

Legibility and Annotation: Reading Images and Words by Wendy Red Star, Thomas Harriot, and

Theodore De Bry

Jamie Kozol Wojtal

English

I. *Introduction: Legibility and its Tools*

In *A Brief and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia*, Thomas Harriot relates his observations and findings during his journey on Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to the Americas from 1585 to 1586. John White, another English colonizer on the expedition, painted watercolors of the Carolina Algonquin peoples and their daily lives. When Harriot returned to England, he gave the paintings to Theodore De Bry, who created the engravings present in Harriot's *Report*. The colonialist nature of this text, revealed by the rest of the title "of the *commodities* and of the nature and manners of the natural inhabitants," may illustrate some of the creators' goals in creating the *Report* (Harriot 1, emphasis mine). Harriot establishes very early on that he hopes to inform future colonists on how they may survive in 'Virginia,' what resources they may use for profit, and how they should interact with the Algonquin people in order to maximize their profits. The aims and goals of the text, as well as how Harriot discusses the Algonquins, impel me to question De Bry's visual portrayal of the Algonquin peoples. Furthermore, as scholars Michael Leroy Oberg and David Moore argue, the interactions and conflicts captured in Harriot's report do not express "the inevitability of European triumph and advance," the way settlers today often think about the early colonial period (Oberg and Moore 55). Instead, Oberg and Moore assert that we should understand Harriot's *Report* and the expedition as a European intrusion into a space where the Algonquin peoples held power. As they note, European "settlements could endure only as long as native peoples allowed them to" (55). Thus, these

images do not represent *total* English authority over Indigenous bodies, but rather, Harriot's attempt to assert his control over the Algonquins with whom he interacted. Harriot's *Report* and the images within illustrate how depictions of Indigenous peoples may be presented as 'texts' to be 'read' by an audience.

Within the last two decades, scholars of Early American Studies, particularly the study of Early American literature, have begun to place more emphasis on the experiences of Indigenous peoples, their communities, and the roles they played during the colonization of North America. With this growing focus on Indigenous communities, scholars of Early America have also begun to take more cues from the field of Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) and the methodologies scholars of Indigenous studies use.¹ With an increasing desire for perspectives from Indigenous peoples during colonization, scholars have looked outside English-language texts, researching Indigenous-language texts and non-alphabetic forms of communication. In a forum for both *William and Mary Quarterly* and *Early American Literature*, Alyssa Mt. Pleasant, Caroline Wigginton, and Kelly Wisecup critique Early American literature and history scholars' preference for examining alphabetic texts and archives, asserting, "colonists' emphasis on alphabetic literacy and insistence that trustworthy history take written forms continue to orient both historiographical practices and conceptions of the literary, despite the ongoing importance of oral traditions and non-alphabetic materials for Native authors and communities" (Mt Pleasant et al. 417). Instead, they urge scholars to continue to turn toward the materials and methodologies used by NAIS scholars. Scholars have too long limited themselves because of the colonialist inheritance of reliance on traditionally textual archives. By expanding the materials we examine, scholars (particularly settler scholars) can rethink colonialist narratives and include Indigenous voices from the past and present.

The expansion of the term text—the kinds of genres, forms, and materials that we identify as readable forms of communication —has opened the door for the analysis of a range of artifacts including images *as* texts. In *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England*, scholar Matt Cohen analyzes communication systems during periods of contact between English settlers and the Indigenous peoples of New England. Cohen catalogs various communication systems such as “traps, paths, wampum, monuments, medical rituals, and other messaging systems,” alongside various European settler materials (Cohen 4). Cohen “trace[s] the role of nontextual media, from gestures to beadwork to sound, in both European media systems and indigenous systems of communication” (13). By using a multivalent approach to defining text and textual analysis, Cohen explores intra- and inter-community communication. I locate my project alongside the work of Cohen, Mt. Pleasant, Wigginton, and Wisecup because I will examine images of Indigenous people made in collaboration between the Indigenous people they depict, the artist who created the image, and third parties who annotated and described the images.

In this essay, I mobilize the concept of *legibility* to analyze and ‘read’ two groups of images of Indigenous people. The first are the images of Carolina Algonquin peoples from *A Brief and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia*, engraved by Theodore De Bry, with annotations by Thomas Harriot. I read Harriot’s annotations as attempts to render the images of Indigenous people as legible to a European or European colonizer. The interplay between De Bry’s images and Harriot’s annotations illustrates how legibility often serves a settler colonial goal. I will also analyze images from the project *1880 Crow Peace Delegation* by Apsáalooke artist Wendy Red Star. Red Star reclaims photos taken of Apsáalooke leaders by European settlers and annotates them with various types of information. While annotation and legibility are

often tools of the colonizer, *1880 Crow Peace Delegation* demonstrates how they can be reappropriated by Indigenous artists and writers for their own end. Red Star also expresses refusal within legibility, revealing some pieces of information and disengaging from other ideas. I chose these sets of images because they sit at the intersection of visual and textual representation. They both depict images of Indigenous people alongside informative annotation in the service of making an Indigenous person legible to different audiences. My analysis of both sets of images will demonstrate how legibility can define Indigeneity, while also being a tool of resisting being known.

