Constructing America: English Encounters with the New World and the Development of Colonial Discourse, 1492-1607

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Abstract

This thesis explores English representations of America and Americans from the ‘discovery’ in 1492 to the establishment of the Jamestown colony in 1607. In examining this earlier period of English engagement with the New World, this thesis aims to illustrate the many ways that sixteenth-century understandings of America impacted the development of English colonial discourse, from shaping where colonies should be located, to influencing how native populations should be incorporated into colonising schemes. In particular, this thesis establishes two fundamental sixteenth-century approaches to the construction of English colonial ideology: the use of continental European portrayals of America that were manipulated and adapted to meet the discursive demands of early English projects in the New World and the selective appropriation of frameworks of knowledge, both old and new, that were employed in an attempt to explain the new lands across the Atlantic.

The following chapters analyse the various processes by which an English colonial discourse, focused on America, came into being. This thesis assesses how English colonisers and explorers constructed the theory of empire using Old World frameworks of understanding, examines how explorative failures and an oscillating English religious, economic, and cultural landscape affected early English colonial discourse, and explores how the practicalities of English trade and settlement in the New World manifested themselves in descriptions of native appearance and behaviour and in accounts of the American environment.

By employing a methodology of ‘thick’ contextualisation and close reading, and by interpreting travel narratives and colonial texts as sites where rhetoric, inter-textual influences, and cultural priorities converge, this thesis enhances historical understandings of the development of English colonial ideology. The formation of early English colonial discourse took place within an international framework of European rivalry and shared cultural heritage and a domestic context of fluctuating economic, political, and religious circumstances. This discourse, which was first articulated in the sixteenth century, was therefore the product of a complex process of assimilation, manipulation, colonial competition, and cultural appropriation.
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Introduction

In 1606 King James I of England and VI of Scotland chartered two joint-stock companies that would become known collectively as the Virginia Company. In December 1606 one of these companies, the Virginia Company of London, set sail to establish an English colony in North America. As every American school child knows, this colony, named by its founding members Jamestown, would become the first permanent English settlement in the New World. For authors of American history school textbooks, the establishment of the Jamestown colony in 1607 was a defining moment in the history of North America, marking the very beginning of Anglo-American history.¹ In contrast, this thesis reveals the complex and often malleable relationship between England and the New World in the sixteenth century and the effect that these earlier encounters had on later English colonialism in the region. By analysing this earlier era of English exploration and attempted settlement in America, this thesis examines the ways in which English colonial discourse was constructed, justified, and disseminated in the sixteenth century. In analysing this foundational era of English exploration and settlement in the New World, and by placing English voyages of discovery in their domestic and international contexts, this thesis transforms existing historical understandings of the origins of English colonial ideology in America and provides a vital insight into the ways in which it was created.

This thesis establishes two fundamental approaches to the construction of English colonial discourse: the selective appropriation of frameworks of knowledge, both old and

new, and the application and manipulation of continental European representations of America. The English legitimised their colonial exploits by employing diverse and well-known intellectual and religious frameworks, from classical climatology, to early modern humoralism, to religious schemes of providentialism, and Christian morality. By harnessing this vast array of knowledge, the English explained both failure and success, and created an assortment of flexible images of America and its peoples that were used to their own cultural, political, and colonial advantage. Continental European perceptions of America also played an integral role in the development of English colonialism. Writers utilised accounts of French experiences in America to reflect on their own disappointments and mistakes. The exploits of Spain were arguably even more influential, becoming central to English understandings of their own project. While the Catholic Mary I still sat on the throne between 1553 and 1558, the English consumption of Spanish descriptions of America fostered a colonialism of emulation. As Anglo-Spanish relations deteriorated, English colonialism began to develop in opposition to the Spanish model, using the flexibility of English categorisations of America to simultaneously attack the Spanish and justify their own methods. As this thesis argues, early English colonial discourse on America, which was first articulated in the sixteenth century, was a complex composite of international colonial influences and experiences, and English cultural, political, and social beliefs and concerns.

Sources and Methodological Approach

English Americana of the sixteenth century, which is the focus of this research, is comprised of a relatively broad spectrum of genres, from cosmographies and histories, to texts aimed at promoting English New World projects to investors and potential future colonists back home, to travel narratives penned by inquisitive explorers and merchants.
These texts represent invaluable sites where rhetoric, inter-textual influences, and cultural and social priorities intersect. The study of this material offers the historian a unique insight into the ways in which English explorers, translators, and editors consciously chose to present America and the cultural, political, and religious forces that implicitly influenced and shaped English responses to the new lands across the Atlantic.

This thesis utilises an innovative combination of translated continental European works alongside English-penned travel accounts from the sixteenth century. The majority of these sources will be familiar to scholars interested in both English and European colonialism, but the use of these disparate sources in tandem will offer a fresh insight into the ways in which English colonial thought developed, highlighting earlier European influences on English thinkers and examining divergences between English texts and those written by authors from other nations equally eager to establish New World colonies. By employing a methodology of close reading and ‘thick’ contextualisation, this thesis uncovers the many international and domestic ideas and concerns that influenced English representations of the Americas. By comparatively utilising both English and translated European texts, then, and by placing them in both a domestic and trans-European and trans-Atlantic context, this thesis establishes a more complete and nuanced picture of the English explorative and colonial experiences of the sixteenth century.

2 The term ‘thick description’ (described here as thick contextualisation for clarity) was coined by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle and expanded upon by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz. It refers to Geertz’s methodological approach towards ethnography and the necessity to not only explain a behaviour, but also to explain the context of a behaviour, in order to render it meaningful to an outsider. For a discussion on the meaning of ‘thick description’ see: Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture”, in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30; Joseph G. Ponterotto, "Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept ‘Thick Description’," The Qualitative Report 11, no.3 (September, 2006): 538-549.
These sixteenth-century sources are undoubtedly remarkable in their content, providing genuine insights into early English views of America. They are, however, limited in number, especially when compared to the plethora of books that appeared in England with American themes in the seventeenth century. The English were conspicuously late into the race to establish colonies in the New World and this fact obviously affected the number of texts published on the topic of the new lands in the first half of the sixteenth century. While the English population in general may not have been particularly interested in the discoveries made across the Atlantic in 1492, a small, yet highly influential group of men, including Richard Eden, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Ralegh, and Richard Hakluyt, were nonetheless committed to promoting America and potential future English colonies to their readers throughout the sixteenth century. Despite the limited number of texts dealing with America in sixteenth-century England, and despite the fact that these texts were increasingly produced by a close circle of inter-connected interested parties, they nevertheless, as this thesis shows, had a profound effect on the way in which English colonialism developed well into the seventeenth century.

This modest collection of early English Americana, while not enabling us to uncover how far the discovery of America impacted upon English society as a whole, does allow for a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which early advocates of English exploration and settlement in the New World firstly understood the new lands of America and secondly developed their own colonial plans for the region. In the 1550s the promotion of English colonies was largely left in the hands of one man, the prolific translator Richard Eden. Through his translations of key European texts relating to the Spanish and Portuguese explorations of

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the New World, Eden brought the first detailed images of America to an English readership as well as the first sustained calls for English activity in the region. Eden’s abridged and greatly condensed versions of the Italian historian Peter Martyr’s *De Orbe Novo*, the Spanish historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s *La Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, and the German cosmographer Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia*, illustrated to English readers for the first time both the benefits and dangers of European travel to the New World, themes that would continue to dominate English texts on America throughout the sixteenth century. Through these texts, Eden showed how wealth and natural resources could be successfully extracted from the new American environments and how the savage and ungodly native peoples of the region could be raised to European civility and converted to the true Christian faith. At the same time, Eden’s translations also highlighted the somewhat uneasy relationship between European bodies and the American environment, recounting tales of European sickness and native resistance and violence.

As the sixteenth century wore on, other interested parties began printing texts in a bid to describe the lands and the peoples that they had encountered across the Atlantic and to promote their burgeoning colonial projects. In the 1560s the voyages and exploits of John Hawkins in the Caribbean demonstrated to English readers the many calamities that could befall a traveller in foreign and distant lands. As Hawkins himself explained in his own account of his 1567 voyage, the animosity of the Spanish and their unwillingness to trade with the English, coupled with appalling weather that hampered the fleet’s return home, had been detrimental to the voyage, resulting in the crew facing starvation and extreme sickness.

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Accounts of the Hawkins voyages also illustrated to English readers the priorities of those engaged in travel to the New World. The purpose of these voyages, amongst others undertaken by the likes of Sir Francis Drake, was to accumulate vast amounts of wealth through acts of privateering and piracy aimed at both the Spanish and French.

It was also in the 1560s that English translators and printers first began looking towards the French for information on the new lands across the Atlantic. In 1562 the French Huguenot Jean Ribault had undertaken his first exploration of Florida, returning through England the following year. An account of his voyage appeared in English in 1563 and introduced a highly positive assessment of the Floridian people and environment. English interest in the hotly contested region of Florida was short-lived, however, as in 1566 another account of Ribault’s exploits in Florida was published in England that highlighted the dangers of engaging in colonial activity in the region of America that had already been claimed by the Spanish Crown. Nicolas Le Challeux, a member of Ribault’s crew, recounted the disastrous events of the 1565 voyage to Florida. The venture ended with the destruction of the French settlement by the Spanish and with the execution of Ribault, putting an end to both French and potential English plans for the region. A third influential French text, however, was translated into English in 1568, providing more detailed information on the various regions of the New World and implicit suggestions as to where prudent European settlement may take place in the future. Thomas Hacket’s translation of André Thevet’s 1557 work, Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique, drew important distinctions between the native peoples of South America and those of the more northerly regions. While the indigenous peoples of the south

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8 Nicolas le Challeux, A True and Perfect Description, of the Last Voyage or Navigation, Attempted by Capitaine John Rybaut (London, 1566).
lived, according to Thevet, like brutish beasts, those in the north were considered more
civilised.\textsuperscript{9} This more positive assessment of the people of North America, coupled with the
demonstrable dangers of attempting settlement in the Spanish sphere of influence, arguably
encouraged English pro-colonists to focus their efforts on the more northerly regions of the
Americas. Indeed, from the 1570s onwards, English colonial attention was squarely directed
towards the North American continent.

It was in the 1570s that the English undertook their first sustained attempts to settle
in the New World. Towards the end of the decade accounts of Martin Frobisher’s voyages to
the Far North began appearing on the booksellers’ stalls of London. The narratives of these
voyages highlighted the frustrations of these early English colonial projects and the perceived
reasons behind their failures. For one member of Frobisher’s crew who wrote an account of
his time in Meta Incognita, Dionyse Settle, it was the harsh climate and lack of critical natural
resources, combined with the beastliness and hostility of the Inuit, which made English
settlement in this region of America a near impossibility.\textsuperscript{10} If English colonialism in America
was to be successful it was imperative that explorers find a region of the New World that not
only suited them in terms of climate, but also provided ample profitable commodities that
could be exploited by investors back home.

The 1580 English translation of Jacques Cartier’s account of his three voyages to
Canada in the 1530s set out what had gone wrong in the explorations of Meta Incognita and
encouraged future English colonists to set their sights on the more temperate, southerly

\textsuperscript{10} Dionyse Settle, \textit{A True Reporte of the Laste Voyage into the West and Northwest Regions, &c. 1577} (London,
1577).
regions of the Americas in the future. Three years later, and offering similar advice, Sir George Peckham and Christopher Carleill penned tracts that encouraged English settlement in Newfoundland. Making similar arguments to those that had been expressed in the English edition of Cartier, both Peckham and Carleill argued that Newfoundland represented a suitable region for English settlement due to the fact that it shared a similar climate to that of England and was home to a number of critical commodities that could be exploited for profit by England’s merchants. This optimistic view of the North American continent would continue to be expounded throughout the 1580s with the English attempt at settlement in Virginia, orchestrated by Sir Walter Ralegh. In the promotional texts related to this project, most notably Thomas Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, Virginia was presented as a region of the New World that was perfect for English habitation. Not only was Virginia home to a vast array of profitable merchandise, the native peoples were also believed to have great potential for receiving English civility and religion. Having ostensibly learned from the mistakes of the 1570s voyages to the Far North, and despite the difficulties faced by the early settlers at Roanoke, English pro-colonists would continue to encourage English settlement in Virginia well into the seventeenth century.

As this thesis illustrates, each of these distinct periods of English engagement with America influenced the development of a specific English discourse of colonialism. Learning from the mistakes and experiences of their predecessors, whether English or otherwise, English commentators and pro-colonialists continued to refine, adapt, and promote their

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11 Jacques Cartier, *A Shorte and Briefe Narration of the Two Navigations and Discoveries to the Northwest Partes called Newe Fraunce* (London, 1580).
projects throughout the sixteenth century. Indicative of this process of collating information for colonial purposes is Richard Hakluyt the younger’s colossal text _The Principal Navigations_ which was first published in 1589, with an extended version appearing between 1598 and 1600.\(^\text{14}\) Bringing together an extensive range of sources, Hakluyt’s text synthesised European knowledge and experience of the New World in the hope that it would encourage the continuation of English exploration and settlement in America. Hakluyt was not to be disappointed. In 1607, after almost a century of English engagement with the lands across the Atlantic, English advocates of colonialism in America finally achieved their goal of establishing a permanent English settlement in the New World at Jamestown, Virginia.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

This research takes an interdisciplinary approach towards colonial sources, drawing on an array of historical, literary, and anthropological methodologies. This thesis is predicated on the notion that early modern travel narratives and promotional texts offer a valuable insight into the workings of early modern culture and its textual imprint. For this reason, this research is indebted to the school of New Historicism in one key respect; the movement’s suggestion that culture was in fact text opened up a vast array of marginalised sources for detailed literary criticism.\(^\text{15}\) It was within this context that early modern travel narratives became texts worthy of analysis by literary scholars, with much of the recent research on these sources coming from New Historicists or scholars influenced by its principles.\(^\text{16}\) Although the New

\(^{14}\) Richard Hakluyt, ed., _The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation_ (London, 1589); _The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation_ (London, 1598-1600). Unless expressly stated, further citations for this text will relate to the 1598-1600 edition.


\(^{16}\) Works on this topic by New Historicists include: Stephen Greenblatt, _Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World_ (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); Mary C. Fuller, _Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Hulme, _Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797_ (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Jeffrey Knapp, _An Empire Nowhere: England,
Historicist approach has been integral in bringing colonial texts to the fore of current research, the methodology of New Historicism is not without problems. As Shannon Miller has argued, while New Historist methods can reveal the integrated nature of culture, the idea that society can be revealed through evidentiary fragments threatens to return us to a ‘monolithic vision’ of culture. This ‘totalizing’ view of culture, in which patterns of thought and discourse become dominant and easily identifiable, frustrates attempts to explore historical transformation and, at times, presents a problematically static view of culture.\(^\text{17}\)

Similar criticisms have also been levelled at the work of micro-historians. While micro-historical studies have undoubtedly complicated our understanding of the past by focusing their attention on peripheral and marginalised individuals and on isolated, and at times unrepresentative, events taking place within a broader historical framework, critics have suggested that the narrow focus of micro-history has led to either generalizations of culture or an unwelcome return to antiquarianism.\(^\text{18}\) Geoff Eley has argued that the ‘cultural turn’ of the 1980s, in which the development of micro-history played an important role, led to the side-lining of social history and a turn away from historical analysis that attempted to paint the bigger picture of society as a whole. This is not to say, however, that Eley believes that the innovative analytical approaches of cultural historians should be abandoned, but rather incorporated into a broader history of society.\(^\text{19}\) Going further than Eley, David Armitage and


Jo Guldi have argued in their provocative and somewhat controversial book, *The History Manifesto*, that in order to play a significant role in contemporary society, the discipline of history must return to macro-historical analyses and move away from studies that focus on what Armitage and Guldi dub the ‘Short Past’.20

This thesis subscribes to neither the narrow anecdotal analyses of New Historicism, nor the tightly focused approach of micro-history. Nor does it, however, advocate the notion put forward in *The History Manifesto* that ‘Big History’ and a return to the *long durée* represents the only means by which historians can significantly and successfully engage with the past. Instead, this thesis utilises many of the laudable approaches of micro-historians and New Historicists, most notably their recognition of complexity and diversity and their application of extensive contextualisation, in order to elucidate the fluctuating relationship between England and America across the sixteenth century, examining how these changes forged the climate in which English colonialism would flourish in the seventeenth century.

This thesis is not primarily concerned with the *reality* of the New World and its peoples, but with the English *perception* of them. Important work has been undertaken that attempts to recover indigenous voices from colonial texts.21 However, the objective of this thesis is to uncover the many European voices, and the many cultural influences, involved in the construction of early English colonial ideology. The English approach to America in the sixteenth century was at times highly inconsistent and volatile, being adapted to meet new

domestic and international political and cultural realities and being transformed in response to failed English voyages and colonial disappointments. Rather than a coherent set of images, English portrayals of America were diverse and changeable and influenced by various aspects of both European and specifically English aspects of cultural, religious, and political thought. Because of the complexity and trans-national nature of English perceptions of America in the sixteenth century, two aspects of cultural theory have been particularly helpful for framing this research: cultural *bricolage* and intertextuality.

The influential French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his seminal book of 1962, *The Savage Mind*, first introduced the notion of the *bricoleur* and the process of *bricolage*. Originally conceived of as a metaphor for what Lévi-Strauss dubbed ‘mythical thought’, the *bricoleur*, a person akin to a professional handyman man in English, used whatever tools were available for the task at hand. In much the same way, a key characteristic of Lévi-Strauss’s ‘mythical thought’ is the way in which it expresses itself by means of a ‘heterogeneous repertoire’ that although extensive is ‘nevertheless limited’. Mythical thought, then, is itself a kind of ‘intellectual bricolage’, a kind of intellectual do-it-yourself. In contrast to the engineer who attempts to go beyond the constraints imposed by particular states of civilisation, the *bricoleur* ‘by inclination or necessity always remains within them.’ Put simply, the engineer ‘questions’ the universe, while the *bricoleur* uses the tools of his society and culture to make sense of the universe.

