trade. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese began to trade slaves on the west coast of Africa. Close behind them were the French and the Castilians, and finally in the sixteenth century, the English. Black Africans had been used as slaves since at least classical antiquity, and

the biblical association of slavery with Ham and the Canaanites, and therefore with Africa, helped to legitimate continued and growing European enslavement of blacks in the early modern period.

There were widespread beliefs that black Africans were intellectually inferior and sexually depraved and violent, and therefore in need of civilizing and Christianizing, which could legitimately be achieved by enslavement. These ideas about intellectual inferiority and violent natures stemmed, in part, from environmentalist theories of human character, which assigned a sluggish intelligence and a libidinous appetite to those peoples closest to the equator, where it is the hottest--that is, to Africans.[19]

European attitudes about the origins and nature of the indigenous peoples of America were complicated by the need to fit the existence of a land mass (the Americas) and peoples into a geographical schema that only had three continents and a theological schema that only allowed for three basic types, or "races" of people, corresponding to the three sons of Noah. Theories about the origins of the peoples of the New World ranged from their being Carthaginians, Jews, or Chinese, to the Lost Tribes of Israel and the descendants of the Canaanites.[20] Adherents of these various theories kept up a running debate that began in 1492 and continued into the nineteenth century. The different degrees of deviancy from the European, white norm--"in the lineage of Japheth"--of Native Americans that is implied by the logical consequences of these varying theories of origin is paralleled by two simultaneous and contradictory views of the character of New World peoples. The image of the "bad Indian"[21] shares characteristics with the black African as a "wild" and "barbarian" creature: they were naked, lecherous, passionate, vain, constantly at war, cannibalistic, indolent, filthy, and idolatrous, or utterly without religion of any kind.[22]

The "good Indian," however, was a new image, a product of the ambivalence that Europeans felt about Indian origins and the persistence of the drawing of certain cultural parallels between the New World and India. This image, eventually becoming the "noble savage" of seventeenth and eighteenth century European literature, projected a people who were friendly, hospitable, handsome, with great stamina and endurance, calm and dignified even under torture, brave in war, independent, and great enjoyers of nature's bounty.[23] In this picture, the "Indian" falls somewhere between the Stoic and the Epicurean.

As Thomas Hahn has put it, Columbus, "and indeed, seemingly all Europeans, had programmed themselves to find...Indians."[24] Citing Dante's *Paradiso* and Mandeville's *Travels,* he has described a widespread European vision of an idealized *East* Indian as a "virtuous heathen," in much the same terms as the image of the "good Indian" above.[25] This image of a people "full of all vertue & they eschewen all vices" was partly superimposed on some of the New World peoples who did not exhibit some of the more unforgivable characteristics of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Both of these images present a "deviant" Indian--one in the older image of the deviant "barbarian," uncivilized and so unlike the European, and the other in the borrowed image of the East Indian, spiritually centered and without the vices and materialness that early modern Europeans feared in themselves. In both cases, the image stands against the Europeans image of themselves, whether in a negative or a positive vein.

Europeans experienced the belief systems of non-white, non-Europeans they came into contact with as deviant, meaning in this instance "heretical," "heathen," or "idolatrous." Andre Thevet, the geographer for France's King France I, writing in the 1570s, expressed the prevailing European attitude about African animism at that time, that, "...if there ever was abominable idolatry, brutish superstition and ignorance, you will find it among these poor people...This people is so stupid, bestial, and blinded by folly that it accepts as divinity the first thing it encounters in the morning when it wakes up."[26] In *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1588), by the Spanish Jesuit Joseph de Acosta, all of Book V, thirty-one chapters in all, are devoted to explanations of the "idolatry and superstition" of the Peruvians he visited from 1571-1587, and the "labours of Satan and the Devill" among them.[27] The English opinion of the spiritual side of Native Americans was much the same, with Samuel Purchas stating in *Hakluytus Pothumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625) that the natives of Virginia were

> ...so bad a people, having little of humanitie
> but shape, ignorant of Civilitie, of the Arts,
> of Religion; more brutush than the beasts they
> hunt, more wild and unmanly then that un-
> manned wild countrey, which they range rather
> than inhabit; captivated also to Satans tyranny

in foolish pieties, mad impieties, wicked idel-
ness, busie and bloudy wickednesse.[28]

It is clear that Europeans considered non-white, non-
Europeans to deviate substantially from the European norm
in regards to religious belief and practice.