By examining images alongside their intended annotations, I hope to understand what the creators of these images wanted their intended readers to glean from both the image and the text. To do this, I will explain my concept of *legibility*, the tools it uses, and its relationship with the concept of *refusal*. To put it simply, legibility is the action of rendering a person or body as recognizable in some way. I imbue the word ‘recognizable’ with as much slipperiness as possible in order to assert that the artist or writer may make their subject recognizable in various ways. While it may indicate an acknowledgment of the humanity of the person depicted, an author or artist may render a person legible as an object. Through the word ‘legibility,’ I hope to locate this term within the framework of expanded notions of literacy that includes the recognition of images.² To make something or someone legible is to render them familiar, able to be understood and interpreted, able to be ‘read’ by a viewer.

Stephanie Pratt (Crow Creek Sioux) also discusses ‘readable’ objects in her study of portraits of Dakota and Ho Chunk leaders. Pratt’s chapter, “Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s–1860s,” in the book *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming*, discusses how the leaders depicted in

these portraits, or the sitters of the portraits, assert their agency through the use of material culture. Pratt uses the term readability to discuss the items Indigenous leaders included in their portraits, calling some items, ““untranslatable” goods that by definition escape the desired transparency, or “*readability*” of the constructed image,” specifically for a settler European audience (Pratt 18, emphasis mine). While Pratt focuses on how specific objects convey information, making them readable for certain audiences, I apply legibility to the entire image. However, I invoke Pratt’s idea of readable objects because it illustrates how images, particularly images of Indigenous people, may not convey the information certain readers need to recognize the humanity of the person depicted—making them illegible.

Any image may be illegible to some people and legible to others, necessitating mediation or more context, often in the form of *annotation*. In this project, I specifically analyze images which have been ‘read,’ or interpreted and annotated in alphabetic writing. Annotation involves textual writing intended to complement, describe, or explain images. It can be a tool for increasing legibility, or it can obscure ideas present in the visual image. The annotation of an image assumes a level of foreignness or illegibility of the person depicted; if someone must explain an image of a person, the explanation renders them legible, not the image itself. However, without the annotation, the person may be illegible, or unable to be ‘read’ and understood by a viewer. In this way, defining the *legibility* of an image means also defining the position from which the viewer interprets the image. Because the annotator chooses what to define, they may also refuse to define certain aspects.

In many ways, *legibility* reflects the goals of colonizers; the ability to understand an image, to interpret meaning, can also convey control over the person or object depicted. As a rule, colonial writing about Indigenous people was meant as a means of controlling perceptions

of Indigeneity.³ Furthermore, European colonizers have long attempted to render Indigenous bodies understandable to a colonizing audience to demonstrate supposed control over Indigenous peoples. As Audra Simpson (Mohawk) describes in her book *Mohawk Interruptus*, “Knowing and representing people within those [colonized] places required more than military might; it required the methods and modalities of knowing—in particular, categorization, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation, and ethnography” (Simpson 95). Simpson asserts that academia, specifically anthropology, acts as a colonizing force by dictating what is known about Indigenous peoples. In fact, Simpson even illustrates the connection between scholarship and land dispossession.⁴ That being said, writers and artists can strategically deploy legibility, often using the settler-colonial tool of annotation as a tactic of resistance to illuminate some aspects of an image and obfuscate others.

I relate legibility to Simpson’s concept of *refusal* by asserting that artists control the legibility of an image, both through visual signifiers and textual accompaniment. Simpson defines *refusal* as “a willful distancing from state-driven forms of recognition and sociability in favor of others” (16). Simpson further explains how refusal can take many forms and how the Mohawk peoples of Kahnawà:ke deploy refusal in many aspects of their lives:

This practice of refusal includes the ways in which the formation of Kahnawà:ke’s initial membership code (now replaced by a lineage code and board of elders to implement the code and determine cases) was refused; the ways in which their interactions with border guards at the international boundary line were predicated upon a refusal; how refusal worked in everyday encounters to enunciate repeatedly to themselves and to outsiders: “This is who we are; this is who you are; these are my rights.” (106)

For Simpson, refusal can be an active turning away from political recognition, or it can be an act “of simply refusing the gaze, of disengagement” (106). Perhaps most importantly, Simpson details how refusal allows the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke to maintain their political sovereignty over Kahnawà:ke. While Simpson depicts refusal as a political tool, she also uses it in her writing as a methodological tool. She acknowledges that the people she writes about may not choose to share their thoughts and allows them the opportunity to refuse to share. Both the methodological and political forms of refusal are useful for thinking about refusal within legibility. If we examine an image of a person, we can see two ways of using refusal. The person depicted may refuse to explain parts or all of themselves to the artist depicting them. Someone editing or annotating an image may also choose to withhold information and refuse to answer questions for a viewer.⁵ In both cases, an Indigenous person, either the subject of the image or someone modifying the image, refuses the gaze of the settler, refuses the ability to be known and contained. Thus, while legibility may arise out of colonial desires to gain knowledge, and thus, power over others, Indigenous actors may coopt it.