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23 Ibid., 19.
Since Lévi-Strauss’s development of *bricolage* it has been applied to various disciplines ranging from literary criticism and business management, to evolutionary biology.\(^{24}\) It is the use of *bricolage* in cultural studies that is most pertinent to this study however. As Wendy Knepper has argued in her analysis of colonisation and creolisation in the Caribbean, *bricolage* can be seen as a ‘mode of interpreting and adapting existing materials to new circumstances’.\(^{25}\) In contrast to Lévi-Strauss’s politically neutral use of the term, Knepper’s understanding of cultural *bricolage* involves ‘selective, coerced, forced, and violent intermixtures in addition to spontaneous meldings, subversive appropriations, and processes of adaptation’.\(^{26}\) It is this conception of *bricolage* that is most useful for understanding the ways in which English writers of the sixteenth century constructed both their own particular picture of the American lands and their approach to colonisation. As each of the following chapters will highlight, early English portrayals of America were a complex composite of various cultural influences, both consciously and unconsciously employed. Some English representations of America were undoubtedly politically motivated, being used to justify English colonialism, while others reflected the precarious economic situation of sixteenth-century England and contemporary anxieties related to religious reform and moral conduct. Whether intentionally evoked for political reasons or not, it is clear that early English images of America were undoubtedly a product of sixteenth-century English culture. English understandings of the body, human diversity, the history of the British Isles, correct religious observation, and contemporary worries over the moral decay of civilisation were all collected

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\(^{26}\) Ibid., 73.
together and redeployed in the context of English colonial activity in the Americas. Early English representations of America, therefore, were the product of a cultural *bricolage* that attempted to make sense of this new and unknown environment by employing a set of cultural tools and materials available to the English of the sixteenth century.

Another key objective of this research is to trace the various influences of other colonising nations, most notably Spain and France, on English representations of America and on English colonial discourse. In order to do this effectively, an appreciation of the various processes of intertextuality, that is the relationship between different texts, is paramount. Gérard Genette’s structural theory of intertextuality is of particular use for this analysis.\(^27\) In Genette’s definition of the term, intertextuality refers to both the explicit and implicit use of other sources to create a new text. These influences can be direct and evidenced through quotation or explicit reference, or indirect through plagiarism or mere allusion.\(^28\) As this thesis illustrates, early English accounts of America employed a combination of explicit and implicit intertextuality, referencing ideas and images of America from continental European texts, but also utilising older sources relating to British history, medieval ethnography and classical geography to help shape English responses to the New World.

**English Colonialism in the Americas**

The dominant narrative of English beginnings in the Americas has largely condemned the sixteenth century to relative historical obscurity. For historians interested in the development of English colonial ideology, and indeed identity, it was in the period of permanent English settlement in the New World, ushered in with the survival of the

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\(^{28}\) Ibid., 2.
Jamestown colony, that the origins of English colonialism have been most clearly discerned. Many scholars begin their discussions on the development of English colonial identity with a glance towards the late sixteenth century, particularly the failed attempt at settlement at Roanoke, and yet this period of English engagement with America is largely dismissed as precursory rather than foundational. Jack P. Greene, for example, in his assessment of the development of early modern British colonies in the Americas, ignores the sixteenth century altogether, beginning his analysis in the first decade of the seventeenth century, arguing that by 1660 two distinct English colonial models had been established.\(^{29}\) The colonies in the Chesapeake were highly materialistic and largely secular, while those of New England were religiously centred and self-consciously traditional.\(^{30}\)

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, in her many works dealing with the encounter between the Indians and the English, has been less dismissive of the sixteenth century. Kupperman has expertly traced the many confrontations that took place between American peoples and English colonisers, incorporating information from the 1580s onwards.\(^{31}\) Although the early Roanoke voyages play an important role in Kupperman’s analysis, the bulk of her inquiry is based on sources from the seventeenth century when continual encounters between the English and the Amerindians became a reality.\(^{32}\) The decision of these scholars to focus on

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\(^{32}\) Kupperman does utilise various sources from the sixteenth century in her analysis but these tend to be used alongside sources from the seventeenth century to make similar points. For example, in a chapter examining the ways in which English explorers and colonisers ‘read’ Indian bodies Kupperman moves seamlessly between examples taken from the writings of David Ingram from the late sixteenth century, to those written by William
the seventeenth century is unsurprising, given the fact that interactions between Amerindians and the English become more plentiful in the seventeenth century as English colonialism became more permanent, and the number of sources pertaining to the English experience in America increased dramatically. This focus has, however, obscured the significance of the sixteenth-century English voyages to the New World. It has led, for example, Catherine Armstrong, a historian of the seventeenth-century Anglo-American world, to define the explorations of the English in the sixteenth century as the ‘pre-history of English involvement in North America’. As this thesis argues, the experiences of English explorers and colonisers in America in the sixteenth century, and indeed their interest in the experiences of other European colonising nations, did not merely reflect a pre-history or prologue for what was to come later. The ways in which the English engaged with America in the sixteenth century were crucial to the construction of an English colonial discourse that reached maturity at the turn of the century, a discourse that would have significant repercussions for the early English colonies. The sixteenth century was thus a critical period in the history of the encounter between America and England and indeed in the history of the development of English colonial thought.

Wood during the Pequot War in 1636-37. Kupperman’s analysis therefore leaves little room for assessing the difference in representations that can be identified across the sixteenth century; Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 47-48. A similar approach to source material can be found in Bernard Sheehan, *Savagism & Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Catherine Armstrong uses this phrase in the abstract to her PhD thesis; Catherine Armstrong, ”Representations of American ‘Place’ and ‘Potential’ in English Travel Literature, 1607-1660,” PhD Thesis (University of Warwick, 2004), 8. Even though this phrase does not appear in the monograph related to this earlier research, the Elizabethan voyages to America are still condensed into a short chapter of the book entitled ‘prologue’, suggesting that the sixteenth-century English experience in America is not central to Armstrong’s understanding of the development of the early English colonies; Catherine Armstrong, *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century: English Representations in Print and Manuscript* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), 1-15.
The Sixteenth-Century English Approach to America

The importance of the sixteenth century for English constructions of colonial ideology and thought has more recently begun to bear the fruits of detailed academic enquiry, albeit in a rather disjointed and disconnected manner. While scholarship on the sixteenth-century English engagement with America has undoubtedly identified some critically important ideas, it has largely failed to address the changing nature of English attitudes towards America across the sixteenth century. Joyce E. Chaplin, in her wide-ranging book dealing with science and technology on the early modern Anglo-American frontier, has convincingly argued that understandings of science, medicine, and nature were at the very heart of English colonisation, influencing the ways in which English colonisers engaged with indigenous Americans and significantly impacting how English imperialism developed. In her analysis of the earliest era of English contact with America, Chaplin argues that the relationship between the English and the Indians was not one of presumed English superiority but one in which English explorers promoted respect for Indian technology and Indian views of nature. This focus on science, technology, and the human body and its relationship to the environment has enriched our understanding of early English colonial thought, moving beyond the realms of religion and politics to identify a more intimate, physical connection between the English and the natural world of America. English understandings of the human body also form an integral aspect of this thesis, particularly in terms of how medical theories of the body impacted on early English colonial discourse. Unlike Chaplin, however, this thesis asserts that English attitudes towards native bodies and the potential bodily effects of the American

environment were by no means static in the sixteenth century. While Chaplin implies that English attitudes towards America remained consistent throughout the sixteenth century, arguing that 1500 to 1585 represented a phase of English colonisation in which the English were uncertain of their ability to master nature, leading to a respect of Indian technology, this thesis instead argues that English ideas relating to bodily health, in an American context, changed in response to New World experience, being adapted to meet the changing objectives of English explorative and colonial policy.36

A fixed understanding of the English approach to America in the sixteenth century can also be found in the work of Mary Fuller and Andrew Fitzmaurice. Analysing the period 1576 to 1624 Fuller suggests that a clear and consistent rhetorical strategy can be found in the printed accounts of English voyages to the Americas, a strategy that Fuller dubs the ‘recuperation’ of failure.37 Whether analysing the voyages of the 1570s to Baffin Island, or those to Virginia in the 1580s, Fuller revises the notion that the early history of English America was one of ‘glorious expansion’, arguing instead that in many ways in the early encounter between England and America failure was predicted and recuperated through rhetorical strategies.38 Fitzmaurice has likewise suggested that the sixteenth-century English approach to America was underpinned with a consistent rhetorical and intellectual strategy. In contrast to Fuller, Fitzmaurice argues that early English colonialism was articulated through the language of humanism and, in particular, the moral philosophy of honour and profit.39 In a similar fashion to both Chaplin and Fuller, however, Fitzmaurice fails to examine the many inconsistencies, contradictions, and differences in approach that were characteristic of

36 Ibid., 16-21.
37 Fuller, Voyages in Print, 12.
38 Ibid., 11-14.
39 Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, 20-57.
sixteenth-century English exploration and settlement in the Americas. Although, as this thesis shows, the explanation of failure and the influence of humanism were, at various points in the sixteenth century, critical to English understandings of America, English colonial rhetoric was nonetheless changeable throughout the sixteenth century, being adapted to meet the specific requirements of the various colonial projects that were undertaken in the period.

**Sixteenth-Century Societal and Cultural Influences**

In order to build a more complete picture of the English approach to America in the sixteenth century it is crucial to understand the rhetoric of colonialism alongside the very real challenges faced by early English explorers and colonisers in the New World. In many of the texts dealing with English experiences in the Americas rhetorical strategies often collided with ostensibly candid responses to the miseries, danger, and strife of early modern voyages, creating a vision of America that was, at times, contradictory and highly ambivalent. Shannon Miller, in her work on the patronage network of Sir Walter Ralegh and the various New World voyages associated with it, has explored what she describes as both the ‘metaphorical’ and ‘material’ demands of early English colonial projects. Miller argues that social and economic conditions in England shaped a set of diverse, and at times competing, responses to America. For example, in the English propaganda on the Roanoke project, capital impulses and feudal conventions of obligation competed with one another, while in the texts related to the Guiana voyage of 1595 trade is balanced with obeisance. By destabilising and decentralising notions of patronage, and highlighting the interaction and conflict between multiple sites of power and production within these networks, Miller creates a complex,

41 Ibid., 85.
nuanced reading of early English New World projects. The material demands of each voyage impacted upon the rhetorical strategies employed in the various texts associated with them, reconfiguring how the New World, and indeed England, was perceived. While Miller’s work undoubtedly illustrates the important interaction between material demands and metaphoric expression in the voyages of exploration undertaken by the Ralegh circle, her analysis of the societal forces shaping such expeditions remains rather narrow, focusing largely on the political and economic demands of each colonial project.

As the following chapters illustrate, it was not only the political and economic landscape of sixteenth-century England that influenced writing on America, but also the religious beliefs, international rivalries, and cultural expectations of sixteenth-century Englishmen involved in American enterprises. Andrew Hadfield, although not specifically focusing on English texts written about America, has also suggested that colonial writing was varied, lively, and a product of the domestic context in which it was written.\textsuperscript{42} Hadfield has traced English representations of foreign lands and non-European peoples in both non-fictional and fictional texts and the ways in which they reflected the political environment of early modern England.\textsuperscript{43} As Hadfield argues, English travel writing was written, either wholly or in part, in order to participate in contemporary debates, whether on the nature of society, fears of foreign influence undermining English independence, religious toleration and persecution, or the protection of individual liberty.\textsuperscript{44} English representations of foreign lands were thus products of English society and culture. These societal influences, however, were by no means solely employed by English writers in order to participate in contemporary


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 1-16.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 12.
debates taking place back home. The various cultural forces that helped shape English responses to America were both consciously and unconsciously employed, articulating anxieties about England’s place within this newly expanding world and aiding the construction, justification, and validation of English colonial thought.

**Internationalising English Colonialism in America**

Aside from assessing the domestic cultural forces that helped shape English responses to the New World, another intrinsic aspect of this thesis is to establish the trans-national connections that influenced English understandings of America and their approach to settlement and colonisation. 45 A small body of literature has already begun to unpick these connections. The influence of English colonisation in Ireland on English approaches to America, and indeed vice versa, was first analysed in detail by David B. Quinn.46 As Quinn has argued, many of those who were involved in projects in Ireland were likewise the early proponents of English activity in the Americas, including Sir Walter Ralegh, Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Ralph Lane.47 More recently Nicholas Canny has extended this discussion on the reciprocal nature of English colonial projects in Ireland and the New World.48 As Canny persuasively suggests, the experience gained in Ireland throughout the sixteenth century


47 The exploits of these men, both in America and Ireland, are explored in Quinn, *Raleigh and the British Empire*.

‘proved useful’ for those who went to America. Canny notes in great detail the inherent differences between the English colonisation of Ireland and the subsequent colonisation of North America, but he also argues that the two projects nonetheless influenced and complemented one another, affecting how the English dealt with native populations and contributing to the migration movements westwards of the early modern period. By placing the English approach to Ireland in a colonial context, then, a context that incorporates English settlement in the Americas, Canny argues that the previously claimed ‘uniqueness’ of the Irish historical experience cannot be sustained given the similar events and processes taking place across the Atlantic.

Aside from England’s close neighbours in Ireland, historians have identified additional connections between English projects in America and outside influences, which this thesis explores in detail. María Fernanda Valencia Suárez, for example, has analysed early modern English understandings of the Aztecs through the lens of imperial ambition. Valencia Suárez argues that from the early sixteenth century, the English used the image of the Aztec Empire to justify their own political and colonial aspirations in the New World. Valencia Suárez’s work, although narrowly focused on English representations of the Aztecs, provides an important insight into the ways in which the emergence of the British Empire took place within an Atlantic network, with ideas travelling between America, Spain, and the British Isles throughout the early modern period.

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49 Ibid., 17.
50 Ibid., 31-102.
51 Ibid., 140-141.
53 Ibid., 253.
This thesis is also concerned with the translation of Spanish colonial ideology into what Gesa Mackenthun has referred to as ‘an English plan for empire’.\(^{54}\) Mackenthun has suggested that English attitudes towards America were heavily influenced by the experiences of Spain in the Caribbean and Central and South America. Despite the growing animosity between the Spanish and the English in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Mackenthun argues that English colonial discourse was ‘solidly intertwined with its Spanish predecessor and rival’.\(^{55}\) According to Mackenthun, the ‘textualization’ of the Spanish experience in Mexico and Peru provided ‘an important ideological and political reference point’ to English ventures in both North America and the Caribbean, shaping English responses and methods of colonial justification.\(^{56}\) Rather than seeing the early English approach to colonising schemes as essentially the same as Spanish colonial practice, as Mackenthun has, this thesis traces the changing English attitude towards Spanish imperialism over the course of the sixteenth century, from one of admiration and imitation in the 1550s to one of criticism and opposition in the 1580s.\(^{57}\) It was not, however, solely the Spanish experience of America that influenced English representations of the new lands. Early French and Portuguese experiences in the New World also served as important points of reference for many early proponents of English colonial activity. This thesis, therefore, extends the work of Suárez and Mackenthun to highlight the various trans-national and European textual influences on English responses to America, illustrating how the exploits of Spanish and French explorers were used to justify English colonialism, to critique the imperial approach of rival nations, and to reassess failed English attempts at settlement in the New World.


\(^{55}\) Ibid., 71.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 141.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 69.
The Construction of Discourses of Discovery

It is not, however, only the English context of voyages to the New World that can help illuminate the process by which an English colonial discourse came into being. A number of studies that have examined the construction of European colonial discourse in the Americas more generally also offer important insights. Edmundo O’Gorman, in his seminal work *The Invention of America*, first highlighted that the European ‘discovery’ of America was a historical misnomer. As O’Gorman expertly argued, the idea of America was a European invention based upon Old World understandings of geography, human diversity, Christian belief, and history. Building on this notion of invention and assimilation, J. H. Elliot has argued that for much of the sixteenth century, the representation of America in Europe relied heavily on categorisation that was consistent with Old World beliefs. According to Elliot, during the early decades of European exploration in the Americas, ‘tradition, experience and expectation were the determinates of vision’.

The work of Anthony Pagden has been particularly influential in bringing these concerns to the fore of scholarship on European imperialism. Pagden’s analysis of the ways in which Europeans confronted the problem of the ‘incommensurability’ of the American lands has clear parallels with the sixteenth-century English experience of America. In the early decades of European contact with the Americas, the new lands were made commensurable to European understandings of the world and human behaviour through

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59 Ibid., 51-138.
61 Ibid., 20.
62 Anthony Pagden’s work on early modern European colonialism includes: *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993); *Lords of All the World*.
63 Pagden, *European Encounters*. 
what Pagden calls the ‘principle of attachment’.64 Put simply, in order to understand the behaviours of native peoples and the composition of American environments, European writers and explorers were forced to shrink the distance between themselves and America by attaching an unfamiliar action to a familiar one.65 What follows from an act of attachment is an act of recognition, made at the expense of detaching original native practices from their contexts.66

While Pagden defines the principle of attachment as a complex mental strategy used to confront the incommensurability of America, this thesis contends that it was also used as an explicit strategy for justifying English colonial activity.67 As chapter one illustrates, the peoples of America were attached to a familiar narrative of British history, in which a Welsh prince was believed to have travelled and settled in the lands across the Atlantic, to allow English writers to make the existence of the American peoples commensurable with their own experiences and to create an English territorial claim to the New World. In this way, the principle of attachment could be both consciously and unconsciously employed, to shrink the cognitive distance between England and America, but also to validate English colonial projects.