The color and cultural characteristics of non-
Europeans, combined with classical and medieval preconcep-
tions that informed white European contact with non-white
others, to create, in many instances, images of black
Africans and Native Americans that were actually "non-hu-
man." For instance, the Frenchman Francois Bernier pub-
lished an article in the *Journal des savans* in 1684 in which
his belief that Africans were a separate species from white
Europeans was supported by the fact that

If a black African pair be transported to a cold
country, their children are just as black, and
so are all descendants until they come to marry
with white women. The cause must be sought
for in the peculiar texture of their bodies, or
in the seed, or in the blood.[29]

The author in this passage is clearly challenging an envi-
ronmentalist theory of skin color. That he was providing
support for the idea of black Africans being a separate
species from white Europeans is all the more remarkable
considering what was known about breeding farm animals at
the time--that, for instance, cows of different colors were all
still cows, and that you can alter the color of a line of
offspring of a cow by breeding it with a cow of a different
color.

Non-humanity in voyage narratives often took the
form of expectations shaped by classical/medieval mytholo-
gies about "Plinian races" or signs of the devil in non-white
peoples. There is a famous account of the British members of
"The second voyage of Master Martin Frobisher to the...West
and Northwest Regions...1577...." After successfully re-
pelling an attack by a group of Eskimos off Baffin Island,
the party found an old woman left behind in the melee and
suicides that followed because of her age. They thought she
was quite peculiar, assigning the characteristics of an ani-
mal, or the devil, to her: "The old wretch, whom divers of
our Saylers supposed to be either a devill, or a witch, had
her buskins plucked off, to see if she were cloven footed, and

for her ougly hew and deformity we let her goe."[30] Previously, the group of Eskimos that Frobisher's men fought had been described as being "altogether voyd of humanity."[31] Either these men were expecting to find cloven feet on this particular group of people, or the old woman's color was such that they associated her with the devil.[32] In any case, she in particular, and her people in general, were perceived as "less than human" by the landing party.

The "primitive" nature of the housing, food procurement, clothing, systems of government, and sexual practices of black Africans and Native Americans, as Europeans generally saw them, defined them as "deviant," and helped to define each group as "a race apart." The repercussions of this attitude were to be the steady encroachment of Europeans onto African and Native American lands, buoyed by a secure belief in the superiority of Western European approaches to all aspects of living. Their assumed inferiority became the standard justification for conquest and genocide. Puritan John Winthrop believed his group had a right to the land of the Indian inhabitants he found on the Atlantic coast because "...they enclose noe land, neither have any settled habytation, nor any tame cattle to improve the Land by and soe have noe other but a Natural Right to those Countries, so as if we leave them sufficient for their own use, we may lawfully take the rest, their being more than enough for them, and us...."[33]

Even when willing to adopt European ways of living, and to convert to Christianity, non-white peoples were subjected to harsh, chattel slavery, and other, slower-acting, dehumanizing conditions. In Barbados, as elsewhere in the New World, the prevailing wisdom was that, "...the Negros and Indians...they and the generation are slaves to perpetuity."[34] The linkage with the perpetual slavery of the progeny of Ham in Genesis is unmistakable. The issue of slavery, vital to the very enterprise of the Europeans in the New World, was ultimately to be the subject of the only systematic discussion of Europeans' relationship with non-European peoples in the period under discussion.

In 1550, at Valladolid, in Castile, a "Council of the Fourteen was called by Charles V to debate the issue of whether Native Americans were "natural slaves," by Aristotle's definition, and therefore subject to conversion to Christianity and enslavement using extreme force under a system of hereditary bondage (usually limited to only two or three generations) called *encomienda*. There had been a war

of words for some time between the two key players in the debate. Bartolome de las Casas, believed in the "Christian redemption" of the peoples of the Americas by teaching through example--a way he felt was in the true Christian spirit. His opponent was Juan Gines de Sepulveda, who utilized Aristotle's *Politics* for his support. The whole story is a long and complicated one. The result of the year and a half of debates was that no firm decision was reached-- but Church policy began to shift in favor of a more humane, educational approach to the missionary and "civilizing" efforts of the Catholic Church in Spanish America.[35]

The images of Africans and Native Americans in literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suffer from the same types of stereotyping--they are written as "types," rather than characters. The image of the African's blackness had been a part of English theatre since the medieval mummers plays. The face was blackened for grotesque decorative effect, or to indicate that the scene was "fantastic," or "exotic"--that is turned around from its "normal" situation. This practice continued in sixteenth and seventeenth century English pageants and in masques at the English courts of Edward, Elizabeth I and James.[36]

Africans portrayed on stage were either "black Moors" --villainous and cruel and always black--or "white Moors," where blackness was deemphasized. They were "tawny"--and dignified, despotic, and noble.[37] Shakespeare's Othello signified a new character, perhaps the first black "character." Instead of a type, his character signifies not so much his personal weakness, not the personal "sin of his skin," but rather the all too universally painful condition of simply being human.[38]