II. *Legibility for the Colonizer: Harriot and De Bry's Annotated Images*

Harriot begins his report by outlining his purpose in writing the Report. According to his introduction, he hopes his reader “may generally know & learne what the countrey is, & thereupon consider how your dealing therein if it proceede, may returne you profit and gaine; be it either by inhabitting & planting or otherwise in furthering thereof” (Harriot 5). While contemporary readers can never know Harriot’s true intention, he does profess a desire for his reader to profit from the land, or even settle there. As I continue to analyze the *Report*, I urge my reader to remember the goals which underpin the dehumanizing aspects of the text and images.

Thomas Harriot's language in *A Brief and True History* about the Carolina Algonquin peoples whom he encountered illustrates the objectifying impacts of extractive and settler colonialism. At most points in the text, Harriot belittles their intelligence and criticizes their technology. In describing the Algonquins' character, he states, "In respect of us they are a people poore, and for want of skill and judgement in the knowledge and use of our things, doe esteeme our trifles before things of greater value" (25). In statements such as these, Harriot implies that their intelligence will make them easy to manipulate. However, at other points he concedes that they have some skills, for instance stating, "in those things they doe, they shewe excellencie of wit" (25). While this may seem like an acknowledgement of Indigenous intelligence, consciousness, and humanity, it serves to depict the Algonquin peoples as another resource to be exploited during colonization. In his introduction to the section "Of the nature and manners of the people," Harriot chillingly asserts, "they in respect of troubling our inhabiting and planting, are not to be feared; but that they shall have cause both to feare and love us, that shall inhabite with them" (24). While he may compliment aspects of Indigenous culture, Harriot only discusses these positive Algonquin attributes with the ultimate goal of colonization and exploitation in his mind. Because his goal was to convince other English people to become colonizers, Harriot's intended audience was presumably other Europeans. In this section, I study three images from Harriot's report, including their annotations, to consider how text and image complement and reinforce the messages of each.⁶

Harriot and De Bry depict the Algonquin peoples in an objectifying and assessing manner, illustrating their desire to render the Algonquins legible only as objects. In most of the images of people, De Bry depicts the front and back views, with the subject standing apart from other Algonquin people in the background. In the image "On[e] of the chieff Ladyes of Secota,"

(figure 1) De Bry shows a young woman in two poses: facing toward the front and facing away (43). The double pose, presumably intended to show the reader this woman's back and her clothes, illustrates how this image was intended to reveal as much visual information as possible to a reader. De Bry has also physically separated the young woman from the background; she stands on a ledge away from other Algonquin peoples fishing in the background. Through these small details, De Bry separates this woman from her actual cultural context. Instead, he renders her as an object of study, to be understood from several angles, but not as a subject completing any actions. In the description of this image, Harriot begins by stating, "The women of Secotam are of Reasonable good proportion," and then lists a description of their faces: "small eyes, plaine and flatt noses, narrow foreheads, and broade mowths" (43). His emphasis on their "reasonable good proportion" illustrates his interest in assessing the 'quality' of their bodies. The plural 'women' and features tell the reader that this woman exemplifies all the women of Secotam. Harriot also describes their clothes, their posture, and their ornamentation, almost cataloging the different physical attributes of Algonquin women. His annotation barely mentions women's behavior or roles, only mentioning activities, such as "walkinge in to the fields," and their desire to "see the hunting of deers" (43). The description of women's activities, which only includes walking and watching, minimizes the roles women played in Algonquin communities. The focus on appearance further minimizes women's agency and action, reframing Indigenous women as objects to be viewed. Harriot's description very clearly illustrates that the woman in the image is not an individual to him, and he does not bother to give her a name. By using one woman to represent all Algonquin women, Harriot further objectifies them, and implicitly, says that all Indigenous women are the same.



Figure 1. “On of the chieff Ladyes of Secota,” Theodore De Bry.