The changing dynamic between New World experience and Old World expectation in sixteenth-century Europe was also critical to the development of English colonial identity. Anthony Grafton’s work on the power of tradition and the shock of discovery has been highly influential in assessing the impact of the New World on the Old.68 Grafton argues that the

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64 Ibid., 17-24.
65 Ibid., 21-22.
66 Ibid., 21.
67 Ibid., 47-48.
discovery of America was highly destabilising as it highlighted the deficiency and inaccuracy of classical, canonical texts that European thinkers had trusted for centuries.69 For sixteenth-century Europeans, these authoritative texts were often the only tools they had for understanding alien societies, but as Grafton contends, ‘like other tools, these often broke in the hands of those who used them’. Despite the dawning realisation that classical writers had been wrong on a number of aspects of natural history, from the number of continents to the existence of monstrous peoples, these learned texts and theories nonetheless showed ‘astonishing flexibility and resilience’, being adapted to incorporate the new knowledge discovered across the Atlantic.70 This flexibility of Old World tradition, deployed in the shocking new context of America, is clearly identifiable in early English encounters with America. As chapter four highlights, classical theories on bodily health were applied to the native peoples of America, and used to identify both strong, healthy natives in Virginia, and unhealthy, deformed ones in Meta Incognita. Chapter one further reveals how other classical ideas, such as the theory of habitable and uninhabitable climates were less resilient, being abandoned in the face of overwhelming, contradictory evidence from the New World.

It was not, however, merely European beliefs about foreign peoples that impacted upon the ways in which the English engaged with the lands and peoples of the Americas. The reality of every-day life in the New World, as experienced by European explorers and colonisers, often informed theories of imperialism, which in turn instructed colonial policy. Rebecca Earle has explored these complicated processes in her study of food and the colonial experience in Spanish America.71 By examining Spanish ideas about food and the body, Earle

69 Ibid., 2-5.
70 Ibid., 10.
offers an extraordinary insight into the ways in which explorers and settlers physically experienced colonialism in America. As Earle argues, the Spanish became increasingly anxious about the effect that unfamiliar native foods would have on their bodies, leading to a colonial policy that attempted to recreate the constituents of a Spanish diet in the New World. The unaccustomed food stuffs of the Americas, coupled with Spanish understandings of the body that linked good health with a diet suited to particular national complexions, thus had serious implications for the ways in which Spanish imperial policy developed, giving diet ‘exceptional importance in the maintenance of colonial order’. Both chapters three and four analyse similar processes in the English context, illustrating how understandings of the mundane cultural practices of dressing and eating affected English approaches to colonisation in the Americas.

**Structure**

This thesis examines the various processes by which an English colonial discourse, focused on America, came into being. It analyses the theoretical tools of empire created and utilised by the English, the changing realities of English engagement with America over the course of the sixteenth century, and the practicalities of English settlement and commercial exploitation in the New World. Chapter one analyses how English writers, explorers, translators, and colonists constructed English colonial ideas for an American context. Through a process of selective appropriation, English writers transformed ideas about America first articulated in continental Europe into theoretical tools of empire. In particular, the chapter analyses the English use of Amerindian origin theories, the discourse of monstrosity, and early

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72 Ibid., 54-75.  
73 Ibid., 217.
modern understandings of climate to illustrate how Old World knowledge was transformed in an American context. Even though a shared European cultural heritage, based on the Bible and classical texts, informed English responses to America, the way in which these ideas were used differed dramatically between colonising nations. Chapter one thus highlights the ways in which European ideas about America circulated in sixteenth-century England, being adapted and remodelled to meet the objectives of a burgeoning English colonial discourse.

Chapter two explores the challenges of English exploration and settlement in America during the sixteenth century, illustrating how frustrated ambitions and a changing relationship with the behemoth of conquest in America, Spain, impacted the English colonial project. It traces, in particular, the emergence of a colonial discourse that placed godly conquest at its centre and analyses the changing nature of the English relationship with America over the course of the sixteenth century, from the emulation of the Spanish in the 1550s, through the aggressive piracy of the 1560s, to the resurgence of a godly vision of empire in the 1580s.

Chapter three analyses the various ways in which English writers utilised the appearance of indigenous Americans across the sixteenth century. English perceptions of Amerindian appearance, particularly in terms of dress, were multi-faceted, performing a variety of functions, from informing English approaches to trade and colonisation, to reflecting the intense debates taking place back home on the topics of religion and morality, and echoing and bolstering shared European attitudes towards nakedness. English understandings of native appearance, then, not only reflected the practicalities of English colonial exploration, in which securing private investment was key, but also the changing cultural and religious landscape of sixteenth-century England. On the one hand, the clothing,
or indeed lack of clothing, of the indigenous Americans was used to assert the controllability of native populations and their capacity for English civility and religion, while on the other clarifying contemporary English beliefs on appropriate dress and appearance. The clothing of native Americans thus reflected the fundamental realities of early English exploration and colonialism and the idiosyncrasies of sixteenth-century English society.

The final chapter explores how English understandings of the body narrated the early colonial experience in America. English descriptions of their own bodily reactions to the American environment and its unfamiliar sources of food, coupled with their perceptions of native bodies, became barometers through which to measure the success, or indeed failure, of English New World projects. In the early decades of English exploration in the Americas, in which inimical climates, inappropriate and insufficient food, and hostile relations with the Spanish were detrimental to English exploration and settlement, native bodies reflected the disappointment of explorers and justified the abandonment of colonial projects. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, English perceptions of Indian bodies had changed markedly, and were now seen as healthy, productive, and robust. Alongside this, by the end of the sixteenth century the belief that English bodies would fare equally well in the temperate climes of North America was also well established, reflecting the new-found confidence of a variety of early English pro-colonialists in their projects. Understandings of the body were thus integral to the encounter between England and America, being used to define, justify, and critique certain aspects of English colonial policy.

By analysing this earlier era of English contact with the Americas, then, this thesis sheds new light on the ways in which the New World was incorporated into the English imagination, and enriches historical understandings of the development, validation, and
justification of English colonial ideology. English colonial discourse was not produced in a vacuum. It was the result of decades of translating and transforming French, Portuguese, and Spanish images of America, appropriating and manipulating intellectual frameworks that attempted to explain the presence of these new lands, experiencing and reacting to the realities of both failed and successful English attempts at settlement, and assessing the practical needs of English men and women making the decision to cross the Atlantic in search of a new life.
Chapter One: Selective Appropriation: The Theoretical Origins of English Colonial Discourse

‘Tuesday, October 23rd / I wished to-day to set out for the island of Cuba, which I believe must be Cipangu [Japan], according to the indications which these people give me concerning its size and riches.’

Christopher Columbus

With these words from his journal of 1492, Christopher Columbus, the Genoese merchant sailor and somewhat reluctant ‘discoverer’ of America, made a geographical mistake that he was to repeat consistently until his death. Columbus was convinced that the land he had inadvertently sailed to in 1492 was not a newly discovered world, but instead the eastern extremities of the Asiatic continent. Columbus’s unwavering belief was the product of his understanding of the size of the world, the distance between Europe and Asia, and the proportion of land to sea. Columbus’s assumptions were based on his interpretation of Aristotelian and Biblical explanations of the earth’s formation and on the findings of earlier explorative expeditions such as those of Marco Polo. European perceptions of the new lands across the Atlantic, as illustrated by Columbus, were thus often informed and coloured by European knowledge and Old World tradition. When European eyes gazed upon America, they saw what they expected to see. As J. H. Elliott famously put it, for these explorers, tradition, experience, and expectation were their ‘determinates of vision’. This did not mean, however, that this process of viewing, in which expectation and experience were key, was in any way passive or subconscious in nature. As this chapter argues, through a process of

2 O’Gorman, Invention of America, 54-61.
cultural bricolage Europeans expertly manipulated, adapted, and selectively appropriated a number of intellectual frameworks to make sense of the radical difference of America, and to justify their colonial decisions and responses to native peoples. By examining the European use of theories of Amerindian origins, the discourse of monstrous races, and classical climate theory, in an American context, this chapter establishes how ideas about the New World circulated internationally, being adapted and manipulated to serve the particular needs of those employing them. For Spanish conquistadors of the early sixteenth century, for example, monstrosity could be used to highlight American alterity and exoticism, while for the English it could be used to establish political authority and colonial validity. Theories of Amerindian origins could be used by the Spanish to legitimise their colonial approach to the New World, in which conversion of rational natives was imperative, whereas for the English, hypotheses about exactly where native Americans had come from could be used to illustrate ancient English ties to the New World and the likelihood of finding a Northwest Passage to Asia. Although a shared European cultural heritage informed many European responses to America, then, creating the theoretical tools of empire, the ways in which it was employed differed radically. By examining the ways in which English explorers, authors, translators, and editors borrowed information from their continental European neighbours and adapted it to suit their own needs, this chapter demonstrates, to a degree that has not been done by other scholars, the ways in which the English engaged with America and legitimised their own specific approach to settlement and colonisation.

The impact of European knowledge, tradition, and experience on the reception of America into early modern European thought has been pervasive in the historiography and yet it has tended to portray this European inability to recognise the uniqueness of America as a product of an inflexible and monolithic early modern mind. Lynn Ramey and Margaret
Hodgen, for example, have both suggested that early accounts of America were heavily influenced by classical and medieval models of ethnography and fantasy, colouring and distorting the ways in which America was portrayed in the early decades after discovery. Anthony Pagden, in his pioneering work on the origins of comparative ethnology, has also argued that in the early years of European contact with the Americas there was a severe ‘problem of recognition’ and a strong belief that ‘the new could always be satisfactorily described by means of some simple and direct analogy with the old’. In contrast, this chapter contends that Old World knowledge relating to human history, exotic peoples, and climate was consciously employed by English writers to justify their approaches to the New World, rather than as an unconscious reflection of their own incapability to recognise American difference. Anthony Grafton has complicated this image of the inflexible European mind through his analysis of how the shock of the discovery of the New World collided with the enduring power of Old World tradition. As he argues, despite the growing realisation that experience in the New World called into question the validity of hallowed classical texts on geography and natural history, these canonical texts nonetheless proved remarkably resilient, being adapted to incorporate the new knowledge discovered in the Americas. As this chapter shows, this conscious adaptation of classical theory to meet the new demands of knowledge gained in the Americas became a crucial aspect of English colonial validation. By adapting

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5 Pagden, *Fall of Natural Man*, 10-11.  
6 Historians have noted, however, a transformation of European understandings of America towards the end of the sixteenth century in which the novelty of the New World was increasingly recognised. On the rise of comparative ethnology see Pagden, *Fall of Natural Man*; Hodgen *Early Anthropology*. On the growing acceptance of American alterity see Elliott, *The Old World*; Inga Clendinnen, “‘Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty’: Cortés and the Conquest of Mexico,” in *New World Encounters*, 12-47.  
7 Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*, 10.
classical theories on climate, for example, English explorers could promote certain regions of the New World by proving their habitability and fertility.

Old World understandings of both natural and human history were not only utilised to contain the American lands within the binds of European experience; they were also used to define what European experience in America could and should look like. A number of studies have begun to unpick how some of these conceptual frameworks were applied to the New World, illustrating the peaks in popularity of certain ideas, and the various ways they were employed by different colonising nations. Harold J. Cook, for example, in his study of the theory that America was in fact the fabled island of Atlantis, has suggested that ideas about American origins affected the way in which the English engaged with America. Cook argues that the Atlantis theory was popular throughout Europe due to the fact that it fitted into a sixteenth-century vision of history that predicted the return of the Golden Age. In the hands of English writers, however, the theory flourished, being adapted to bolster English claims to an imperial title in the New World. In a similar fashion for the seventeenth century, Richard W. Cogley has explored the popularity of Amerindian origin theories amongst Puritans on both

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10 Ibid., 38-41.
sides of the Atlantic in the 1640s and 1650s, illustrating how waxing and waning apocalyptic expectation affected both English understandings of native origins and the way in which colonisers engaged with the indigenous population. Conceptual frameworks, based upon Old World understandings of religion, history, and human diversity, were thus utilised in a number of ways, bolstering religious assertions and justifying English colonialism.

This chapter extends and retools this body of scholarship, illustrating how traditional European frameworks of religion, science, and culture were transformed to meet the needs of England’s burgeoning colonial identity. By utilising Old World ideas relating to monstrosity, human diversity, and climate, English writers and colonists created a set of tools of empire that could successfully justify and shape their approach to the New World. In adapting European theories that were first applied to the new American lands by Spanish and French writers and explorers, the men involved in early English colonial projects in America were able to legitimise their claims to territory in the New World, explain their increasingly positive assessment of native peoples, validate their decision to focus their colonial attention on the lands of North America, and convince potential investors and colonisers of the validity of their projects. In this way, then, Old World frameworks of understanding, rather than being restrictive, became flexible rhetorical tools that made America comprehensible and more importantly open to European manipulation. It was, therefore, not the innocent nor incapable eye, but ‘the selective eye’ that first viewed America, seeing not what was really there, but what was most advantageous to the political, economic, cultural, and colonial aims of the viewer.\(^\text{12}\)


\(^{12}\) The term ‘selective eye’ is taken from Cook, “Ancient Wisdom,” 43.
Amerindian Origins and the Legitimisation of Empire

In 1520 the English printer, and sometime dramatist John Rastell, put down in print, in the form of a play, a question that was to puzzle Europeans for centuries. The play was composed soon after Rastell’s own disastrous colonial venture that aimed to reach the New World. In the play Rastell pondered the nature of the inhabitants of the strange new lands of America, describing how they ‘lyve all bestly / For they nother know god nor the devell / Nor never harde tell of hevyn or hell / Wrytynge, nor other scripture’. He also posed an intriguing question about the Amerindians; ‘but howe th[e] people furst began In that countrey or whens they cam’, i.e. what were the origins of the native inhabitants of America?

Rastell would not be the last to pose this question. The debate over where the Amerindians had originated became a hot topic for many authors writing about the discoveries in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Unlike Rastell, however, who offered no theory of his own, preferring to leave such questions ‘for clerkes’, these other writers did propose a variety of theories that would connect the peoples of the New World to the history of the peoples of the Old World. Once the newness of America had been accepted, and Columbus’s consistent belief that he had in fact reached Asia had been shed, the recognition that the very existence of native Americans posed a problem for early modern Europeans began to emerge.

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13 Rastell set sail for the New World in the summer of 1517, hoping to settle the lands that had been claimed by the English in 1497 and to find a Northwest Passage to Asia. The venture was a disaster as Rastell’s crew abandoned him in Waterford and sold Rastell’s cargo in Bordeaux. Rastell remained in Ireland for two years, where he is believed to have composed A New Interlude; Cecil H. Clough, “John Rastell,” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, last accessed 21 June, 2016, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23149?docPos=1.
14 John Rastell, A New Interlude and a Mery, of the Nature of the iiiij Elements (London, 1520), sig. C2r.
15 Ibid., sig. C2v.
16 Ibid.
men were descended from Adam and Eve, and more specifically from the three sons of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japhet. In order to preserve the veracity of the biblical account of the dispersal of mankind, native Americans had to be linked to the sons of Noah, and by extension, to the peoples of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Scholars such as Huddleston and Robert F. Berkhofer have analysed in great detail the development of some of these theories on Amerindian origins but they imply in their work that the development of these theories was largely motivated by an urge to reconcile the scriptural account of the dispersal of mankind with the discovery of a continent filled with peoples previously unknown to the Old World. In this reading, then, the debate surrounding the origins of native Americans was in essence a theological one. While this is undoubtedly true in some cases, it is also clear that Europeans manipulated theories of Amerindian origins to meet other political, economic, and colonial objectives. How this was achieved depended heavily on who was writing and for what reason. English responses to Amerindian origins, while undoubtedly shaped by Spanish views, were presented in a way that emphasised the particular concerns of late sixteenth-century English explorers and pro-colonists. As we shall see, the English in particular harnessed theories of Amerindian origins, not merely to prove the validity of the Bible, but to prove the validity of the English territorial claim to America and their belief in a Northwest Passage to Asia. English theories of Amerindian origins thus reflect the process by which information regarding the new lands was circulated, digested, and transformed to meet specific English needs.

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18 Ibid., 9.
For English readers, their first exposure to theories regarding the origins of the native peoples of America came, as did much of the early information on America, through Richard Eden’s 1555 translation of Peter Martyr’s *Decades*. First published in its entirety in 1530 under its Latin title, *De Orbe Novo Decades*, Martyr’s original lengthy text detailed the early Spanish discoveries and explorations of the New World. Martyr had left his native Italy, in his own words, to ‘collecte, these marvelyous and newe thynges, which shoulde otherwyse perhappes have line drowned in the whirlepoole of oblivion’. He quickly rose through the ranks in Spain, becoming a member of the Council of the Indies and a trusted advisor of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. His comprehensive accounts of the early decades of Spanish contact with America proved popular, with subsequent abridged and partial editions of the text appearing in French in 1532, German in 1534, English in 1555, Dutch in 1563, and Italian in 1564. Eden’s 1555 edition, however, contained more than just his translation of Martyr’s *Decades*. It also included abridged and greatly condensed versions of Francisco López de Gómara’s *Historia General de las Indias* and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s *La Historia General y Natural de las Indias*. Both Gómara and Oviedo were closely connected to events taking place in Spanish America, Gómara as secretary and chaplain to Hernán Cortés and Oviedo as a colonial administrator in Santo Domingo, with both later producing chronicles of the events that they had witnessed or heard tell of. Because of the compiled nature

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21 This quotation is taken from Martyr’s preface to the extended edition of the *Decades* from 1516. This is cited in Andrew Hadfield, “Peter Martyr, Richard Eden and the New World: Reading, Experience and Translation,” *Connotations* 5, no. 1 (1995/96): 9.


of Eden’s text, a number of theories relating to Amerindian origins were introduced, discussed, and on occasion, discounted.