Images of Native Americans in literature were much more ambivalent than those of Africans tended to be. The "good Indian" and the "bad Indian" images crystallized into two foils for internal European critiques of current European society. Both images, as with the images of the African as a despotic King, or a barbarian wildman, were dependent on whatever European characteristics were "missing" in the Indian person. If the aim of the writer is to convey the reader back to a Golden Age of Perfection, from which even white Europeans have fallen, then the image of the "noble savage"--the "good Indian" is evoked. If the goal was to frighten the reader into seeing the slippage of the European way of life and mend his own, then the "bad Indian" image was useful as a concrete example of the degradation of a fall

into "pagan barbarism."[39]

The European attitude towards non-white, non-European peoples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was clearly that they were "deviant"--they were not European/Christian/ "white." Individual "cultural" characteristics, including nakedness, as well as physical characteristics such as skin color and hair texture were the components of an emerging idea of "racial" differences. In European accounts of Africans and Native Americans, the congruence of discussions of skin color, body type, hair texture, and decorative traditions with those of various kinds of "deviancy," such as physical deformity, violence, cannibalism, or the simple status of being a slave, supports the idea that non-white races were, in themselves, deviant in the European mind, *because of their race/color/culture.*

"Race" was an emerging concept throughout sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. In order to better understand the intellectual context of the development of late-eighteenth and nineteenth century "scientific" concepts of "race," historians must push their notion of the concept back into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and farther, and take it on its own terms. Because this earlier conceptualization of "races" took place within the context of European discovery of their "European-ness," through contact with increasing numbers of non-Europeans that was combined with a re-aquaintance with classical and medieval writings, skin color and other physical characteristics were intertwined with other "cultural" characteristics. During this period "non-white races" were perceived as deviant--abnormal--because they did not conform, or perform, according to an increasingly more well-defined European and "white" norm. This "early modern" European concept of "race," arising in the midst of current concepts of deviancy, awaits further, more detailed investigation into its origins, applications, and social and intellectual consequences.

NOTES

1 The modern idea of "race" predates its late eighteenth and nineteenth century modern forms, which were largely dependent on emerging scientific explanations of human origins and development. Historians unable to free themselves of a bias toward these early scientific definition of race have been unable to see existing clear indications of the emergence of the idea in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. The following is a sample of

those who have at least admitted that the sixteenth century is where one must start to look for the origins of the modern idea of race: George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 9; Reginald Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 9; and Nancy Stephen, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982), xi-xii, passim. The major research for placing the origins of the Euro-American idea of "race" in the sixteenth century (or earlier) has yet to be done. For an exploratory essay see Niobeh Crowfoot Tsaba, "Travel Literature and the Roots of Elizabethan Racial Thinking, 1558-1603," unpublished paper (1989). Although the above examples, including my paper, deal specifically with the developments in English attitudes, the arguments are clearly extendable to all of sixteenth century Europe.

2   Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), reprinted by Harper Torchbooks (New York), 1966, 2-4.

3   Aristotle, *Politics* 1327b, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (The Revised Oxford Translation), edited by Jonathan Barnes, Volume II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2107.

4   Denys Hay, *Europe*, op. cit., 7.

5   Genesis 9:18-27, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Revised Standard Version, edited by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, 1977 [1962], 11-12.

6   Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, translated from the original Greek by William Whiston (Philadelphia, PA: Porter and Coates, 1860), Book I, Chapter VI, 47-48. This entire chapter is an attempt to correlate, in minute detail, the children of the sons of Noah with all of the different peoples known to Josephus (47-49).

7   Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness: Archeology of an Idea", 3-38, in Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 14.

8   The book of the Bible that generated the most commentaries during the Renaissance was, in fact, Genesis. Arnold Williams has discussed the great literary and cultural "superstructure" that was constructed on the framework of what he refers to as the "Genesis material," a great elaboration on the text itself. Such diverse writers as Shakespeare, Raleigh, and Purchas grounded their work on current social concepts rooted in the Genesis commentaries. See Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis, 1527-1633* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 3-4.

9   Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Volume V, with an English translation by Eva Matthews Sanford and William McAllen Green (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 16.2:5-9. Hayden White has suggested (without giving a source) that ancient Hebrew had a common or related roots for the words for Ham, the color black, Egypt (bondage), Canaan (idolatry), and fertility. See Hayden White, op. cit., 15.

10 Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection*, translated by Leo Sherley-Price, with an introduction by Clifton Wolters (New York: Penguin, 1988 [1957]), II.12:135-136.