In other images of women, Harriot and De Bry make similar assessments and judgements on Algonquin women’s appearances. The image “A chieff Ladye of Pomeiooc,” (figure 2) shows a woman on the left and a child on the right (47). While they are apparently mother and daughter, De Bry also shows them separated from each other as well as from the background. Furthermore, the woman’s face is eerily similar to other women’s faces in the *Report*. The woman holds a gourd or vessel of some kind, which Harriot neglects to explain. Despite the fact that his annotation describes this woman from head to toe, he fails to explain *why* the women “Have their skinned pounced” and “they lay their hands often upon their Shoulders, and cover their brests in token of maydenlike modesty” (47). As Oberg and Moore point out, “When [Harriot] tells us that Algonquians “either pownes, or paynt their forehead, cheeks, chynne, bodye, armes, and legs” with a variety of images in a number of colors, he did not explain why” (Oberg and Moore 49). In the descriptions of women, Harriot thoroughly describes their appearances while dedicating only one or two sentences to their practices or behavior. Although he focuses heavily on describing appearance in his annotations, Harriot’s omission of beliefs, practices, or meaning behind appearance tells his reader that those aspects are not important. In order to make these

women legible, or understandable, to an English reader, Harriot and De Bry reduce them to their physical appearance and put them on display at all angles. The colonialist gaze that Harriot and De Bry exercise elides the thoughts and beliefs of Indigenous peoples, instead focusing on them as if they were objects or resources.

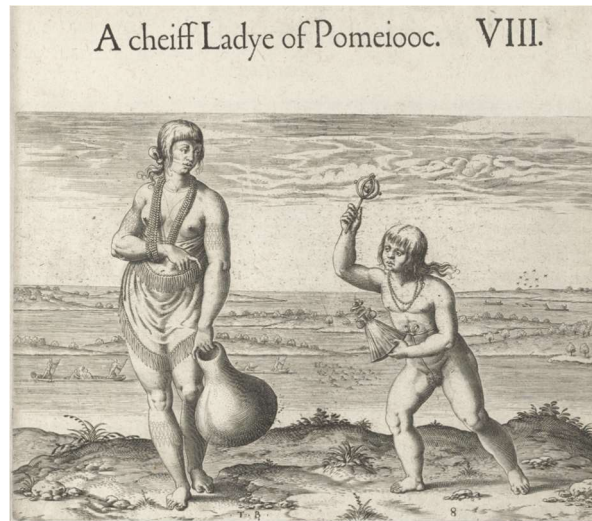


Figure 2. "A cheiff Ladye of Pomeiooc," Theodore De Bry.

In the final image of the Algonquin peoples, Harriot and De Bry show the reader some tattoos and their meanings. This image, titled "The Marks of sundrye of the Cheif mene of Virginia," (figure 3) shows an Algonquin man's back with the tattoo that identifies his tribal affiliation (Harriot 68). De Bry shows several other tattoos next to the man, each labeled with a letter from A to G. According to Harriot, these tattoos show "what Princes subjects they bee, or of what place they have their originall" (68). By using the language of 'subjects' and 'belonging' Harriot intimates a sense of ownership to the leaders. He does not conceive that these tattoos could indicate affiliation or community, instead imposing his own system of social organization. Harriot also states, "we have set downe those marks in this figure...that they might more easelye be discerned" (68). These are the only tattoos to which Harriot attributes meaning, as Oberg and Moore note. By asserting that the tattoos will help to identify Indigenous peoples, Harriot shows

his hand, so to say. He reveals that these images are for the purpose of educating future colonists. Harriot and De Bry did not intend to teach their readers about Algonquin culture and the importance of tattoos. They only explain the piece that they believe will be useful to an English colonizer. Tattoos illustrate one form of non-alphabetic media that can be read as a text. In fact, to a Carolina Algonquin person, these tattoos would make this image legible in many ways. However, Harriot only ascribes surface level meaning to non-textual media because English colonizers demonized non-alphabetic texts. In so doing, they further render a person they cannot ‘read’ as an object.

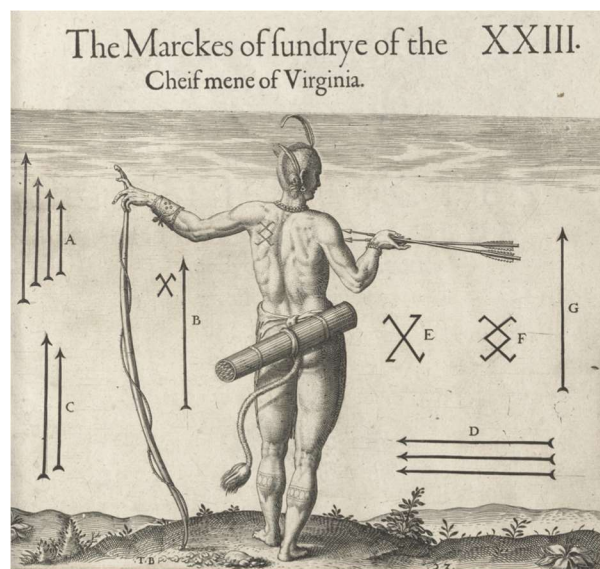


Figure 3. “The Marckes of sundrye of the Cheif mene of Virginia,” Theodore De Bry.