In the early years of European exploration in the Americas the methodological approach of writers who wished to deduce the origins of Amerindians was essentially deductive and exegetical. This was also the case for the theories presented in Eden’s text. One of the earliest theories relating to the origins of the peoples of the New World was first expounded by Christopher Columbus and later relayed to European readers by Peter Martyr. This theory claimed that America, particularly the island of Hispaniola, was in fact the land of great riches that the biblical King Solomon had purportedly sailed to - the land of Ophir. As James Romm has argued, it is clear from Columbus’s own writings that the story of Ophir heavily influenced the Admiral’s engagement with America. Columbus invoked the salient passages from the Old Testament books of Kings and Chronicles dealing with Solomon’s voyage in a number of texts including in his letter to Ferdinand and Isabella from his fourth voyage to the New World in 1503. In the letter, Columbus stated that, in his opinion, the mines that King Solomon had found in Ophir were identical to the mines that he had found in the New World. He concluded by suggesting that ‘Jerusalem and Mount Sion are to be rebuilt by the hands of Christians’, with the Christians in question being Columbus and the subjects of Spain. Equating Hispaniola with Ophir was not only ‘good public relations’ as it gave credence to the idea that America, like Ophir, was filled with riches. It also highlighted Columbus’s own personal piety and his belief that his discovery represented a providential

27 Christopher Columbus, “A Letter Written by Don Christopher Columbus, Viceroy and Admiral of the Indies, to the Most Christian and Mighty Sovereigns, the King and Queen of Spain,” in Christopher Columbus, With Other Original Documents Relating to the Four Voyages to the New World, ed. and trans. R. H. Major esq. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), 197.
event on the short road to the End of Days in which the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem was key.28

Peter Martyr in his retelling of the theory was, however, less than convinced. Martyr restated Columbus’s belief that Hispaniola was in fact Ophir on multiple occasions, but he was unwilling to suggest whether or not this belief was true, stating that ‘whether it bee soo or not, it lyeth not in me to judge, but in my opinion it is farre of’.29 If the English readers of Eden’s text were in any doubt about the validity of Columbus’s claims they need only return to Eden’s own preface to find a firm denunciation of this particular theory. In his address to the reader, although claiming in a somewhat similar fashion to Columbus that the Spanish had ‘planted a newe Israell mucche greater than that whiche Moises ledde throughe the red sea’ in America, Eden argued that the fact remained that during the time of Solomon’s voyages there was ‘no knowleage of Antipodes’ and ‘neyther dydde any of his [Solomon’s] shyppes sayle abowt the hole worlde’.30 Eden found no evidence that the lands that Solomon had travelled to were in fact the lands of the New World. Eden even suggested that the Spanish explorations of America had actually exceeded Solomon’s voyages in terms of wealth and territorial gain. As Eden informed his readers, in the tales of King Solomon we do not read ‘that any of his shyppes were so laden with golde that they soonke, as dyd a shyppe of kynge Ferdinandos’ and nor could Solomon’s dominion that ‘extended from the ryuer of Euphrates to the lande of the Philistians’ be compared ‘with the large Empire whiche the kynges of Spayne have in the west Indies’.31 In the opinion of Eden, then, America was not the Ophir of

29 Quotation from Martyr, Decades of the Newe Worlde, fol. 22. Martyr asserts Columbus’s belief that Hispaniola is in fact Ophir on fol. 2, fol. 10 and fol. 22.
30 Ibid., sig. A4r.
31 Ibid.
the Bible but a much more impressive region of the world that was home to far more riches and precious materials than even Solomon could have imagined.

For the English, who had no claim to the territories already taken by the Spanish in the Caribbean, connecting Hispaniola to King Solomon’s fabled Ophir held little appeal. With the rejection of this theory in Eden’s text, the idea of a clear biblical origin for the peoples of America appeared to wane in the English context. Indeed, Berkhofer has argued that scriptural interpretations of Amerindian origins were rarely employed due to the belief in the validity of the Bible’s explanation for the dispersal of man.32 The English instead turned to explanations that relied less on scriptural analysis and more on hallowed classical texts and their particular understanding of the history of the British Isles. Once more, we must turn to the work of Richard Eden to identify the root of some of these English explanations. Although Eden had discredited Columbus’s theory that America was Ophir, there was another key theory on Amerindian origins that was introduced in the section of the book taken from Gómara’s history of the Indies; this was the theory that America was in fact the fabled, lost island of Atlantis. Gómara found the hypothesis that America was Atlantis thoroughly convincing, beginning his discussion on the Atlantis theory by exploring the history of the story. As Gómara suggested, the existence of an island named Atlantis was first espoused by the Greek philosopher Plato in his two dialogues Timaeus and Critias. Atlantis, as Gómara explained, was purported to be an island ‘greater then Affrica and Asia’. The kings of Atlantis were said to have ‘governed a greate parte of Affrica and Europe’ until ‘a certeyne greate earthquake and tempest of rayne’ ‘soonke’ the island, drowning its people. Whether this story had any truth to it was of course debateable, with Gómara reminding his readers that

32 Berkhofer, White Man’s Indian, 35.
‘sum take this for a fable’ while others ‘for a trewe hystorie’. Gómara himself felt that the European discovery of America once and for all proved the veracity of Plato’s tale; according to Gómara, there was ‘nowe no cause why wee shulde any longer doubte or dispute of the Iland Antlantide, forasmuch as the discoverynge and conquest of the west Indies do plainly declare what Plato hath wrytten of the sayde landes’. Gómara had deduced from Plato’s writings that as Atlantis was said to have been located ‘in the sea Atlantike’ and after its demise ‘that sea Atlantike coulde not bee sayled’, the idea that America, hidden in the dangerous and difficult to traverse Atlantic Ocean, was in fact Atlantis looked increasingly likely.

The idea that America was in fact Atlantis became extremely popular amongst writers attempting to deduce the origins of the Amerindians. Harold J. Cook has suggested some possible reasons for this theory’s popularity, arguing that the Atlantis story fit perfectly into a sixteenth-century vision of history in which ‘the present was witness to the return of a Golden Age’. Alongside these more theoretical motivations, it can also be argued that for writers such as Gómara making the connection between Atlantis and America served more practical functions. The Spanish imperial project relied heavily on papal support. The papal bull *Inter Caetera*, issued in 1493, stated very clearly that the Spanish claim to the lands of America was entirely bound up with conversion; the Spanish Crown was given the right to seek out ‘mainlands remote and unknown and not hitherto discovered by others, to the end that you might bring to the worship of our Redeemer and the profession of the Catholic faith

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34 Martyr, *Decades of the Newe Worlde*, fol. 310.
35 Ibid.
their residents and inhabitants.’\textsuperscript{37} In order to convert Amerindians to Catholicism it first had to be proven that the peoples of the Americas were indeed rational humans, capable of receiving the gospel.\textsuperscript{38} In this context of proving Amerindian rationality, the story of Atlantis was particularly useful. It illustrated that the peoples of the New World were indeed connected to those of the Old through the lineage of the people of Atlantis, without contradicting or misinterpreting the Scripture. This not only served to reconcile the biblical account of the dispersal of man with the discovery of America, illustrating clearly that all men, including the Amerindians, were descended from the progenitors of Adam, but also proved that the Amerindians were capable of receiving the gospel due to their inherent, if not immediately obvious, humanity. By identifying the Amerindians as lost and degenerate Atlanteans, Spanish writers could maintain the unity of mankind and in doing so strengthen their own colonial claims to a land in desperate need of Christian conversion.

While the Spanish arguably used the Atlantis theory to bolster their American conversion project, the English use of the story justified their early approach to the Americas which focused on discovering a Northwest Passage to Asia. English uses of the theory thus differed dramatically from those of the Spanish. The English enthusiasm for the Atlantis theory has been explored by both Harold J. Cook and Margaret Small who have analysed both the intellectual and practical significance of the theory in sixteenth-century England. According to Cook, the development and popularity of the Atlantis theory was, to begin with, the product of a common Renaissance outlook which claimed a new Golden Age was at hand.

The New World, with its rich supply of precious minerals and metals, well-stocked forests,

\textsuperscript{37} Papal Bull, “Inter Caetera, 1493,” American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond, the University of Groningen, last accessed 30 June, 2016, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/before-1600/thepapal-bull-inter-caetera-alexander-vi-may-4-1493.php.

\textsuperscript{38} Pagden, \textit{Fall of Natural Man}, 104-119; Patricia Seed, “‘Are These Not Also Men?’: The Indians’ Humanity and Capacity for Spanish Civilisation,” \textit{Journal of Latin American Studies} 25, no. 3 (October, 1993): 635-637.
and exotic animals, seemed to confirm this supposition. When placed in the hands of English writers, however, Cook argues that the Atlantis story became conflated with other tales, most notably the belief that Queen Elizabeth I was a descendant of the Trojans, in an attempt to validate English exploration and colonisation in the Americas. Consequently, what began as an expression of Renaissance humanism became, in an English context, an increasingly supplementary aspect of an American creation myth that attempted to justify an English empire. Margaret Small, while agreeing that some English manifestations of the story were motivated solely by political and colonial interests, argues that the theory was also utilised to make sense of the rapidly expanding world of the sixteenth century, especially by the Elizabethan polymath and early advocate of English imperialism, John Dee. Small argues that Dee’s use of the theory illustrates the influence of Neoplatonic thought on geography after the discovery of America. As Small suggests, Dee believed in the Platonic principle that there was an underlying unity and balance in the world. Within this framework, Atlantis-as-the-Americas represented an inhabited world that acted as a ‘counterpart and counterweight to the known world’, providing mathematical balance and thus terrestrial unity. It was these philosophical interpretations of Plato’s work, rather than the physical geography of the Atlantis myth, that Small argues convinced audiences well-versed in humanism of the merits of projected English voyages like those to discover a Northwest Passage to the East.

Intellectual understandings of the Atlantis story are undoubtedly critical since they helped shape English responses to a newly expanding world, yet the practical use of the

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40 Ibid., 40-42.
41 Margaret Small, “From Thought to Action: Gilbert, Davis, And Dee’s Theories Behind the Search for the Northwest Passage,” Sixteenth Century Journal 44, no. 4 (2013): 1044-1045.
42 Ibid., 1048.
43 Ibid., 1049
44 Ibid., 1057-1058.
theory in an English context should not be underestimated. It was the work of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in particular, that reflected the practical use of the Atlantis story for would-be English explorers.45 Half-brother to the more famous Sir Walter Ralegh, Gilbert, along with many other Englishmen, was convinced of the presence of a Northwest Passage to the wealthy lands of Cathay, now modern-day China.46 But what does this question of geography have to do with the legend of Atlantis? Atlantis, as has already been suggested, was famously an island. As Gilbert explained in his short pamphlet on the subject from 1576, because ‘Atlantis, now called America was ever known to be an island, and in those days navigable round about’, ‘a far greater hope now remaineth of the same by the northwest’.47 Put simply, if you could sail around the northwest coast of Atlantis, you could sail around the northwest coast of America because they were one and the same. The attempt to find a new passage to Cathay was integral to English aspiration at this time. As Gilbert suggested in a letter to his brother, John, which is printed at the beginning of his pamphlet, the discovery of a new passage to Cathay by the English would open up an abundance of ‘wonderful wealth and commodities’.48

Gilbert also implicitly explained why a Northwest Passage to Cathay would prove most favourable. Not only were the Portuguese in control of the route around the Cape of Good Hope, but the route itself was extremely dangerous as ‘the greatest Armados’ ‘cannot without great difficulty passe that way’.49 Gilbert also rejected the notion of a Northeast Passage, stating that in this part of the world ‘no shippe of great burden can navigate in so shallow a sea’, with the ‘gross thicke ayre’ of the region making any navigation extremely difficult.50

48 Ibid., sig. ¶¶¶4v.
49 Ibid., sig. D4v.
50 Ibid., sigs. E3r-F1r.
Northwest Passage, where conditions were believed to be much more favourable, was thus the only logical route for the English to establish.

By connecting America to the lost island of Atlantis, Gilbert was justifying his reasons for believing there to be a navigable Northwest Passage to Cathay. Atlantis, or indeed America, was to be England’s door to wealth and European supremacy. With empirical data on the existence of such a passage lacking, and with the dominant belief that true wisdom about the world was to be found in the major works of antiquity, classical theories and philosophical ideas became the only way for Gilbert and his fellow mariners to gain support for their explorations. This reliance on canonical classical literature, a feature that also, as we shall see, influenced to varying degrees English understandings of monstrosity and climate in an American context, was undoubtedly a result of the sixteenth-century English educational system. By the end of the century it was largely agreed amongst pedagogical theorists that English education, from the grammar school to the university, should be based around the humanist principles of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. Within this educational scheme the retrieval and preservation of an ancient form of wisdom, derived from the works of classical thinkers, was of profound importance. Andrew Fitzmaurice has contended, moreover, that the humanist imagination in fact dominated early English colonial projects, with many of the men at the forefront of colonisation, including Gilbert, being trained in the studia humanitatis. In the hands of the humanist Gilbert, then, the Atlantis theory became less an explanation for the existence of the Amerindians, as had been the case

51 Small, “From Thought to Action,” 1057-1058.
53 Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, 1-19.
in Gómara’s exposition of the story, and more a tool with which to convince potentially sceptical readers of the validity of his ideas. The Atlantis theory was popular in both Spain and England but the way in which it was utilised differed dramatically. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, when Gilbert’s tract was published, the theory had been transformed from one which attempted to explain the existence of an entire continent to one which hoped to explain the existence of a passage to the rich and prosperous East.

Attempting to prove a lucrative passage to the East through the conflation of America and Atlantis was not the only way in which English writers used theories of American origins for their own ends. Towards the end of the sixteenth century the English were just beginning to form imperialistic ideas about the Americas. One way to justify their involvement in the New World was to illustrate an early English discovery there. Some writers, therefore, wished to prove that the origins of the Amerindians could be connected to the British Isles. In texts written to encourage English settlement in America, authors such as Sir George Peckham, John Dee, and Richard Hakluyt hoped to prove Elizabeth’s territorial claim to the lands of North America by suggesting the region was first populated by a medieval Welsh prince. This attempt to produce a genealogy that linked the people of America with the people of a European colonising nation was not unique to the English. A similar hypothesis had been proposed in Spain in the early decades of the European encounter with America. It claimed that the peoples of the Americas were descendants of the inhabitants of the ancient islands of the Hesperides. According to Oviedo, who first proposed this theory in the 1530s, the Hesperides of the ancient writers were controlled by the Spanish, being named after the

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twelfth king of Spain, Hespero.\footnote{Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (Madrid: La Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), 14.} Oviedo backed up this theory by employing a number of examples which illustrated this custom of naming territories after their leaders: ‘the Romans of Romulus, their king, built the city of Rome’ and ‘the Alexandrians of Alexander the Great, their king, built that city of Alexandria’.\footnote{Ibid., 15. Original Spanish reads: ‘los romanos de Rómulo su rey, que edificó la cibdad de Roma’ and ‘los alexandrines de Alexandre Magno su rey, que edifice aquella cibdad de Alexandria’.
} Unfortunately for Oviedo, his contemporaries did not agree with his hypothesis. The theory was met with much derision, with various Spanish authors claiming that Oviedo had utilised discredited authors to invent a story that would flatter and praise the Spanish monarchy.\footnote{Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 272; Bolaños, “Historian and the Hesperides,” 280.} The theory was also lambasted in Eden’s translations of Martyr and Gómara, with both writers claiming that the Hesperides were in fact the Cape Verde islands.\footnote{Martyr, *Decades of the Newe Worlde*, fol. 12 and fol. 310.} 

The English genealogical claim to the Americas, despite making similar outlandish assertions to those of Oviedo, was met with far more approval. The first printed reference to this claim appeared in 1583 in a text on America written by Sir George Peckham.\footnote{Peckham, *A True Reporthe*.} Peckham was a close associate of Humphrey Gilbert and helped finance Gilbert’s first attempt at establishing an English colony in North America in 1578. Peckham, as a Catholic, wished to establish settlements for English Catholics in the New World that, while remaining loyal to the English Crown, would be far enough removed from England to avoid the crippling fines imposed on recusants.\footnote{James McDermott, “Sir George Peckham,” ODNB, last accessed 30 June, 2016, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21743.} Peckham’s text appeared at a crucial time for this project because in 1583 Gilbert’s voyage to the Americas ended with his death at sea. Peckham’s text was thus an attempt to restore confidence in the project after the loss of the enterprise’s most well-
respected member. A key aspect of this attempt to incite interest and optimism in the project was to establish and prove the English right to explore and settle the region. Rather than simply relying on the 1578 letters patent that gave Gilbert permission to explore and settle North America, Peckham suggested that the English claim to the region was indisputable, given the fact that the lands had first been discovered by a Welsh prince from whom Elizabeth I was directly descended. In a chapter of the book specifically pertaining to ‘the lawfull tytle’ of Queen Elizabeth, Peckham claimed that ‘her Highnesse’ was ‘lyneally descended from the blood royall, borne in Wales, named Madocke ap Owen Gwyneth’. Madoc, as Peckham explained, had departed from the coast of England in 1170, arriving and settling himself and his people in the territories of North America that the English were now engaged in exploring. According to Peckham a Welsh presence in America was still clearly identifiable in the late sixteenth century as there were ‘sundrie Welch names’ and ‘divers other welch wordes’ still in daily use in the region.

In the following year, another text appeared that also utilised this theory to justify English claims to the territories of North America. David Powell, in his Historie of Cambria, now Called Wales, gave a more detailed account of the Madoc story, likewise claiming that it was clear that America was ‘long before by Brytaines discovered, afore either Columbus or Americus Vesputius lead anie Spaniardes thither’. After a succession dispute, and subsequent war between siblings, Madoc set sail and ‘sought adventures by seas, sailing west’. Eventually Madoc came upon a ‘land unknownen, where he saw many strange things’.

