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Stephanie Pratt: American Indians in British Art, 1700-1840, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press 2005, ix + 198 S., 17 color, 34 b&w ill., ISBN 0-8061-3657-x, USD 29,95

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This engaging book surveys visual images of Native Americans made by British artists between 1700 and 1840. A 1958 exhibition on "The Noble Savage: The American Indian in Art" (at the University Museum, Philadelphia) and Elwood Parry's "The Image of the Indian and the Black Man in American Art" (1974) serve as partial antecedents to the subject. Hugh Honour's "The New Golden Land: European Images of America" (1975) and his exhibition catalogue "The European Vision of America" (1975-76) are the most immediate examples in methodology to the study. The novelty of Stephanie Pratt's work is its focus on British artists and on a relatively neglected era - and a historiographical gap - located between the early European discovery of America and its people and the later national crafting of an Indian iconography by the United States. Seventeen color plates and 147 monochromatic images highlight the original context of this book and prompt larger speculations on its topics.

In her introduction the author proposes to establish "a more nuanced understanding of American Indians in British society" than that governed by prevailing theories of race construction, cultural dissipation, and colonial domination. Her subject, she declares, resides within "the reality of the 'middle ground', that liminal space between American Indian and European territories where a hybridized culture developed, where mutually acceptable trade flourished, and where Indians and non-Indians temporarily achieved a certain amount of coexistence..." (7). The implicit nod to Richard White's groundbreaking "The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics ... 1650-1815" (1991) is highly appropriate here even as the promised "nuanced understanding" is well provided. In five chapters - on early allegorical representations of America, on the use of "Indian" figures to represent diplomatic and military agendas in the 1750s, on the representation of "Indians" in history paintings between 1700 and 1804, and on the elegiac and diminished portrayals of Native Americans thereafter - we are given an overview of the shifting "middle ground" and the changing fields through which the first inhabitants of America were viewed, perceived, presented, and received, during the period 1700 to 1840.

When Benjamin West saw the Apollo Belvedere in Rome in 1760 he exclaimed "My God... How like it is to a young Mohawk Warrior!" (28).

This comment, by the expatriate American artist and future President of Britain's Royal Academy, encompassed at once West's classical training and its European sources, and his boyhood in Pennsylvania and very real experience of Mohawk and other tribes. West's comment also expresses the many tensions of artistic training, origin, influences, expectation, and perspective that can complicate the fields of vision of artists who paint and create between cultures. These complications of vision and visualization, and the unexpected juxtaposition of images occasioned by historical periodization, will be the most effective and enduring aspects of Pratt's book.

In the opening chapter on the allegorical and symbolic figures of Native Americans created to represent America as a geographical place, Pratt traces the movement in depiction from early suggestions of an idyllic, fertile environment to those symbolizing a place of ferocious nature and savage custom. More interesting is the parallel movement traced from male warrior to female supplicant to match prevailing female personifications of Asia, Africa, and Europe in British art. Crispijn de Passe's early 17th century engraving, *America* (Fig. 1.2), serves as a remarkable summary and extension of the chapter's subjects: America is female, voluptuous and unclothed but for a wreath at her loins and a feathered crown; paradisiacal fruits and birds hang in the trees above her, and a peaceable kingdom of animals, including ferocious big cats and serpents, cluster at her feet. De Passe's America holds a bow in one hand, like the Indian brave and noble savage of earlier depictions that she has replaced, but the curve of her bow recalls classical representations of Diana the Huntress. In her left hand de Passe's America holds up a severed human head, chosen from a tray of heads proffered to her, in strange conflated impression of the jaded barbarianism of Biblical Salome and the primitive barbarianism of a savage Indian Other.

The importance of Native American groups as diplomatic and military allies of the British led, in the middle 18th century, to the creation of a new "Indian persona" in visual representations. Tribal groups in America, not always British allies, often served as intermediaries in the contest for ascendancy between the British, the French, and the revolutionary colonists. "Indian Chief" embassies to Britain - the four Mohawk chiefs to Queen Anne's court in 1710, the Cherokee chiefs to George II's court in 1730, the Cherokee "delegation" to London of 1762, the Creek and Cherokee petitional emissaries to London in 1790 - helped form the persona of Britain's ally, "the good Indian." Four color plates, reproducing Francis Parsons' *Cunneshote* (1762), Joshua Reynolds' *Scyacust Ukah* (1762), George Romney's *Joseph Brant -Thayendanegea* (1776), and William Hodges' *A Cherokee (or Creek) Man* (1791), illustrate by juxtaposition and context the passage of Britain's ally in America: from partial savage to respected mediator to Westernized military leader to alien and distant former friend. Parsons' Indian wears a red coat, but he also carries a dagger; Reynolds' Indian, also implicitly red-coated, appears contemplative and carries a peace pipe; Romney's Indian, a Tory