Although De Bry’s images are critical to the specific way the white settlers rendered Algonquin people legible, Harriot’s annotations most greatly impact how an English reader, the intended audience of his *Report*, would read these images. By focusing most of his description on the Algonquin people’s appearances, Harriot emphasizes their physical bodies, not humanity. Furthermore, the excessive detailing without explanation of meaning may even render these images as more foreign and exotic. Even in annotations in which Harriot dedicates some time to

describing Algonquin culture, he rarely explains the importance of cultural practices and beliefs. Alongside the rest of the text of the *Report*, these annotations demonstrate a profound othering of the Algonquin peoples. They are meant to be seen, to be looked at, but not to be understood. In this way, he uses annotation to make them legible as objects, as resources for future colonizers.

III. *Balancing Legibility and Refusal: Wendy Red Star's 1880 Crow Peace Delegation*

Examining images and annotations from the sixteenth century can illuminate the origins of legibility as a settler colonial concept. Harriot's annotations and De Bry's engravings give us valuable information about how early colonizers sought to portray Indigenous peoples. However, Indigenous artists and writers have also deployed legibility to portray themselves and others as fully human. Apsáalooke (or Crow) artist Wendy Red Star (also known as Baahinnaachísh) frequently looks to the archive for inspiration for her artwork. Unfortunately, depictions of Indigenous people in the archive were usually made by settlers, and they often objectify or exoticize their subjects. To combat this, Red Star explores the reclamation and humanization of Indigenous individuals within the archive. Here, I use her work to examine how an artist uses annotation to make someone legible as a person, in the process refusing the histories of objectification usually associated with this action.

Red Star's er project *1880 Crow Peace Delegation* uses several portraits of Apsáalooke Bacheeítuuk taken by C.M. Bell during the 1880 Crow Peace Delegation who traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with Ulysses S. Grant (now in the National Anthropological Archive of the Smithsonian Institute). While the leaders discussed Crow territory with Grant, they also sat for photographic portraits by Bell (Red Star and Vittoria 10). The Crow leaders they took copies of these images home, but the original photographs remained in possession of Bell, until they were given to the National Anthropological Archives. The images of these men were also placed

on widely distributed postcards and Native-themed memorabilia, without their permission -- itself a type of unacknowledged theft. Red Star even encountered the image as a part of the logo on bottled iced tea (14). As Scott Manning Stevens (Akwesasne Mohawk) discusses in an article about portraiture and tomahawks, portraits of Indigenous leaders often “present the normative European viewer with a collection of specimens meant to be metonymically representative of a larger population of ethnic Others” (Stevens 485). Even photographs of specific Apsáalooke leaders become representative of ‘the Indian’ to a European or Euro-American settler viewer. Objects such as the tomahawk, objects which are identifiably ‘native’ to a settler viewer, may not personalize a portrait, but rather place the sitter in a “sphere of alterity” (485), in so doing, perpetuating practices initiated in the 16th century by artists and authors like DeBry and Harriot.

While the Crow Peace Delegation portraits were taken by a white photographer, Bell was not the only creator. Each portrait was also crafted by the person it depicts. Through choice of dress and appearance, demeanor and countenance, each chief’s history and life may be legible to certain audiences. While material culture can signify Indigeneity to a settler viewer, Pratt argues, “if we use material culture to widen the aperture of perception, it may be that we can discern something that lies mute within these images; the residue of what the sitter brought to the occasion” (Pratt 20). This requires two shifts in our understanding of Indigenous portraiture. Firstly, we must acknowledge that these portraits are not exclusively for a settler viewer. Instead, as Red Star notes, the sitters of the portraits often valued the copies of the portraits they received (Red Star and Vittoria 5). Secondly, the portrait may incorporate “objects deliberately chosen by the sitter to frustrate the process of reading the image from “outside” and therefore acting as a form of cultural resistance” (Pratt 18). Keeping these points in mind, we must ask, for whom an image is legible and does the sitter want to be legible to everyone. As I explore the legibility of

Red Star's work, I will continue to trace in what ways she renders her subjects eligible for specific audiences.

Red Star traces the photos in red ink and adds her own annotation. Some of these notes include descriptions of the sitter's accessories and even details from the sitter's life. Red Star's annotation of these archival portraits acts on several levels to reclaim the images from the colonial archive and emphasize the humanity of the individuals depicted. She also illustrates the agency of the sitter in the creation of the portrait. While peace discussions with Grant ultimately led to the "coerced cession of Crow tribal lands to the government," the red ink allows Red Star to 'redraw' the boundaries created by colonizers and reassert control over the images of the Apsáalooke leaders (Rivera Fella and Laughlin Bloom).