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61 Ibid.
62 Gilbert’s letters patent can be found in “The Letters Patents Graunted by her Maiestie to Sir Humfrey Gilbert Knight, for the Inhabiting and Planting of our People in America,” in Principal Navigations, 3:135-137; information on Elizabeth I’s ancestors from Peckham, A True Reporte, sig. D4r.
63 Peckham, A True Reporte, sig. D4r.
64 Ibid., sig. D4r-D4v.
65 David Powell, The Historie of Cambria, Now Called Wales (London, 1584), 228.
When Madoc returned home he told tales of a ‘pleasant and fruitful’ land which was crucially uninhabited. Setting sail once again, Madoc returned to these strange lands with a number of men and women who were ‘desirous to live in quietness’. Powell concluded by suggesting the lands that Madoc had settled had been in the region of Mexico, giving two particular explanations for his reasoning. Firstly, according to the inhabitants of that country, ‘their rulers descended from a strange nation, that came thither from a farre countrie’, a point which was confirmed ‘by Mutezuma king of that countrie, in his oration made for quieting of his people, at his submission to the king of Castile’. Secondly, and as Peckham had also suggested, ‘the Brytishe words and names of places, sed in that countrie even to this daie, doo argue the same’. Not only, then, did the Madoc story justify English exploration in North America, it also disputed the Spanish claim to Mexico. By invoking a tale of Amerindian origins that linked the peoples of the British Isles to those of the New World, writers such as Peckham and Powell were not only expressing England’s imperialistic ambitions but also England’s increasingly antagonistic attitude towards the Spanish, a theme that was to become central to the early English colonial project.

The Madoc story’s significance to early English colonial thought is cemented by its inclusion in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* of 1589, a colossal text which attempted to bring together information on all English overseas voyages in an effort to popularise the idea of an English empire. In this edited version of Powell’s text, Hakluyt too claimed that America ‘was by Britaines discovered, long before Columbus led any Spanyards thither’. While he removed the section that claimed the lands were in fact those of Mexico, possibly in an attempt to widen the scope of English territorial claims in the North American continent,

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66 Ibid., 227-229.
67 Ibid., 229.
Hakluyt was still certain that the land that Madoc had voyaged to and settled ‘was some part of the West Indies’.68

The roots of this tale are somewhat difficult to untangle and it is unclear how far its advocates were influenced by the earlier Spanish claim that the Amerindians were descended from ancient Spaniards. The first reference to the Madoc story appeared in manuscript in Humphrey Llwyd’s 1559 *Cronica Walliae*. In almost identical terms to those expressed by Peckham and Powell, Llwyd explained how Madoc ventured to a land unknown that was believed to be ‘some parte of that lande which the Hispaniardes do affirme them selves to be the first finders’.69 In around 1575 John Dee obtained a copy of Llwyd’s manuscript.70 It is clear from Dee’s own writings that the story of Madoc was crucial to his conception of an English empire. In Dee’s *Unto your Majesties Tytle Royall to these Forene Regions & Ilandes*, dated May 1578 and most probably presented to the queen shortly thereafter, Dee employed the story of Madoc to illustrate the first example of lands in America being ‘discovered, inhabited, and partlie conquered by the subjectes of this Brytish Monarchie’.71 After running through other examples of early English exploration in the New World, Dee concluded by stating that for all the lands north of Florida, ‘the tytle royall and supreme governement is due and appropriate unto your most gratious Majestie’.72 Dee was known to have met with Sir Humphrey Gilbert to discuss English overseas expansion and it is therefore likely that Peckham, who himself was a close associate of Gilbert’s, learned of the Madoc story either directly from Dee or via Gilbert. David Powell was also associated with John Dee’s circle and

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72 Ibid., 48.
likely received Dee’s copy of Llwyd’s *Cronica* which he greatly expanded and adapted to form his own history of Wales.\(^\text{73}\) It is also clear from John Dee’s library that he was not ignorant of some of the debates taking place in Spain over the origins of the native Americans and the Spanish legal right to these lands. He is known to have owned a copy of Ferdinand Columbus’s *History of the Life and Deeds of the Admiral Christopher Columbus*, a text which explored Ferdinand’s father’s encounter with the New World.\(^\text{74}\) In this text, Columbus disputed Oviedo’s claims that the West Indies were in fact the Hesperides. As Álvaro Bolaños has suggested, Columbus’s reason for denouncing this claim was clear; ‘the proposition that the Caribbean islands had belonged to a Spanish king in ancient times not only undermined the significance of Cristóbal Colón’s [Christopher Columbus’s] discovery, but also made his heirs’ legal suit demanding rights over land in the New World look ridiculous’.\(^\text{75}\) While it is unclear whether or not Dee was influenced by this theory when developing his own ideas about Madoc, what is clear is that Dee was well aware of this claim, and other Spanish claims, to the Americas. As William H. Sherman has noted in his analysis of Dee’s annotations of this text, it is Ferdinand’s frequent assertions of the Spanish right to conquer and settle the Americas that are most vehemently criticised by Dee in the margins of the text.\(^\text{76}\) Dee’s theory surrounding the English entitlement to settle North America thus combined the medieval history of the British Isles with the denunciation of Spanish claims to the Americas. The Madoc


\(^{75}\) Bolaños, “Historian and the Hesperides,” 280.

origin story was thus simultaneously influenced by, and created to counter, origin stories first proposed in Spain.

An analysis of the English use of stories relating to Amerindian origins highlights the ways in which Europeans utilised, adapted, and manipulated Old World frameworks of knowledge and learning, based on classical texts and the Bible, to advance their colonial programmes. The prevalence of Indian origin stories in English travel writing was not a response to a set of ostensibly threatened assumptions regarding the dispersal of mankind, but a considered response to complex questions of colonial legitimacy and economic advancement. The content of Amerindian origin theories was similar in both Spain and England and yet the ways in which these theories were employed and received differed dramatically. For the English, with their belated entrance into the race for American colonies and their seeming lack of claim to the lands that had already been divided between the Spanish and the Portuguese with the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, Amerindian origin stories that validated their ideas about American geography and established connections between the new lands and those of the British Isles became indispensable theoretical tools of empire.

Making America Monstrous?

Ideas relating to Amerindian origins were not the only conceptual frameworks used to legitimise English colonial plans. Beliefs about the nature of the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, derived from classical and biblical understandings of human nature and monstrosity, also helped shape English responses to the New World and their place within it. From ancient times, exotic and foreign peoples had been associated with monstrosity in the European imagination. Hermaphrodites, dog-headed Cynocephali, the Blemmyae with their faces in their chests, and large footed Sciapods can all be found wandering through the pages
of classical and medieval travel literature. These beings, along with many others, were members of what were commonly referred to, from the Middle Ages onwards, as the monstrous or Plinian races. These ‘races’ could differ markedly in appearance from the Europeans describing them, while others were proven ‘monstrous’ through their behaviour. These included the human-flesh-eating cannibals, the cave-dwelling Troglodytes, couples that lived together unmarried, and even men who went about naked. Another feature of these monstrous creatures, aside from their unusual appearance and behaviour, was their location, occupying regions far away from the society of the people describing them, in this case Europeans. In classical and medieval writing, these races were placed in the relatively mysterious lands of India, Ethiopia, Albania, and Cathay. These races not only inhabited lands outside the civil Mediterranean that was home to the classical writers who first described them, they also inhabited lands distant from Christendom. In the immensely popular The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, the further Mandeville travelled away from the Christian and civilised centre of Jerusalem, the more fantastical and monstrous the people he met became. The further Mandeville moved away from Jerusalem, moreover, the more he encountered societies ‘that seem to exist for the sole purpose of flouting such Christian taboos as those against cannibalism, incest, polygamy, public nudity, and human sacrifice’.

77 John Block Friedman, The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 1-24; Ramey, “Monstrous Alterity,” 86.
78 As Iain Macleod Higgins has argued, the popularity of Mandeville’s text is attested to by the fact that 300 manuscripts of the early version of the book remain extant. Its success continued into print, with the book appearing in eight languages before 1515. By 1600 there had been sixty printings of the text; Iain Macleod Higgins, Writing East: The ‘Travels’ of Sir John Mandeville (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 8. The popularity of Mandeville’s book amongst early English explorers of America is also clear. A copy is known to have been taken on the Martin Frobisher voyages to Baffin Island and Sir Walter Ralegh explicitly cites the text in his printed narrative of his expedition to Guiana; William C. Sturtevant and David Beers Quinn, “This New Prey: Eskimos in Europe in 1567, 1576, and 1577,” in Indians & Europe: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays, ed. Christian F. Feest (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 115; Sir Walter Ralegh, The Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana (London, 1596), 70.
In late medieval Europe, then, monstrosity was used to describe far-flung peoples who lived in ignorance, or indeed in contempt, of the true faith of Christianity.

With the onset of the Age of Discovery, and as geographical knowledge of the lands in the East grew, the monstrous races were shifted to regions less well known. As John Block Friedman has argued, the races were transported from their traditional homelands in the East, namely India and 'Ethiopia', to the newly discovered and mysterious lands of the West. Lynn Ramey, in her analysis of early modern travel literature, has convincingly argued that Renaissance explorers relied heavily on classical and medieval models of monstrosity to explain the new-found lands of America.

The use of monstrosity in descriptions of America did not represent, however, a mere continuation of classical and medieval ethnographic modes of describing exotic peoples. As more recent studies have suggested, monstrosity in the American context served particular cultural and political functions. In an enlightening article on gender in the discourse of discovery, Louis Montrose has highlighted the way in which monstrous Amazonian women were utilised in English travel writing, particularly in the work of Sir Walter Ralegh. According to Montrose, the Amazonian anti-culture ‘precisely inverts’ European norms of political authority, sexual license, marriage, and child-rearing practices. This recognition of a matriarchal and gynocratic system, which could not be fully contained by European patriarchy, reflected the gender contradictions of Elizabethan England that simultaneously called for loyalty to a female sovereign and the exercising of masculine authority over

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80 Friedman, The Monstrous Races, 1.
81 Ethiopia is placed in inverted commas because in the medieval and early modern periods the term was, as Friedman illustrates, a ‘vague literary term rather than one denoting a specific place’; Friedman, The Monstrous Races, 8.
82 Ramey, “Monstrous Alterity,” 81-95.
women.\textsuperscript{84} Surekha Davies, in her innovative analysis of the role played by maps in Renaissance ethnology and understandings of human diversity, has also suggested that the relationship between the human and classical concepts of monstrous peoples was integral to European colonialism in the Americas.\textsuperscript{85} According to Davies, ‘each point on the human-monster graph performed different cultural work’. The identification of monstrous peoples could be a cause for optimism, with suggestions that evangelisation could eradicate their monstrosity. On the other hand, the presence of monstrous peoples could be highly destabilising, causing European explorers to question the effect that an environment that had brought forth monsters might have on their own bodies.\textsuperscript{86}

In early English engagements with America, it is clear that monstrosity also served important political and cultural functions. As we shall see, utilising the image of the native cannibal could legitimise English colonialism, while the suggestion of an Amazonian tribe, who controlled their territory without the aid of a husband, located near the powerful empire of Guiana, could be used as a means to flatter the similarly independent Elizabeth I in an attempt to secure funding for further expeditions. While images of cannibals and Amazonians were employed sporadically by English writers to serve particular rhetorical functions, the image of the wild man significantly helped shape English responses to native Americans and in doing so informed colonial decisions. As shall be discussed in more detail later, by employing the ambiguous figure of the wild man, English writers, explorers, and colonists created a flexible assortment of images of native Americans that could be used to simultaneously praise their own enterprise and criticise those of their competitors. The Amerindians of the English

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 201-210. \\
\textsuperscript{85} Surekha Davies, \textit{Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 20. \\
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 15.
colonial imagination, then, bore what Walter Lim has described as ‘functional’ identities: identities that could be shifted to meet the needs of ‘rhetorical and discursive demands’.\textsuperscript{87}

English conceptions of American monstrosity were initially influenced, not by direct English experience in the New World, but by descriptions of America that reached the English through translations of continental texts. In 1553 English readers got their first glimpse of the monstrous Americas through Richard Eden’s English translation of Sebastian Münster’s \textit{Cosmographia}. The \textit{Cosmographia} first appeared in German in 1544, with a definitive Latin edition going on sale in 1550. Assembled from various avenues of investigation, from personal research to detailed considerations of ancient authorities, and utilising a ‘bewildering number of sources’, from contemporary travel narratives to the classical works of Ptolemy and Strabo, Münster’s text was ‘highly ambitious’ in scope, ranging from discussions on cartography and geography, to considerations of history and ethnographic description.\textsuperscript{88} It is, of course, unsurprising that Eden selected this particular text for his first foray into publicising the new discoveries in the west. Münster was committed to the Reformation, leaving the Franciscan order in Heidelberg for Basel in 1529.\textsuperscript{89} For Eden, who produced his translation during the reign of the Protestant Edward VI and under the patronage of the Duke of Northumberland, John Dudley, who was also a committed Protestant, Münster’s text appeared to be, ideologically speaking, ideal for English translation.\textsuperscript{90} However, the English edition of 1553 was, in comparison to Münster’s original text, extremely modest. Rather than focusing on the geography and history of the entire globe, as had Münster, Eden’s translation was instead

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  \item \textsuperscript{87} Walter S. H. Lim, \textit{The Arts of Empire: The Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton} (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1998), 37.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Matthew McLean, \textit{The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: Describing the World in the Reformation} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 1-3.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} David Loades, “John Dudley,” ODNB, last accessed 11 August, 2016, \url{http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8156?docPos=1}.
\end{itemize}
limited to the description of the ‘new founde landes and islandes’, both ‘eastwarde as westwarde’ that had recently been discovered by the Spanish and Portugese.\textsuperscript{91} It is clear, then, that Eden’s real interest lay in the newly discovered parts of the world, rather than in Münster’s conception of global history and geography. Originally published in the lands of Reformation Germany, the \textit{Cosmographia} was thus arguably an excellent source for disseminating information on the New World to an English and ostensibly Protestant readership.

A large proportion of the text is, unsurprisingly, focused on early Spanish encounters with America and, in particular, the various voyages of Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. According to Münster, the New World appeared to be home to an array of strange and exotic humans, many of whom were reminiscent of the Plinian races and monstrous peoples of Mandeville. In Hispaniola, Columbus heard of a ‘people called canibales or anthropophagi, which are accustomed to eate mans fleshe’. There was the intriguing Island of Martinique ‘in whyche dwell only women, after the maner of them called Amazones’. There was the land explored by Vespucci and his men that was said to be home to giants of ‘so greate stature’ that the Spanish ‘marveyled thereat’ and on their departure ‘called that Ilande, the Ilande of Giauntes’.\textsuperscript{92}

Two years later, another text appeared in English that repeated these descriptions almost word for word. This text was Eden’s 1555 edition of Peter Martyr’s \textit{Decades}. Although this text appeared in English after Münster’s, it was in fact printed in Latin some fourteen years earlier than the first edition of the \textit{Cosmographia}. Given the similarity of description

\textsuperscript{91} Münster, \textit{Treatyse of the Newe India}, title page.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., sigs. G6r, H2v and L4r-v.
and Münster’s use of a vast array of contemporary source material, it is likely that Münster’s accounts of monstrosity were directly influenced by those of Martyr. According to Martyr, and as Münster had also suggested, in America there were ‘the wylde and myscheveuuous people called Canibales’ who were ‘accustomed to eate mannes fleshe (and called of the olde writers, Anthropophagi)’. There was the Island of Martinique which was ‘inhabited only with women; to whom the canibales have accesse at certen tymes of the yeare’, reminiscent in Martyr’s mind of the Thracians of the ‘owlde tyme’ and their access to ‘the Amazones in the Islande of Lesbos’. Martyr made it clear that these ‘creatures’ were not products of his imagination, and nor were they products of the specific environment of America. They were clearly examples of those monstrous races handed down by the ‘olde writers’ and ‘antiquites’ of the classical and medieval period to the writers of the Renaissance such as Martyr. The women of Martinique and the man-eating canibales, although given new names, were thus part of a European cultural heritage spanning centuries.

**New World Cannibals**

As English experience in the New World from the late 1560s onwards increased, American monstrosity became less a tool for explaining the exoticism of the new lands and more one for justifying and validating specific aspects of English colonial strategy. This new approach to American monstrosity can be seen in the way in which English writers and explorers adapted and employed the image of the cannibal and, as will be discussed later, the Amazon, and the wild man. As Merrall Llewelyn Price has suggested, reports of cannibalism in the New World served to vilify the ‘other’ and became a ‘convenient screen for European

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93 Martyr, *Decades of the Newe World*, fol.3.
94 Ibid., fol.6.
fears and phantasies and for the realities of colonial violence’.⁹⁵ From the outset of European contact with America, the division of native populations between gentle and naïve peoples, and vicious cannibalistic ones, became a critical tool for the justification of European conquest and colonial violence.⁹⁶ Columbus had been the first to divide the native peoples of America in this way, between gentle Arawak and cannibalistic Carib.⁹⁷ According to Richard Eden’s preface to Martyr’s account of Columbus’s voyages, not only did the Caribs, also known amongst the Spanish as the Canibales, consume human flesh, they also enslaved their gentle Arawak neighbours.⁹⁸ Up until the arrival of the Spanish, the Arawak ‘were ever in danger to be a pray to those manhuntynge woloves’. Thanks to the Spanish intervention, however, the benign natives of the Greater Antilles were freed from the bondage of that ‘develysshe generation’ of Caribs and, indeed, from that of ‘Sathans tyrannie’ more generally.⁹⁹ In Eden’s understanding of the native inhabitants of the Caribbean, then, the Spanish were cast as the saviours of the Arawak, freeing them from the intolerable bondage of the Caribs and enlightening them with the word of God. The presence of the cannibalistic Caribs thus enabled the Spanish, and their English admirers such as Eden, to justify both colonial violence and a programme of conquest and conversion; a violent approach in the Caribbean would rid the region of the inhuman practice of cannibalism, while a continual Spanish presence would

⁹⁶ Persephone Braham has also suggested that the inference of cannibalism in the Caribbean became a convenient justification for conquest, enslavement, and abuse. Braham, “The Monstrous Caribbean,” 22.
⁹⁸ The word cannibal itself is derived from the Spanish word canibales. The canibales were the peoples of the land of Caniba or Canibata. As one of the defining features of these peoples was their penchant for consuming human flesh, the word ‘canibale’ quickly became synonymous with the eating of humans, eventually being adopted as the word to describe this very phenomenon. Information taken from Robe, “Wild Men and Spain’s Brave New World,” 45.
⁹⁹ Martyr, Decades of the Newe World, sig. a2v.
keep the Arawak safe from their vicious neighbours and enable their conversion to Catholicism.