hero and a Christian, is barely distinguishable from his British military counterparts; Hodges' Indian, meanwhile, is an elegiac representation of dispossession and inaccessible knowledge. Also visible here, but not mentioned by Pratt, is the way these portraits represent the movement and distinctions between intellectual and artistic periods: between, say, reasoned Enlightenment optimism (Reynolds' portrait) and dark Romantic sublimity (Hodges' portrait). In a later discussion of another portrait by Hodges, *A Cherokee Man* (1790-91), Pratt proposes that the real distinction between the presentations by Reynolds and Hodges is one of purpose and patronage: Reynolds wished to foster confidence and engagement, whereas Hodges was providing scientific and physiognomical specimens for his patron, the surgeon John Hunter (108-9). This hardly takes the measure of Hodges' darkly brilliant and extraordinarily sensitive portraits of two profoundly unhappy human beings who can foresee both their own imminent irrelevance to Britain and the cultural extinction of their race.

A chapter on history painting in Pratt's book focuses largely on West's "Indian decade", 1761-71, when the artist executed six paintings or engraved designs featuring Native Americans (76). In close analysis of these six works, especially *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (1771-72), Pratt shows how West melded the allegorical with the documentary in his presentations. Ever the self-promoter, West emphasized his unusual personal knowledge of tribal life in the use of seemingly authentic ethnographic details, even as he used his familiarity with the counters of European art to form sentimental portraits and family groups that showed Britain's Indian allies as appealing but also quiescent and fully under control. West's knowledge of his Indians thus mirrored in microcosm the imperial power and possessions of Britain.

After 1785, as Pratt correctly notes, two stereotypes dominated the portrayals of Native Americans: the stereotype of the Indian controlled, stilled but ethnographically picturesque, set by West, and the stereotype (in a recidivistic return to early representations of barbarity in America) of the fully alien and vicious Indian Other which found apotheosis in John Vanderlyn's *Death of Jane MacCrae* (1804). In the decades following the 1790s, America's Indians became increasingly irrelevant to Britain's imperial history. There is a consequent dearth of portraits, and only token representations of the subjects in British history paintings. Instead, in response to the sentimental pieties of imperial missionaries (first expressed, perhaps, in Alexander Pope's lines on the "poor Indian" in his *Essay on Man* - 1733-34), there is a new and singular focus on depictions of the "dying Indian" in British art (131 ff.). Thomas Stothard's watercolor, *Lo! the Poor Indian* (1790s) serves as Pratt's chief exhibit on this point (Plate 17), but examples in print as well as in visual design can be found everywhere. George Caitlin, the reputed chronicler of the terminal plight of the western tribes of America, whose depictions profoundly effected British perceptions in the 1830s and 1840s, described his elegiac mission: "I have, for many years past, contemplated the noble races of red men who are now spread over these trackless forests and

boundless prairies, melting away at the approach of civilization. Their rights invaded, their morals corrupted, their lands wrested from them, their customs changed, and therefore lost to the world. [...] and I have flown to their rescue - not of their lives or of their race (for they are '*doomed*' and must perish), but to the rescue of their looks and their modes. [...] [that] they may rise from the 'stain on a painter's palette', and live again upon canvass, and stand forth for centuries yet to come, the living monuments of a noble race." (125). These are chilling words from a sympathetic chronicler. They assume an inevitable and necessary extinction of a noble race; the characterized "living monuments", moreover, would seem to exist posthumously only to serve the painter's national and imperial monumentality.

Thought-provoking books like this one often generate larger queries from their readers. A reference to Samuel Hearne's travel account, *Journey from Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795) as a source for Wordsworth's "Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman" in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) reminded this reader of the use of landscape in narrative and image by Romantic writers and artists to describe at once the divine, the natural, the spiritual, and the human. Given the importance of landscape in all its forms, and especially in its symbolic or spiritual and transcendent implications to the Native American, one wonders why there is no mention or representation of landscape in the entire book. Perhaps this is or will be the subject of another good book by Stephanie Pratt. Regardless, both she and the University of Oklahoma Press are to be commended for a job well done.

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