Through an assemblage of personal, tribal, and historical information, Red Star's annotations give any reader more information about the sitter. For example, in the piece *Peelatchiwaaxpáash / Medicine Crow (Raven)*, (figure 4) Red Star writes, "Ermine on shirt, captured gun. Ermine leggings, successful war leader," with arrows pointing to the ermine on Peelatchiwaaxpáash's coat and leggings. Descriptive annotations provide different kinds of information to different audiences. To a viewer unaccustomed to the cultures of Indigenous Peoples of the Great Plains, Red Star points out crucial accessories and explains their significance. While this annotation gives an uninformed (read: settler) audience information about cultural practice, Red Star also gives her viewer more personal information. For instance, by pointing out "Hair bows were out of fashion in 1880" and "This hair bow is broken," Red Star indicates that Peelatchiwaaxpáash preferred hair bows even though they were no longer stylish, personalizing him as the subject. Furthermore, the broken hair bow could even show that Peelatchiwaaxpáash held onto this specific hair bow after it was broken, implying that this

In the two portraits of Alaxchiiyahush, (figures 5 and 6) also known as Many War Achievements and Plenty Coups, Red Star includes quotes, first person narration, and even references to herself. The inclusion of various types of annotation works in a much different way than Harriot's annotations. Rather than dictating one way of 'reading' the image, as Harriot's annotations seem to do, Red Star's collage of information opens various possibilities for understanding Alaxchiiyahush through his portrait. Like in the image *Peelatchiwaaxpáash*, Red Star includes both cultural annotation, specifically pointing out material culture, and biographical information. Red Star also speaks as Alaxchiiyahush, such as the annotation, "This eagle feather means I kicked ass first. I was the first man to touch the enemy first! I have the right to wear this eagle feather." Not only does this give the viewer information about the sacred nature of eagle feathers, but Red Star's imagined first person narration also gives Alaxchiiyahush a voice in this portrait. Furthermore, with more modern syntax of "kicked ass," Red Star produces a sense of familiarity and closeness; the feather is meaningful to Alaxchiiyahush beyond its cultural meaning. Red Star even includes several quotes from Alaxchiiyahush, including, "I am ashamed of you. Self-pity has stolen your courage, robbed you of your spirit and your self-respect; stop mourning the old days—they are gone with the buffalo...clean out your dirty lodges and go to work." Rather than mourning the effects of genocide and settler colonialism, which he would have every right to do so, Alaxchiiyahush speaks to his people about continuing in the face of adversity.

While Red Star's annotation of the portraits of Alaxchiiyahush include cultural, biographical, and personal information, she does not solely valorize him. In the second portrait, Red Star shares an anecdote about how Alaxchiiyahush gave away a large part of the Carbon County Reserve "for two white hookers and a 5th of whiskey." This annotation, which carries

criticism and frustration toward the bacheeítuuk, comes alongside the note, “I shook hands with Prince Albert of Monaco. He was lucky to shake hands with me.” These two pieces of information, one an indictment of Alaxchiiiaahush, the other praise of him, illustrates how this man was human, made mistakes, and was still important to his people. In presenting many types of information of the Apsáalooke bacheeítuuk, Red Star rejects a monolithic reading of these images. Instead, she asserts each man’s full humanity, cultural practices, personal preferences, and relationships to others, to reveal the depth of information within the portrait. Rather than constraining interpretation through annotation, Red Star presents an abundance of personal and cultural information. While we can never know a person’s full life from one image, even with annotations, Red Star reinscribes humanity into images which have previously been appropriated by settlers. In this way, Red Star makes the bacheeítuuk legible as complex, three-dimensional people, rather than as symbols of Indigeneity to a settler audience.

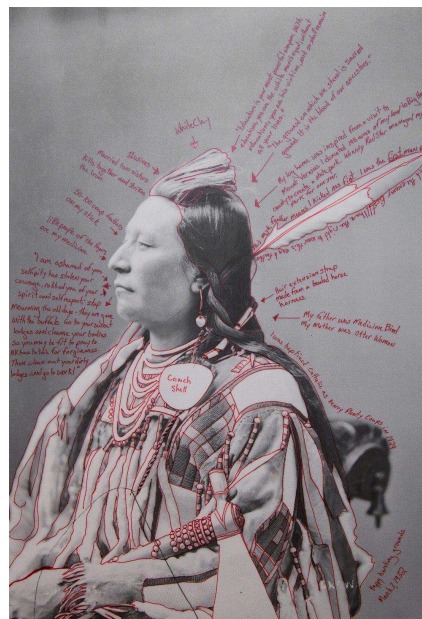


Figure 5. *Alaxchiiiaahush / Many War Achievements / Plenty Coups*, Wendy Red Star.