11 It was the Roman Pliny's "accounts" of them that were so widely read and imitated through the medieval period, hence the term "Plinian Races."

12 John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 5-18, passim.

13 *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, translated with an introduction by C.W.R.D. Mosely (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), "Introduction," 30.

14 Hayden White, op. cit., 10.

15 *Travels*, op. cit., 44.

16 Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1970), 2.

17 Ibid., 176-183.

18 Richard Eden, "A voiage made out of England unto Guinea and Benin in Affrike, at the charges of certain marchants Adventurers of the Citie of London, in the yeere of our Lord 1553", 141-154, in Richard Hackluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Volume VI (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 145.

19 Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of the Commonweale*, edited and with an introduction by Kenneth Douglas McRae (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), the Fifth Book, Chapter 1, 554- 555: "...And they which...drawing towards the South [are] more sanguin and melancholike: fo[r] their complexion is more blacke and yellow, blacke being the color of melancholy and yellow of *choler*...the people of the North are not malitious nor craftie, as the nations of the South be...the people of the South are cruell and reuengeful, by reason of melancholie, which doth inflame the passions of the soule with an exeeding violence, the which is not easily suppressed..." Bodin's summation of environmentalist theories of the origins of cultures had great currency in the late sixteenth century, in all areas of exploration, colonization, and the slave trade.

20 Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science, and Letters* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 121. For a detailed treatment of sixteenth and seventeenth century theories of the origins of New World peoples, see Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492-1729* (Austin, TX: Published for the Institute of Latin American Studies by the University of Texas Press, 1967).

21 The Spanish referred to all peoples that inhabited the New World, on both sides of the Americas, including Haiti and the Philippines, as *Indios*, or Indians. See Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage (A Division of Random House), 1979 [1978]), 5. The term "Indian" is adopted here to reflect the united view of Europeans that the New World was the "Western Indies."

22 Ibid., 28.

23 Ibid.

24 Thomas Hahn, "Indians East and West: Primitivism and Savagery in English Discovery Narratives of the Sixteenth Century", 77-114, *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8.1 (Spring 1978):77.

25 Ibid., 80.

26 Andre Thevet, *Cosmographie universelle*, edited by Georges Musset (Paris, 1544), 52, quoted in William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 15-16.

27 Joseph de Acosta, *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1588), reprinted from the English translated edition of Edward Grimston (1604), edited with notes and an introduction by Clements R. Markham (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970 [1880]), Volume I: *The Natural History*, i-ix; Volume II: *The Moral History*, 296-389.

28 Quoted in Robert F. Berkhofer, op. cit., 21.

29 Quoted in William B. Cohen, op. cit., 12. It is difficult to make a certain judgement about the intentions of the author, because the context of the quotation -- the surrounding text that ostensibly states the argument for which this passage was the evidence -- was unavailable to me.

30 Dionise Settle, "The second voyage of Master Martin Frobisher, made to the West and Northwest Regions in the yeere 1577, with a description of the Countrey", 211-231, in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, publishers to the University, 1905), 7: 220. It is unclear in this passage if the party let the woman go because they felt sorry for her because of her age (they took as prisoners a young woman with a small child) or because they felt she was too "ougly" and strange to be bothered with.

31 Ibid.

32 The devil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was often described, as it had been for centuries, as both as black man and as a creature that was partly animal and partly human. Norman Cohn's *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (New York: New American Library, 1975), for instance, contains numerous examples of the representation of the devil as a black person: "...the Devil would appear to them, sometimes as a Negro, and sometimes as an angel of light..." (20); "The biography of St. Afra, which belongs to the period between 700 and 850, already shows Satan in the form that was to become standard in the later Middle Ages: pitch-black, naked and covered with a wrinkled skin..." (69); "...that private demon of Lady Alice's, who appeared sometimes in the guise of a cat, sometimes in the guise of a shaggy black dog, sometimes in the guise of a Negro..." (199); and in a detail of the beliefs of a magistrate who hunted witches, "...the initial appearance of the Devil in the form of a black man..." (137). The "hew" of the Eskimo woman could have been dark enough to trigger a response to her as though she had been a "black devil."

33 John Winthrop, "Reasons to be Considered", quoted in G.E. Thomas, "Puritans, Indians, and the Concept of Race", 3-27, *The New England Quarterly*, 48.1 (March 1975):10.

34 G.E. Thomas, op. cit., 24.

35 For a full treatment of this rather complicated episode in Spanish-American intellectual history see Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959).

36 Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, published on behalf of Fourah Bay College, The University College of Sierra Leone, 1965), 28-31.

37 Ibid., 49.

38 Ibid., 87.

39 Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., op. cit., 26-31.

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