This early Spanish use of the Amerindian cannibal to validate European conquest and colonialism no doubt influenced English explorers who also employed this image in the late sixteenth century. In George Peckham’s 1583 publication that aimed to illustrate the benefits of continued English exploration and settlement in Newfoundland, the spectre of the man-eating native was an important feature. Peckham, as well as running through a number of benefits that the English sought to gain through settlement and trade in America, was also keen to stress that the native peoples would benefit from English colonialism too. Not only would they receive the true word of God, saving their souls from eternal damnation, they would also be protected ‘from the cruelty of their tyrannicall & blood sucking neighbors, the Canniballes, wherby infinite number of their lives shalbe preserved’. Peckham, then, in much the same way that Eden had done in relation to Spanish colonialism, employed the image of the American cannibal to support continued English colonialism in the Americas. The fact that Peckham used the word ‘canibale’ also highlights how engrained this notion of the dastardly, man-eating cannibal was. Despite exploring a region that was much further north than the Caribbean, it was still Columbus’s canibale that was cast as the tyrannical, native neighbour. At the end of the sixteenth century, then, ‘canibale’ remained a by-word for the inhuman, cannibalistic Indian that preyed upon their gentle neighbours and was identified by various authors in such diverse regions of the continent as Trinidad, Venezuela, Brazil, and Canada. The canibales were no longer merely the vicious inhabitants

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100 Peckham, A True Reporte, sigs. E2r-E4r.
101 Ibid., sigs. F2v-F3v.
102 For Trinidadian and Venezuelan ‘canibales’ see Ralegh, The Discoverie, 29 and 47; For Brazilian ‘canibales’ see Jan Huygen van Linschoten, John Huighen van Linschoten. His Discours of Voyages Into ye Easte & West.
of the Caribbean island of Canibata. They were instead a cruel and depraved group that could be found in all corners of the New World and used to justify the imperialistic ambitions of both the English and the Spanish.

**American Amazons**

The belief in a tribe of Amazonian women was also transplanted from the Caribbean of Columbus’s early expeditions to regions of the Americas that the English hoped to conquer for themselves. In Sir Walter Ralegh’s 1596 published account of his 1595 voyage to South America, the Amazonian women are transformed to meet the specific requirements of his text. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ralegh portrayed the all-female tribe in a rather positive light, rationalising their perverse behaviour. In order to understand Ralegh’s interpretation of the Amazons, it is first crucial to understand the rationale behind the publication of his narrative. Any reader of the text cannot fail to notice how often Ralegh mentions Queen Elizabeth I and how important her image is to the potential success of the project. As Walter Lim has suggested, the ideal reader of Ralegh’s text was the Virgin Queen herself who, incidentally, was also the ideal investor for any future expedition. Throughout the narrative Ralegh explained how he told the native chiefs of the queen’s ‘greatenes, her justice, her charitie to all oppressed nations’ and all the rest ‘of her beauties and vertues’.

Shannon Miller has argued that Ralegh’s usage of stories about the queen and her image reflected how the monarch was presented as a commodity, ‘an object, a token, that Ralegh can trade throughout the river villages of Guiana’. In casting the queen as a coin that could

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104 Lim, *Arts of Empire*, 45.


106 Miller, *Invested with Meaning*, 175.
be traded, Miller argues that Elizabeth’s power in the New World was effectively transferred to Ralegh.\textsuperscript{107} This interpretation, however, seems to underestimate the importance that Ralegh placed on his relationship with the queen and his recent fall from grace. Ralegh had been a former favourite of the queen, only finding himself in trouble when he married one of the queen’s ladies-in-waiting, Elizabeth Throckmorton, without royal permission. When the marriage was discovered, Ralegh was thrown into the Tower of London. Although he was eventually released from the tower, Ralegh was unable to restore his former privileged position at court.\textsuperscript{108} Mary Fuller has suggested that Ralegh’s exploration of Guiana and his account of the expedition reflected this precarious position in the 1590s. According to Fuller, Ralegh’s expedition to Guiana was meant as penance for his sexual indiscretion with Elizabeth Throckmorton; ‘the profitable discovery of the other was to overwrite the disgraceful discovery of the self’.\textsuperscript{109} Read in this way, then, Elizabeth’s image was employed by Ralegh in an attempt to win back the favour of the queen.

Elizabeth’s virginity, justness, and imperial prowess are employed time and again in Ralegh’s text. Although Susan Doran has argued that these symbolic representations of the queen could be used to both praise and criticise the monarch, in Ralegh’s case these images are clearly used to flatter Elizabeth, win her support, and convince her of the viability of the venture in Guiana.\textsuperscript{110} Ralegh pointed out that he told the natives of Elizabeth’s just nature, explaining how she gave ‘charitie to all oppressed nations’, and how she ‘was an enemy to the Castelani in respect of their tyranny and oppression’.\textsuperscript{111} Elizabeth’s imperial and military

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 181.
\textsuperscript{108} Quinn, \textit{Raleigh and the British Empire}, 175-177.
\textsuperscript{109} Fuller, \textit{Voyages in Print}, 74.
\textsuperscript{111} Ralegh, \textit{The Discoverie}, 62 and 7.
prowess is alluded to at various points, with Ralegh telling his readers how he told the native people he met about England’s stunning success against the Spanish Armada and how the queen had freed all the coast of the northern world from Spanish servitude.\footnote{Ibid., 7 and 52.} Elizabeth’s perpetual virginity is also alluded to. She was described by Ralegh to the natives as ‘the great Casique of the north, and a virgin’.\footnote{Ibid., 7.} The queen’s virginity was therefore presented as being central to her ability to lead; she was a great leader or casique because she was a virgin. Elizabeth’s impregnable virginity literally fended off foreign princes, preserving England and bolstering Elizabeth’s position as a powerful and independent leader.\footnote{Knapp, An Empire Nowhere, 67.} The virtues of the queen thus became the virtues of Ralegh’s project in Guiana; by echoing Elizabeth’s chastity, fairness, and military power Ralegh attempted to reingratiate himself with the queen and convince her and her court of the viability of his enterprise.

It is within this context of royal flattery that Ralegh’s description of the Amazons should be read. Ralegh’s more positive account of the Amazonian tribe can be seen as an attempt to praise the female leadership of Elizabeth in order to secure further investment for a second expedition. This line of interpretation, however, has been dismissed by Louis Montrose and Walter Lim who both claim that although Amazonian figures may at first seem suited to strategies for praising a female ruler like Elizabeth, they in fact represent a violent anti-culture that inverted European cultural norms.\footnote{Montrose, “The Work of Gender,” 202-203; Lim, Arts of Empire, 51. These scholars dispute the idea that Ralegh used the image of the Amazons to praise Elizabeth’s leadership. Other scholars, however, have suggested that Elizabeth utilised the imagery of the Amazon to accentuate her strength and prowess. Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, “Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare’s Joan of Arc,” English Literary Renaissance 18, no. 1 (December, 1988): 55-57; Winfried Schleiner, “‘Divina Virago’: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon,” Studies in Philology 75, no. 2 (Spring, 1978): 164-175.} Shannon Miller also implicitly suggests that Ralegh’s description of the Amazons is essentially a negative one, claiming that it is
directly translated from the French Franciscan explorer André Thevet’s wholly negative account of the tribe. Through a close reading of Ralegh’s description, however, it is clear that his view of the Amazons was far more ambiguous than these scholars have claimed and differed significantly from Thevet’s representation. Ralegh, despite employing some of the key themes common to all stories of the Amazons such as their apparent cruelty towards prisoners of war, rationalised and to some extent humanised the behaviour of the all-female tribe. In Ralegh’s description, the Amazons ‘accompagne’ with men but once a year, apparently in the month of April. All the kings of the bordering nations gather with the queens of the Amazons, the queens choose their preferred sexual partner, and the rest ‘cast lots for their valentines’. If the Amazons conceive and bear a son, they return him to his father and if they bear a girl they keep her and ‘send unto the beggeters a Present’ in thanks. The process by which the Amazons became pregnant is thus portrayed as a ritual performed by all the people of the region, including male leaders, in which there is a clear set of protocols that the women completely control. Although Ralegh admitted that they were rather blood-thirsty towards people who invaded their territory, he highlighted the care they gave to their children and the respect awarded to the men with whom they procreated. Conversely, Thevet’s description, from his 1557 book Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique that was translated into English in 1568, portrayed the way in which the Amazons conceived as shambolic and secretive, their treatment of their children cruel and, in many cases, murderous. According to Thevet, rather than meeting at an organised time and place, the Amazons met with unspecified men, ‘sometime secrete in the night, or at some appointed

116 Miller, Invested with Meaning, 170.
117 Ralegh, The Discoverie, 24.
118 Ibid., 23.
119 Ibid. 23-24.
time'. Rather than consistently returning their male children to their fathers they ‘kil their male children incontinently after they are delivered’. There are, of course, interesting parallels to be drawn between Elizabeth and the Amazonian women, such as their perpetual unmarried statuses and their ability to lead. It would therefore seem from Ralegh’s narrative that he saw Elizabeth as the ultimate Amazonian woman. She had shown that she could successfully defend her own territories without the aid of a husband and, as Ralegh suggested, when the Amazons ‘heereby heare the name of a virgin’ who is able to do this they would undoubtedly submit themselves to her, making the Virgin Queen their leader. Ralegh transformed the image of the Amazons, from one that epitomised female aberrance and monstrosity, into one that could be used to praise female leadership and in turn help him achieve his colonial objectives. By reworking and manipulating well-known classical models of monstrosity, then, English explorers once again transformed Old World knowledge to match the demands of New World experience. English images of the cannibal and the Amazon, although influenced by continental European writers such as Martyr, Münster, and Thevet, were employed to meet the particular political needs of their authors, legitimising English settlement in Newfoundland and English conquest in Guiana.

**New World Wild Men**

Peckham’s cannibals and Ralegh’s Amazons, despite highlighting how monstrosity could be adapted to function in English theories of colonialism, remain isolated examples of the English use of American monstrous peoples. What is particularly notable about English accounts of America written in the late sixteenth century is, in fact, the lack of reference to

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specific types of monstrous peoples. As John Block Friedman has argued, in the sixteenth century the monstrous men of antiquity were gradually reduced to a single figure, ‘the hairy wild man’, which was then conflated with the indigenous peoples of the New World. The wild man, alongside his female counterpart the wild woman, was the antithesis of the civilised. He wore no clothes, had long, thick tangled hair, carried a club or tree trunk as a weapon, crawled on all fours and lived on the outskirts of civilisation in the wilderness of European woods and forests. The wild man was ubiquitous in European society and culture in the medieval and early modern period, with his image not only present in the literature of the time, but also adorning prints and panel paintings, ceramics, coats-of-arms of kings and popes, and even playing cards. In late medieval and early modern Europe, however, the wild man was a deeply ambiguous figure. On the one hand, he represented human regression to an animal state, yet on the other was an idealised image used as justification for rebellion against civilisation. The wild man was thus symbolic of two competing ideas; he was the antithesis of desirable humanity, but also the embodiment of man in his natural state. It was this ambiguity that made the wild man such an important frame of reference for English explorers in the late sixteenth century. By employing this image, English writers commenting on the nature of the Amerindians could portray them as either savage and beyond achieving European civility, or as primitive and living in a state of natural perfection. The employment of the wild man in an American context, then, allowed for the creation of a flexible assortment

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122 Friedman, The Monstrous Races, 197.
123 Alixe Bovey, Monsters & Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 55.
126 Ibid., 28.
of English representations of native peoples, which served to promote certain regions of the Americas, while criticising and condemning others.

It is clear that wildness was seen by Europeans as a key characteristic of native American peoples throughout the sixteenth century, with the adjective ‘wild’ being employed by a number of authors to describe the various peoples of the New World. The people of Canada were ‘wilde and unruly’, the Canibales ‘wylde and myscheuevous’, those of the Caribbean islands ‘wyld and nakte’, and the people of Central America ‘wilde and savage’. Like the wild men of the medieval imagination, the wild folk of America were often naked and were most at home in the woods, mountains, and wilderness. Early descriptions of America, reaching an English audience through translation, are replete with tales of the indigenous populations retreating to the woods when faced with the possible threat of European visitors. In Martyr’s description of a Spanish skirmish with Indians, the natives fled to the woods where they were able to shoot at the Spanish more safely. As Martyr explained, the Indians were ‘accustomed to the woodes and naked without any lette’, being able to pass through the bushes and the shrubs as if they ‘had byn wylde bores’. When exploring the lands of New France in the 1530s, the French explorer Jacques Cartier also found that the Indians had to be coaxed out of the woods. The arrival of Cartier and his fellow Frenchmen had ‘caused all the young women to flee into the wood’, only being tempted out again by the promise of French gifts. In a markedly less friendly encounter with the women of the American wilderness, Münster recounted the gruesome tale of a young Spaniard, voyaging with Amerigo Vespucci,

127 Cartier, Shorte and Brieffe Narration, 7; Martyr, Decades of the Newe World, 3; Thomas Greepe, The True and Perfecte Newes of the Woorthy and Valiauent Exployetes, Performed and Doone by that Valiant Knight Syr Frauncis Drake (London, 1587), sigs. B2v; Job Hortop, The Rare Travailles of Job Hortop (London, 1591), title page.
128 Martyr, Decades of the Newe World, 33-34.
129 Cartier, Shorte and Brieffe Narration, 20.
who was clubbed to death with a ‘great stake’ by an Indian woman, taken to the mountains, cut into pieces, and roasted on a huge fire.\textsuperscript{130}

By far, the clearest comparison between native Americans and the European conception of the wild man available to English readers in the mid-sixteenth century was to be found in the 1568 translation of André Thevet’s work that detailed the early French explorations of America. In Thevet’s description, the wild man was synonymous with that of the native, with the term ‘wild man’ being used most regularly to denote the people of the New World.\textsuperscript{131} Not only did Thevet categorise the peoples of America as wild, his description of their behaviour also corresponded to the negative European image of the wild man. Like the wild man of European folklore, the indigenous Americans lived ‘without Fayth, without Lawe, without Religion, and without any civilitie: but living like brute beasts, as nature hath brought them out, eating herbes and rootes, being alwayes naked as well women as men’.\textsuperscript{132} Thevet’s American wild man, then, engaged in the same beastly, uncivilised behaviour as the European wild man and highlighted the need for missionary and colonial activity that would encourage the wild natives to leave their ‘brutish living, and lerne to live after a more civill and humayne manner’.\textsuperscript{133} While Thevet employed the image of the wild man to highlight the necessity of French civilising and missionising zeal, English writers increasingly utilised the language of the wild man to promote their own colonial plans, condemn the results of their competitors, and articulate the frustrations of expeditions that did not go according to plan.

\textsuperscript{130} Münster, \textit{Treatyse of the Newe India}, sigs. L5v-L6r.
\textsuperscript{131} Thevet, \textit{New Found Worlde} fol. 34-136.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., fol. 36.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., fol. 36.
once again illustrating how pan-European cultural references could be employed in radically different ways.

The articulation of savagery through the image of the wild man was employed by some Englishmen in a bid to explain the dangers of exploring the lands of Spanish America. John Chilton, a merchant sailor who had spent a prolonged period of time in Spain before setting sail for the New World, composed a short but detailed account of his time in New Spain and the West Indies, which was eventually published in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*. While Chilton suggested that the Spanish had been able to subdue a large number of native tribes, reporting in detail the tribute they paid to the Spanish, it is also clear from Chilton’s account that some of the natives were so wild that the Spanish were unable to control them. In New Biscay, now modern-day northern Mexico, Chilton came across a group of Indians who, ‘for the most part go naked, and are wilde people’. These wild Indians also had the worrying tendency to ‘eate up such Christians as they come by’, evidence indeed of their lack of loyalty to the Spanish conquerors. The city of Panuco, which used to be a ‘goodly city, where the king of Spaine had his governour’, now ‘lieth in a maner waste’ because ‘the Indians there destroyed the Christians’. Having left Panuco with the intention of returning to Mexico City, Chilton found himself lost in ‘a great wood’ where he ‘fell into the hands of certaine wilde Indians’. The Indians placed Chilton upon a mat and called for a young Indian girl to act as translator. According to Chilton, the Indian girl told him that these people would ordinarily eat any Christian that crossed their path. On this occasion, however, Chilton

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135 Ibid., 3:456-461.