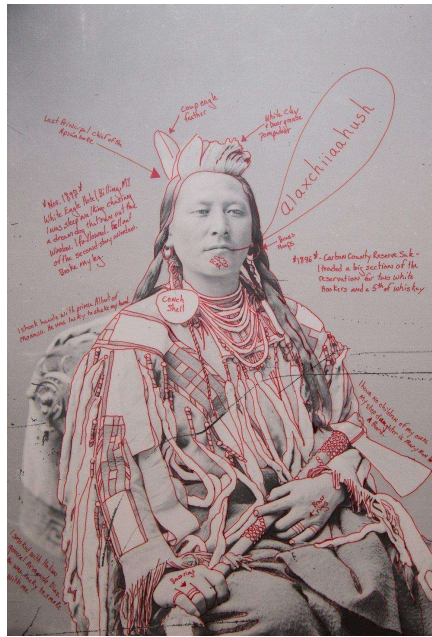


Figure 6. *Alaxchiiyahush / Many War Achievements / Plenty Coups*, Wendy Red Star.

While Red Star presents an almost over-abundance of information to make her images legible, especially to a settler audience unfamiliar with Alaxchiiyahush and other Apsáalooke bacheeítuuk, she also refuses to include some information. Even in older portraits, Stevens asserts, “we must ask what is *not* being represented,” because it can tell us vital information about an artist’s desires for their artistic representation (Stevens 491). In many portraits, Red Star includes the phrase “Happy Hunting Grounds” and a year, which indicates the year the sitter died. However, Red Star does not explain the meaning of this phrase. This tells me that Red Star does not intend to make these portraits fully legible to a settler audience. She refuses to explain or translate her commemoration of their deaths. As I have already noted, Red Star does not trace the facial features of the Apsáalooke bacheeítuuk (except for a scar on Alaxchiiyahush’s face). As Red Star and scholar Vittoria note in their article about *1880 Crow Peace Delegation*, Red Star uses, “red pen to trace, mark, and inscribe what has been lost over years of colonization and

systemic racism” (18). I interpret this as a refusal to reinscribe information over a person’s face, instead letting each sitter’s expression speak for itself. While she may include quotes or even speak for the sitter, Red Star refuses to cross the line of tracing their faces. Both details, while small, illustrate refusal within legibility. As Pratt reminds us, portraits may include “objects deliberately chosen by the sitter to frustrate the process of reading the image from ‘outside’” (18). Red Star’s refusal to explain certain objects extends the sitters’ own agency in their choices of personal and tribal artifacts in their portraits.

In her project *1880 Crow Peace Delegation*, Red Star balances legibility and refusal. By using images that have been sold and appropriated by settlers, Red Star’s project reclaims images of her people. Rather than using them on tea bottles or postcards, Red Star annotates the images with an abundance of different types of information. This annotation works to render the sitters legible as people, even to a settler audience. Red Star includes information about material culture, biographical facts, and even quotes to make her subjects’ humanity impossible to ignore; their humanity becomes legible to anyone who reads the annotation. Still, Red Star refuses to cross certain lines. She refuses to trace their faces, just as she refuses to explain why she uses “Happy Hunting Grounds,” in reference to their deaths. By establishing lines that she will not cross, Red Star also practices refusal: she refuses to give everything to a settler audience that might demand it of her. She illustrates how legibility and refusal can balance each other, while also displaying the tension the two create. Further, her work raises an important question for me: does legibility seek to overcome or overpower refusal?

IV. Conclusion: The Limits of Legibility

In this article, I have examined two collections of images. One set was created in the sixteenth century. The other was originally created in the nineteenth century, then reclaimed,

reconfigured, and annotated in the twenty-first century. Harriot's *Report* and the images in it contain a very clear message by white settlers about the Carolina Algonquin peoples. They are one aspect of the resources Harriot describes and his annotations illustrate how he saw them as objects. The combination of De Bry's images and Harriot's annotations serves to render Indigenous bodies as legible as objects. That is, they tell the intended reader, future English colonists, how to view the Indigenous people they see in the *Report*.

Wendy Red Star's images from *1880 Crow Peace Delegation* create a more complicated dynamic. Firstly, her project does not have the same homogeneous intended viewer population, as Harriot did. Secondly, her goal of rendering her subjects as legible as full humans is balanced with her refusal to explain all aspects of the images she annotates. While Red Star uses both refusal and legibility, her work raises questions on the usefulness of legibility. In *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson discusses her issues with recognition, and why refusal allows the Mohawk peoples of Kahnawà:ke to reject political recognition from the settler state of Canada because they do not recognize Canada as their sovereign. They refuse to play the game of recognition with a state that does not recognize their sovereignty. Because legibility deals heavily with a viewer's recognition of an image, is it useless in discussions of Indigenous people and Indigenous sovereignty? I argue that legibility gives us the tools to see how artists and writers frame Indigenous people. Do they frame Indigenous people as objects, as humans, or in another way? In what ways are artists and writers, such as Harriot, De Bry, and Red Star, attempting to influence their imagined viewer? As a theoretical tool, legibility gives us a framework for answering these questions. Furthermore, by locating legibility alongside the intended viewer *and* Indigenous people's ability to refuse, to refuse to explain or refuse to engage with the settler gaze, we can see how artists like Red Star reclaim images.