136 Ibid., 3:457.

137 Ibid.
seemed to have been lucky as the Indian girl also told him that ‘thou mayest thanke God thou art leane; for they feare thou hast the pocks: otherwise they would eate thee’. After being sent on his way, Chilton, after a short time, came to a town that was inhabited by Christians. After hearing his account of his close encounter with Indian cannibalism, the Christians of the town ‘marvelled to heare’ that he had come ‘from those kinde of Indians alive’ as it ‘was a thing never seene nor heard of before: for they take a great pride in killing a Christian’.139

It is important to note here that Chilton clearly linked notions of wildness with the practice of cannibalism. As has already been suggested, cannibalistic native Americans were often associated with the man-eating anthropophagi of the classical imagination. From accounts such as Chilton’s it is also clear, however, that some instances of apparent Indian cannibalism in the sixteenth-century English mind were the product of a parallel cultural trajectory that linked the image of the wild man with the behavioural trait of cannibalism. This is unsurprising, for as Timothy Husband has argued, the medieval image of the wild man, in which cannibalism was a prominent feature, was heavily influenced by the classical monstrous races.140 Whether associated with the classical anthropophagi or with the medieval wild man, representations of American cannibalism were part of a broader European cultural heritage that correlated the abhorrent practice of eating human flesh with savage, beastly, and monstrous peoples. Chilton’s voyages through Spanish America and his deployment of images of wild, cannibalistic Indians, had identified some of the shortcomings of the Spanish imperial project and the continuing savagery of some groups of Indians. Some native populations appeared to be under the control of the Spanish but there still remained

138 Ibid., 3:458-460.
139 Ibid., 3:460.
140 Husband, The Wild Man, 3-6.
groups of wild Indians that posed a significant threat to the Christians settling in the region. The lands of Spanish America, although filled with unimaginable riches, were also filled with untold dangers.

It was not just in the lands conquered by the Spanish, however, that wild Indians posed a threat. In the 1570s English explorers hoping to claim the very north of the American continent for Elizabeth I also encountered the savagery of some indigenous Americans. Dionyse Settle, a member of Martin Frobisher’s crew that undertook an expedition to Meta Incognita in 1577, was particularly damning of both the region’s potential and its native inhabitants. According to Settle, this region of America was home to ‘barren mounteines’, ‘furious seas’, and ‘monstrous and great Islandes of yce’. There was ‘no grasse’, ‘no wood at all’, or indeed anything ‘profitable for the use of man’. Settle’s portrayal of the indigenous Inuit was closely entwined with this negative opinion of the environment and commodities of the region. As Settle suggested, ‘as the Countrie is barren and unfertile, so are they [the natives] rude and of no capacitie to culture the same’. The Inuit were ‘craftie villains’ who would ‘lye lurking’, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting English visitors. They were ‘voyde of humanitie’, feasting like beasts on raw and spoiled meat and living in animalistic ‘dennes’ rather than in houses. This image of the wild, unruly Inuit thus reflected the disappointing nature of the region as a whole. Not only were there no profitable commodities to speak of in Meta Incognita, the native inhabitants were beyond civility, making English settlement in the region pointless, if not, impossible. The negative image of

141 Settle, A True Reporte, title page.
142 Ibid., sigs. B6v-B7v.
143 Ibid., sigs. D1r-D1v.
144 Ibid., sig. D1v.
145 Ibid., sig. C3v.
146 Ibid., sigs. C1r-D8r.
the wild man, devoid of humanity, was thus employed by English writers to criticise particular regions of the Americas. The wild, cannibalistic Indians of Spanish America highlighted the difficulty of controlling conquered native populations, while the beastly Inuit reflected the harsh and unprofitable nature of the Far North.

Not all images of American wild men were negative, however. From the 1580s, English writers, although still utilising the language of wildness and savagery, perceived some native American groups as primitive and living in a state of nature, rather than as beastly and inhuman. This more positive assessment of native Americans is particularly evident in the early English writing on Virginia, for as Surekha Davies has suggested, the view of Virginian life as primitive and simple ‘chimed well with the promotional purpose of early colonial literature, which was aimed at encouraging English settlers’. Writers such as Arthur Barlowe and Thomas Harriot, both of whom had spent time in Virginia, attempted to idealise the figure of the native Algonquian, projecting an image of a people who lacked civility and lived without science and culture, but were nonetheless loving, well-natured and thus easy to control. For those Englishmen and women thinking of making the voyage for themselves, and who had potentially read about the wild, cannibalistic Indians of Spanish America, this affectionate portrayal of the native Virginians would have been particularly appealing. In Barlowe’s account of his reconnaissance voyage to Virginia in 1584, the natives were described as a ‘people most gentle, loving, and faithfull, voide of all guile and treason’. This contrasted heavily with the English image of the natives of Mexico and Meta Incognita who were perceived to be treacherous, vicious and, in many cases, murderous. The Algonquians,

147 Davies, “The Unlucky, the Bad and the Ugly,” 69.
148 Arthur Barlowe, “The First Voyage Made to the Coasts of America, with Two Barks, Where in were Captaines M. Philip Amadas, and M. Arthur Barlowe,” in Principal Navigations, 3:249.
despite their loving nature, were still perceived to be somewhat wild and uncivilised compared to the English. As Barlowe suggested, it was as if they lived ‘after the maner of the golden age’, a time of pre-lapsarian innocence in which people lived according to the laws of nature rather than the laws of man. They cared not for wealth, being more concerned with ‘howe to defend themselves from the cold in their short winter, and to feed themselves with such meat as the soile affoordeth’. 149 This lack of concern for wealth and the many trappings of civilisation would help ensure the success of the English project in the region. English colonisers could exploit the neglected commodities of the region while improving the lives of the primitive and wild Algonquians by exposing them to English civility.

A year after Barlowe’s expedition, another English crew set out to Virginia, this time hoping to establish a permanent English settlement in the region. A principal member of this crew, Thomas Harriot, wrote a detailed account of his time in the region that was eventually published in 1588 and then again in 1590. Just as Barlowe’s account had promoted Virginia as a land of natural resources and innocent natives, so too did Harriot’s. Harriot found the natives of Virginia to be a ‘savage people’, yet it is important to note that this word did not, in the sixteenth century, necessarily have the negative connotations that it has today. 150 Rather than exclusively meaning fierce or violent, the word savage was a derivation of the French word sauvage meaning wild. 151 The concept of savagery was thus still closely connected to that of wildness in the sixteenth century. Just as the wild man of European

149 Ibid.
150 Thomas Harriot, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (Frankfurt, 1590), 11. Subsequent references for this text will refer to this edition rather than the 1588 edition unless expressly stated.
folklore could be used in positive and negative ways, so too could the image of the savage American. Alongside being somewhat savage and wild, the Algonquians were, according to Harriot, ‘a people poore’, lacking ‘skill and judgement in the knowledge and use of our things’. As well as being deficient in knowledge and skill, the natives were also rather naïve, esteeming English ‘trifles before thinges of greater value’. Despite this obvious primitivism and lack of civility, Harriot also identified a potential for learning. The natives seemed rather ‘ingenious’, for although they did not have ‘such tooles, nor any such craftes, sciences and artes’ that were enjoyed by the English, in the things they did have they showed ‘excellencie of wit’. This type of savage primitivism, combined with the perceived superior technology and intellect of the English, led Harriot to conclude that because the natives would wish to learn from the English they would ‘desire’ the ‘friendships & love’ of the colonisers and develop ‘the greater respect for pleasing and obeying’ them.\textsuperscript{152} Harriot, therefore, believed that the English could control the native peoples of Virginia because of their savage primitivism. Once the natives recognised the superiority of English knowledge, they would undoubtedly ‘have cause both to feare and love’ their English visitors.\textsuperscript{153}

The image of the wild man thus served a number of important functions in early English travel narratives. The negative concept of the wild man, devoid of humanity, engaging in cannibalism, and living in barbarous, beastly and vicious conditions, could be used to identify a lack of colonial control on the part of the Spanish, or the inappropriate nature of some regions for English settlement. Conversely, the more positive figure of the wild man, in which savagery was considered an aspect of the natural primitive state of man, could be used to achieve the exact opposite. The incivility and naivety of the native Algonquians was clear

\textsuperscript{152} Harriot, \textit{Briefe and True Report}, 25.  
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 24.
proof that these native peoples could easily be controlled by the superior English. The fact that the natives also seemed uninterested by their natural resources of potentially great value also indicated to the English that the lands of Virginia could be successfully exploited for financial gain. Although the language of savagery was, in the words of Peter Hulme, ‘honied into the sharpest instrument of empire’ by all European colonising nations, in the sixteenth century it was arguably the English, in particular, that were able to mould it into a range of useful and multi-functional forms most successfully. Through redeploying the symbolism of the medieval wild man in an American context, English writers illustrated how wildness and savagery continued to be construed as evidence for both the limitations of civilisation and the worrying potential of man to regress to a beastly and primitive state. Moreover, by employing the image of the wild man, and the associated concept of savagery, those commenting on early encounters with America created an assortment of positive and negative images of Amerindians that served a variety of important political and colonial functions, from justifying a continued English presence in Virginia to illuminating the perceived failures of Spanish colonialism.

**Climate Theory and the Location of English Colonies**

The environment, and particularly the climate, of the New World was also critical to English responses to America in the sixteenth century, with the English understanding of climate becoming a key theoretical tool of empire. In a similar process to that identified in the English use of ideas of monstrosity, certain aspects of classical climatology were manipulated and rejected to conform to New World experience, while others were retained and

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154 Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 3.
redeployed for the new American context. The discovery of America challenged the ancient theory that lands located near the equator were unfit for human habitation. The undermining of this theory, through explorative experience in the Americas, meant that the question of climate was now open for debate, being manipulated by English authors to make claims about the suitability of cold, far northern regions for English settlement. Yet at the same time, the climate of America remained a central concern for European colonising nations due to its perceived effects on early modern bodies. While the ancient notion that human habitation was impossible close to the equator due to extreme heat was rejected in the sixteenth century, the classical belief that different nations were suited to particular climates remained a potent one. Although classical climatology came under increasing strain in the sixteenth century, then, certain aspects still remained resilient. Ideas relating to the various climates of the new lands helped English commentators, explorers, and colonisers to predict which regions of the New World would be most suitable for English habitation. While the Spanish were at home in the torrid regions of the Caribbean and Central and South America, the English focused their colonial attention on more suitable, cool climates in the north. Ideas about climate, both based on Old World knowledge and New World experience, thus significantly impacted English colonial choices and the location of potential settlements.

Before discussing the impact that early modern climatology had on English colonialism, it is first important to establish how ideas surrounding climate changed in the decades after the discovery of America. First attributed to the Greek philosopher Parmenides, climate theory that identified the Earth’s different zones remained valid for centuries. According to the theory, human habitation was only possible in the Earth’s ‘temperate zones’. The other two zones, the hot ‘torrid zone’ and the cold ‘frigid zone’, were uninhabitable due
to their extreme climates. Unsurprisingly, Europe could be found sitting comfortably within the temperate zone.\textsuperscript{155} As more populated lands were discovered lying within the apparently uninhabitable torrid zone, the theory came under increasingly close scrutiny (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Unknown, woodcut, “Schematic Diagram Showing the Earth’s Zones” (1594).\textsuperscript{156}

In a wide-ranging book that dealt with mathematics, cosmography, geography, and navigation, Thomas Blundeville attempted to set down a collection of treatises that would be ‘very necessarie to be read and learned of all yoong gentlemen’.\textsuperscript{157} In his section on cosmography, Blundeville reiterated the commonplace belief that the earth was split into five zones, stating that ‘the extreme hoat Zone lyeth betwixt the two Tropiques, in the middest of which two Tropiques, is the Equinoctiall line’.\textsuperscript{158} Despite repeating the assertions put


\textsuperscript{156} Unknown, “Schematic Diagram Showing the Earth’s Zones,” woodcut in Thomas Blundeville, \textit{M. Blundevile his Exercises} (London, 1594), fol. 155.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., title page.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., fol. 155.
forward by ancient Greek philosophers, Blundeville later admitted their errors. The ancient writers ‘did greatly erre in affirming 3. of the Zones to be unhable’ due to ‘a lacke of experience’, having ‘never travelled to those regions’. Conversely, the explorers sent to the New World from Spain, England, France, and the Netherlands had travelled through the supposed uninhabitable torrid zone and found it to be ‘well inhabited’. Martin Cortés, in his popular manual for navigation, also tackled the issue of the ancient writers’ mistake regarding uninhabitable zones. Like Blundeville, Cortés explained how in times past cosmographers had believed the ‘burnt zone (called Torrida Zona)’ to be uninhabitable ‘by reason of the greate heate thereof’. But also like Blundeville, he highlighted that experience in the New World had proven this to be untrue. The New World was ‘well replenyshed wyth people’ and to say anything to the contrary was clearly ‘a manifest errour’. Writers with first-hand experience of the New World also rejected the notion that the lands beneath the equator were uninhabitable due to the extreme climate. George Best, a captain in the Frobisher fleet that explored the far north of America in the 1570s, for example, found the idea that the land beneath the equator could not sustain life due to the heat almost laughable, declaring that ‘under the Equinoctiall, is the most pleasant and delectable place of the worlde to dwell in’. By the end of the sixteenth century, then, and in large part due to European experience in the Americas, the idea that the torrid zone was uninhabitable due to intolerable heat had become redundant.

159 Ibid., fol. 193.
160 Ibid.
162 Ibid., fol. 17.
163 Best, A True Discourse, sig. f4v.
With the realisation that the classical writers had been wrong about habitable and uninhabitable zones, sixteenth-century Europeans attempted to explain the reasons behind this mistake. Best, for example, speculated why there was this disagreement between what the ancient writers thought and what the sixteenth-century explorers found. He suggested that the reason America was a temperate, abundant environment, rather than a scorched and meagre one, was down to the position of the sun. Classical writers, according to Best, had focused their attention on the angle of the sun with the earth and how this affected temperature. Best argued that their failure to take into account the length of time the sun spent above the horizon in various locations explained their error regarding the temperature and climate of the torrid zone. Because the sun spent longer beneath the horizon in America, so Best theorised, it was not as hot as expected. For a place to be intolerably hot the sun must ‘maketh perpendicularly righte Angles’ with the earth and the sun must shine above the horizon for a long period of time. When one of these conditions was ‘wanting’, ‘the rigor of the heat is lesse’. Cortés also highlighted the importance of the long American nights in explaining the temperate climate the continent enjoyed as ‘the coldnesse of the night doth sufficiently temper the heate of the day’. By observing the difference between the length of days in their native Europe with those in America, Best and Cortés had shown that experience and observation could explain phenomena that Europe’s trusted classical works had been unable to.

165 Best, A True Discourse, sigs. e3v-e4r.
166 Ibid., sig. e3v.
Writers such as Best, however, were not necessarily interested in the climate of America for purely educational reasons. With the abandonment of the classical theory of habitable and uninhabitable zones, English explorers and colonisers like Best could begin to manipulate ideas about climate to suit their colonial discursive and rhetorical needs. For Best, and those other men interested in the far north of the American continent, this meant proving the habitability of the cold, frigid zone. If the classical philosophers had been wrong about the torrid zone, could they have also made a similar mistake about the frozen region to the north? Thomas Churchyard, a soldier and prolific writer, made an impassioned plea for continued English exploration of the Far North in 1578 after Frobisher and his men had abandoned their project to plant a colony in the region. With the failure of the expedition and the spreading of, what Best called, ‘sundry untruths’ about the venture, texts such as Churchyard’s attempted to silence the critics and instil a new sense of optimism for English overseas expansion. Churchyard referred directly to some of these criticisms, particularly those levelled against the climate of the region. According to Churchyard some of those that had criticised the Meta Incognita project had suggested that there was ‘no peece of benefite to bee gotten in a cold climate’. In response, Churchyard had suggested that due to their lack of experience, these critics were in no position to comment; as Churchyard argued, they relied on ‘strong reasons and argumentes on their owne sides because thei haue not proued the experience of this journey’. Just as the Spanish explorations in America had proven the

169 Best, A True Discourse, sig. a3r.
171 Ibid.
lands close to the equator to be far more temperate than the classical authorities had suggested, those ‘honourable personages’ who had actually experienced Meta Incognita for themselves had shown the region to be beneficial to the English nation.¹⁷²

George Best, one of the ‘honourable’ explorers that Churchyard had referenced, agreed with this sentiment, arguing that the ‘old writers’ were ‘perswaded by bare conjecture’ that the frozen and torrid zones were uninhabitable. According to Best, the ancient geographers, when discussing extreme climates compared them ‘to their owne complexions’ and thus ‘felt them to be hardlie tolerable to themselves’. In concluding that extreme hot and extreme cold climates were intolerable to the temperate Mediterraneans of the classical world, these regions were deemed to be uninhabitable. To explain his point clearly, Best used the following example: ‘if a Man borne in Morochus, or other part of Barbarie, should at the later end of Sommer, upon the suddayne, eyther naked, or with hys thinne vesture, be broughte into England, he woulde judge this Region presently not to be habitable, bycause he being broughte up in so warme a Countrey’.¹⁷³ Tolerable climates were thus relative to experience, something that Best claimed had been ignored by the classical writers. Having made this point, Best then went on to explain why he thought the Far North was in fact home to a temperate climate, providing a complex theory that explored the length of days and the position of the sun in the region, leading him to conclude that in Meta Incognita ‘the Sommers are warme & fruitful, & the Winters nights under the pole, are tollerable to living creatures’.¹⁷⁴ This argument also, rather helpfully, enabled Best to explain away negative English accounts of the region such as Settle’s in which monstrous islands of

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¹⁷² Ibid., sigs. B3r-B3v and C7r.
¹⁷³ Best, A True Discourse, sig. g2v.
¹⁷⁴ Ibid., sigs. g3v-h2r.
ice and barren, unfertile lands featured heavily. According to Best, the mountains of ice that were created during the cold winter would thaw thanks to the heat of the summer sun. The fact that some areas of the region seemed barren was not problematic as the same could be said for the northern coastal regions of Devon and Cornwall. The frozen zone was not only habitable, then, in summer it was positively temperate. Best also implicitly suggested that the coldness of the winter would not be a problem for the English as ‘by little and little by certaine degrees’ human beings were able to adapt to new climates so that eventually the air would seem ‘more temperate’. Both Churchyard’s and Best’s arguments relating to climate thus helped bolster their assertions that Meta Incognita was a suitable region for English habitation. Debates surrounding the validity of classical climate theory, therefore, helped shape English responses to criticism and enabled explorers to reassert the viability of their ventures.