For whom did Wendy Red Star create the project *1880 Crow Peace Delegation*? Is it for the Apsáalooke viewer or a non-Apsáalooke viewer? Red Star does not answer, and the information in the images could point to both. I argue that, in rendering the Apsáalooke bacheeítuuk as legibly human *and* refusing to explain everything, Red Star creates images for her own people *and* those outside of her group. We can all learn from and feel the power of her reclamation of these images, no matter our background. She shows us the redemptive power of annotation and illustrates how legibility does not solely function as a tool of colonization.

Endnotes

1. In this article, Mt Pleasant, Wigginton, and Wisecup also problematize the time period and boundaries of ‘early America.’ For a more in-depth discussion of this term, its possible definitions, and how scholars have explored it, please read “Methods and Materials in Native American and Indigenous Studies: Completing the Turn.”
2. Here, my use of ‘recognition’ differs from Audra Simpson’s use of the term. Another gloss for my use of the term recognition could be acknowledgement. Both terms are loaded and carry meanings in NAIS and outside of it. For more on Audra Simpson’s use of “recognition,” read *Mohawk Interruptus*.
3. For more information on how colonizers have defined Indigeneity as a tool of settler colonialism, look to Patrick Wolfe’s text *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*.
4. For more information on Indigenous nations’ distrust of academics, especially anthropologists, perhaps begin with the chapter “Anthropologists and Their Friends,” in Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria’s foundational text *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*.
5. I do not incorporate European settlers’ omission of information into the concept of refusal. Although Simpson traces the genealogy of refusal to Hegel and Fanon, in her use and mine, it is specific to citizens of Indigenous nations and how they interact with settler colonial nation-states.
6. While I have not cited it in this section, Karen Ordahl Kupperman’s *Indians & English: Facing Off in Early America*, particularly the chapter “Reading Indian Bodies,” was incredibly helpful for my analysis of the images in Harriot’s *Report*.

Works Cited

Cohen, Matt. *The Networked Wilderness : Communicating in Early New England*.

University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Fellah, Nadiah Rivera, and Tricia Laughlin Bloom. *Wendy Red Star: A Scratch on the Earth*.

Newark Museum, 2019.

Harriot, Thomas. *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia : Of the*

Commodities and of the Nature and Manners of the Naturall Inhabitants. Discovered

by the English Colon There Seated by Sir Richard Greinuile Knight in the Eere 1585.

Which Remained Vnder the Gouvernement of Twelue Monethes, at the Speciall Charge

and Direction of the Honourable Sir Walter Raleigh Knight Lord Warden of the

Stanneries Who Therein Hath Beene Fauoured and Authorised b Her Maiestie :And

Her Letters Patents: This Fore Booke Is Made in English by Thomas Hariot Seruant to

the Abouenamed Sir Walter, a Member of the Colon, and There Imploed in Discovering

Cum Gratia et Priuilegio Caes. Matis Speciali. Typis Ioannis Wecheli, sumtibus vero

Theodori de Bry anno M D XC. Venales reperiuntur in officina Sigismundi Feirabendii,

1590.

Oberg, Michael Leroy, and David Moore. "Europeans in the Indians' Old World." *New*

Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History, edited by Jeffrey J. Crow,

The University of North Carolina Press, 2017, pp. 41–59.

Pleasant, Alyssa Mt., et al. "Materials and Methods in Native American and Indigenous

Studies: Completing the Turn." *Early American Literature*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2018, pp.

407–44.

- Pratt, Stephanie. "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s–1860s." *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming*, edited by Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Rebecca Tillett, SUNY Press, 2013, pp. 17–30.
- Red Star, Wendy. *Alaxchiiaahush / Many War Achievements / Plenty Coups, 1*. Artist-manipulated digitally reproduced photograph, 2014, <https://www.wendyredstar.com/1880-crow-peace-delegation>.
- . *Alaxchiiaahush / Many War Achievements / Plenty Coups, 2*. Artist-manipulated digitally reproduced photograph, 2014, <https://www.wendyredstar.com/1880-crow-peace-delegation>.
- . *Peelatchiwaaxpáash / Medicine Crow (Raven)*. Artist-manipulated digitally reproduced photograph, 2014, <https://www.wendyredstar.com/1880-crow-peace-delegation>.
- Red Star, Wendy, and Shannon Vittoria. "Apsáalooke Bacheeítuuk in Washington, DC: A Case Study in Re-Reading Nineteenth-Century Delegation Photography." *Panorama*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020.
- Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press, 2014.
- Stevens, Scott Manning. "Tomahawk: Materiality and Depictions of the Haudenosaunee." *Early American Literature*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2018, pp. 475–511.