English writers interested in overseas expansion also utilised ideas surrounding climate to explain and justify European patterns of colonisation. Unlike Best, not all writers were happy to suggest that it was possible for humans to adjust to all climates as there was a strong connection in the early modern period between climate and national character. Not only was it believed, by the late sixteenth century, that all regions of the world were in fact habitable, it was also believed, and had been for centuries, that different nations suited different climates. In the early modern period it was believed that national temperaments and character were shaped by a country’s physical environment and most notably its climate. This notion of climate being connected to national character had its origins in the

175 Settle, A True Reporte.
176 Best, A True Discourse, sigs. h2v-h3r.
177 Ibid., sig. g3r.
178 Joep Leerssen, National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 69.
climatic and medical theories of Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen. In sixteenth-century Europe, Hippocratic and Galenic humoral theory remained the most common way of explaining how the human body functioned. According to these theories the human body was made up of four different humours: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. When the humours remained in equilibrium, the body remained healthy, but when the humours became unbalanced, due to the effect of external forces such as diet and climate, the body became unhealthy.

Early modern explorers were particularly concerned with the American climate due, in large part, to this understanding of the human body and national temperament. A consideration of the differing climates of various parts of the Americas could serve to highlight the suitability of particular regions for English settlement while also providing legitimate reasons for avoiding hostility in lands already occupied by other European nations. It was, once again, the texts relating to Frobisher’s voyages to the Far North that first articulated these ideas relating to climate. Dionyse Settle, in the preface to his account of the second English voyage to Meta Incognita, clearly identified the effect that climate had on European colonisation patterns in the New World. It was Settle’s belief that God had deemed it appropriate that these new lands ‘should be found out by those people, which for the temperature of their habitation, are most apt to achive the same’. For Settle, then, success in the New World was rooted in climate theory. The Spanish were ‘the most apte men for the injoying of the habitation of the West Indies’, for ‘continual heate’ ‘is agreeable to their temperature’. Likewise, God was also content that the Portuguese, who shared a similar

179 Ibid., 2.
climate to the Spanish, ‘have explored Africa, even through the burning zone’. The French, who enjoyed cooler climes to those of the Spanish and Portuguese, discovered New France as the Spanish had thought other parts of America ‘not apt for their temperature’. In a logical conclusion to his argument, Settle posited that the English should seek out regions more ‘septentrional than those before rehearsed’ as they would be ‘more agreeing’ to the English natural temperament. In Settle’s opinion, then, the success of European colonial ventures was intrinsically linked to how well the colonisers were able to deal with the climate of the lands they set out to conquer.

Despite Best’s and Churchyard’s attempts at convincing readers that the northerly regions of North America were suitable for English settlements, interest in Meta Incognita largely failed to reignite after the abandonment of the proposed colony in 1578. The content of these accounts of Meta Incognita had belied the arguments that Best and Churchyard had set out in their prefaces; the region was barren, cold, and held little colonial potential. Just as Settle had advocated, the focus of English colonial ambition moved further south, concentrating on the regions of Newfoundland and Virginia, with climate once again being a key tool with which to prove the viability of particular ventures. George Peckham, for example, described the climate of Newfoundland as ‘mylde and temperate, neither too hotte nor too colde’, making it a most ‘convenient place to plant and inhabite in’. Peckham suggested that this region was particularly suited to the English as the ‘countrey dooth (as it were with arme advaunced) aboue the climats both of Spayne and Fraunce, stretche out it

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182 Ibid., sig. A3v.
183 Ibid., sig. A4r.
184 Peckham, A True Reporte, sig. B3v.
selfe towardes England onelie’.

Newfoundland was thus on a similar latitude to England, enjoying a cooler, more northerly climate than both France and Spain.

In the 1580s, as the English moved still further south to Virginia, climate theory was once again adapted to fit the needs of English colonists. Rather than claiming that Virginia enjoyed a similar climate to England, however, some writers suggested that it actually had a superior one. According to Thomas Harriot, Virginia benefitted from an ‘excellent temperature of the ayre there at all seasons’, being ‘much warmer then in England, and never so violently hot, as sometimes is under & between the Tropikes’. The quality of a country’s air and climate was central to English understandings of bodily health. As chapter four discusses in more detail, in the healthcare system of the six non-naturals, external forces such as climate, diet, and sleep were believed to affect a person’s humoral balance and thus in turn their health. The primary principle in need of regulation within this system was that of air. As the physician Andrew Boorde claimed, ‘no thynge excepte poyson’ was more detrimental to a person’s health than a ‘corrupte and a contagyous ayre’. Proving that Virginia was home to wholesome and temperate air was thus critical for establishing the region’s suitability for English habitation. John Brereton, in his account of his voyage to northern Virginia, concurred with Harriot’s description, claiming that the climate of the region agreed with the English, even making the explorers ‘fatter and in better health’ than when they had left England. Brereton agreed with Harriot that Virginia was a place ‘temperat and well agreeing with our [the English] constitution’, being located ‘betweene 40. and 44. degrees of

\[\text{Ibid., sig. B4r.}\]
\[\text{Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 31.}\]
\[\text{Lindemann, Medicine and Society, 13.}\]
\[\text{Andrew Boorde, A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of Helth (London, 1547), sig. A2v.}\]
\[\text{John Brereton, A Briefe and True Relation of the Discouerie of the North Part of Virginia (London, 1602), 11.}\]
latitude, under the Parallels of Italy and France’ and yet not as hot as these countries ‘by reason that the suns heat is qualified in his course over the Ocean, before he arriveth upon the coasts of America’. Virginia was thus warmer than England, but not as hot as the countries of the Mediterranean and equatorial America.

This shift towards promoting warmer climates over the cooler ones of Meta Incognita and Newfoundland is particularly interesting and surprising given the prevalence of the belief that a change in climate could harm the body and the fear of the effect of heat on English bodies in particular. In an illuminating article which traces English attitudes and perceptions towards heat, Karen Ordahl Kupperman has illustrated how, in the English imagination, ‘sudden exposure to a hot climate was seen as particularly dangerous’. This fear of the heat of the tropics is exemplified in a medical tract of 1598 written by George Wateson. In Wateson’s opinion, the cause of many of the diseases found in America was an excess of heat. The Espinlas takes hold ‘after great heat or travell’, the Erizipila proceeds from the ‘unholesome aires and vapours, that hot climates doo yeelde’, while one of the principal causes of las Cameras, also known as the Bloodie Flux, was simply ‘being hot’. The heat, so Wateson’s diagnosis suggested, caused an imbalance of humours which needed to be corrected in order to cure the disease. Wateson recommended that patients should be ‘purged’ and have ‘the corrupted humour’ drawn out from their bodies, while, of course, ‘continuing in colde places’. Despite Wateson’s determination that heat was incredibly dangerous, English attitudes towards hot weather were in fact highly ambivalent. While it was accepted that heat could do damage to bodies used to cold climates, it was also widely

190 Ibid., 15.
193 Ibid., sigs. C1v-C3r.
believed that hotter countries enjoyed more abundant crops and higher volumes of precious commodities.\textsuperscript{194} This belief led Roger Barlow, an English merchant and early investor in English enterprises in America, to lament the fact that much of South America had already been claimed by the Spanish, leaving only the north of North America for the English. In this part of America, according to Barlow, ‘it is to be presupposed that ther is no riches of gold, spyces nor precious stones, for it stondeth farre aparted from the equinoctial’.\textsuperscript{195} In early accounts of Virginia, then, the suggestion that the country enjoyed a warmer climate than England served to bolster the common assertion that Virginia was an abundant, fertile land, home to an array of profitable commodities. By suggesting that Virginia was warm, but not too warm, Harriot and Brereton were not only able to reassure their fellow countrymen that their bodies would survive in such a climate, they were also able to convince colonisers that their move across the Atlantic would be a profitable one.

The English use and adaptation of climate theory thus served a number of important functions, influencing English colonial decisions directly in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The reworked version of classical climate theory, in which all lands were now habitable, enabled explorers involved in the Meta Incognita project to assert that the lands in the frigid north were in fact temperate and suitable for English habitation. The retention of the belief that climate shaped national temperament also allowed English colonisers to justify their focus on the northerly regions of the North American continent, arguing that it was in this part of the Americas that English colonialism, and indeed English bodies, would prove most successful and resilient. By the late 1580s ideas about the climate of the Americas had

shifted once more, with commentators now suggesting that the English would not only retain their natural complexions and characteristics in America, but would in fact improve them, becoming healthier and more robust. By looking to the unclaimed territories of the North American continent, and by utilising climate theory to validate this focus, the English would not only diminish the risk of skirmishes and territorial conflicts with Spanish and other European colonisers in parts of America that had already been claimed, they would also ensure the retention, and even improvement, of English natural temperament and bodily health. Climate had thus become a key tool of empire, validating colonial decisions and convincing potential investors and colonisers that they would be able to survive and even thrive in the temperate and abundant regions of the northern American lands.

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Throughout the sixteenth century, English writers, explorers, and colonisers created a set of theoretical tools, based on Old World intellectual frameworks of knowledge and understanding, which helped shape and define English responses to America. These ideas relating to human diversity, monstrosity, and climate were first articulated in an American context by Spanish and French explorers who had travelled to and settled in America in the early decades of the sixteenth century. These writers had illustrated how useful these conceptual ideas were for European colonising nations. Monstrosity could help elucidate European fear, and indeed interest, in exotic others, theories of Amerindian origins could serve to justify European conquest and conversion, and the adaptation of classical climate theory could stimulate debate on how the world worked and what could be learned from exploring the new lands across the Atlantic.
When placed in the hands of English writers, however, these theories were remodelled to meet the needs of burgeoning English colonial projects. Rather than merely translating the ideas of their continental neighbours, then, the English transformed them. Through the selective appropriation of the Spanish theory that America was in fact Atlantis, and through the creation of their own origin myth that linked the people of the New World to the Tudor dynasty, English writers were able to convince their readers of the likelihood of a Northwest Passage to the East and assure potential investors and colonisers of the English legal entitlement to lands in the newly discovered West. English images of monstrous Americans and New World wild men allowed for the creation of flexible portrayals of Amerindians, both positive and negative, which could be used to justify continued English colonialism in Newfoundland, flatter the queen in an attempt to win financial backing for explorative projects in Guiana, illustrate the dangers of journeying through Spanish America, and highlight the natural, primitive, and thus easily controllable, state of native Virginians. Beliefs surrounding climate, based both on classical learning and New World experience, informed English decisions to focus their attention on the lands to the north of those already conquered by Imperial Spain and validated beliefs that this region of the Americas would not only be particularly suitable for English habitation, but would also be home to a vast array of precious commodities that could be exploited by those making the journey across the Atlantic. By employing these Old World theoretical frameworks, then, those men involved in the early English attempts to settle in America were able to justify and validate a range of colonial decisions. However, it was not just the theory behind English colonialism that helped frame English responses to America in the late sixteenth century. As the next chapter illustrates, the reality of these early colonial ventures, in which failure and disappointment were common themes, served to reshape English approaches to exploration and settlement.
in the New World, creating an English colonial model in which godly conquest, rather than material gain, became the most prominently articulated goal.
Chapter Two: Religion, Commercialisation, and the Challenges of English Colonialism

*If hetherto in our owne discoveries we had not beene led with a preposterous desire of seeking rather gaine then Gods glorie, I assure my self that our labours had taken farre better effecte. But we forgotte, that Godlinesse is great riches, and that if we first seeke the kingdome of God, al other things will be given unto us.*

Richard Hakluyt

The above quotation, taken from Richard Hakluyt’s 1582 *Divers Voyages Touching the Discoverie of America*, illustrates a common anxiety felt by English explorers and pro-colonialists in the 1580s: the fear that God had deserted them in their quest to explore and colonise the New World. This tension between the desire to seek wealth and riches in the New World and the need to advance the glory of God is something that was discussed by many writers commenting on English exploration and colonisation in the late sixteenth century. This chapter explores this tension, identifying its roots in the 1550s, its abandonment in the 1570s, and its re-emergence in the 1580s. By tracing this process, it becomes clear that by the end of the sixteenth century a unique brand of English colonialism had emerged that placed both religious evangelisation and commercialisation at its centre. As Hakluyt had suggested in 1582, the English need not compromise one for the other; with the glorification of God and the conversion of heathens, great riches would no doubt follow.

These changes in approach towards exploration and settlement in the Americas across the course of the sixteenth century were shaped by reciprocal influences from actual experience in the New World and the fluctuating religious and political landscape at home. In

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the 1550s, when the Catholic Mary I sat on the English throne, and when the royal consort was Philip II of Spain, English colonial schemes in America were presented as extensions of the already important work being undertaken by the Spanish in the region. English involvement in the New World would aid the Spanish objective of converting the heathen of the Indies to Catholicism, bringing for the English, as it had done for the Spanish, the reward of material riches in return for their proselytising. The English approach to America in the 1550s, then, was shaped by the return of Catholicism to the realm under Mary I, a strong Anglo-Spanish political alliance, and the perceived success of Spanish imperialism in the New World.

With the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth I in 1558, and growing Anglo-Spanish hostility caused in part by political tensions in the Netherlands and subsequent trade embargos, the English attitude towards America and Spanish imperialism changed dramatically. It was no longer advocated that the English should imitate, and indeed bolster, the Spanish approach to colonisation. Instead, English calls for Catholic conquest were replaced with privateering and, at times, outright piracy in an attempt to wrestle the wealth of the New World from Spanish hands. At the same time, private English ventures in the Americas began to take off, with a number of expeditions taking place in the 1570s to search for a Northwest Passage to the riches of Asia and to attempt to plant an English colony at Newfoundland. These expeditions all ended in disaster, leading some key proponents of settlement in America, including Richard Hakluyt, to question the English approach to the lands across the Atlantic. While hostility with Spain had led to an English policy of seeking riches in the New World at the expense of their European rivals, the failure of many of these commercial ventures forced advocates of English involvement in America to rethink their methods.
By the 1580s, then, English commentators such as Richard Hakluyt and Edward Hayes were beginning to worry that God had deserted the English cause, basing these assertions on the disastrous nature of English projects in the New World throughout the 1560s and 1570s and the worsening economic and social conditions taking hold back home. This reading of English colonial and explorative failure, in which God’s hand was ever present, is unsurprising given the fact that providentialism was part of mainstream religious culture in sixteenth-century England.\(^2\) In order to win back God’s favour, English writers, explorers, and future colonisers began once again in the 1580s to advocate a type of colonialism that had religion at its centre. Rather than seeking riches and material gain, pro-colonists now suggested that English colonialism should focus on converting native peoples and securing economic well-being for the people of England. These dual objectives led to the emergence of an embryonic English colonial policy in which anti-Spanish sentiment collided with the peculiarities of sixteenth-century English religious, political, and economic life. The changing English approach to America thus reflected a complex process that took into account both the harsh realities of English experience in the New World and the vacillating religious, political, and economic landscape of sixteenth-century English society.

The connection between commercialisation and religion in the English colonies of America has been fiercely debated amongst historians of the seventeenth century, but as of yet has received little detailed analysis for the earlier period of English involvement in the New World in the sixteenth century. Scholars working on the early English colonies of the seventeenth century have largely agreed that commercial incentives coexisted with religious motivations in the early decades of sustained English colonialism. According to Jack P. Greene,

the initial phase of English colonialism across the Atlantic, which culminated in the
establishment of the Jamestown colony in Virginia in 1607, was centred on commercial gain
rather than religious expression.\textsuperscript{3} Greene also argues, however, that this changed with the
next wave of English migration to the New World, with the Plymouth colony, in particular,
being more firmly religiously orientated due to its separatist puritan leaders.\textsuperscript{4} Jamestown was
built for commerce, Plymouth for religious expression and freedom. Karen Ordahl Kupperman
also argues that the early English colonies were characterised by the blending of commercial
incentives and pious intentions. Unlike Greene, Kupperman suggests that this coexistence can
be seen \textit{within} colonies, not just \textit{between} them.\textsuperscript{5} Even the staunchly puritan colony of
Massachusetts Bay was not immune to economic considerations. The constriction of
economic opportunity in England during the 1620s and 1630s, both for ordinary men and
women and for university-trained men, pushed people toward emigration.\textsuperscript{6} In the early
English colonies, then, both economic and religious factors were high on the list of
motivations for emigrants settling in the new colonies.

Both Greene’s and Kupperman’s interpretations are largely centred on the English
experience after 1607 and set aside the fluctuating sixteenth-century approaches to English
activity in the Americas. As this chapter illustrates, an analysis of this earlier period is critical
for understanding the embedded nature of religious and economic motivations in English
colonial practice in the New World. In the current historiography relating to the sixteenth-
century context, however, economic motivation, rather than religious fervour, has often been
considered the driving force behind early English exploration and settlement in the New

\textsuperscript{3} Greene, \textit{Pursuits of Happiness}, 11.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{5} Kupperman, \textit{Settling with the Indians}, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 12.
World. According to Kenneth R. Andrews, John C. Appleby and Carole Shammas the main goal of early English activity in the New World was to procure wealth and valuable commodities for investors back home, whether through acts of piracy, privateering, and conquest, or through the establishment of English settlements and new trade links.\(^7\) Andrews, in particular, argues that commercial incentives were integral to the development of the British Empire, both in the West and the East. In the Americas merchants dominated explorative projects, plunder became a ‘commercialized business’, and plans for colonisation increasingly became commercial in character.\(^8\)

This focus on the economic incentives of early English projects in America, however, obscures the obvious religious motivations that men such as Hakluyt articulated in the sixteenth century. Although David Armitage has recently claimed that it is ‘almost impossible’ to discern any obvious Protestant contribution to the ideological origins of the British Empire, particularly in the work of Hakluyt, it is clear that towards the end of the sixteenth century religious language was increasingly used as the motivational ideology behind English colonialism, whether genuine or tinged by the conventions of rhetoric.\(^9\) In direct contrast to Armitage, Nicholas Canny has analysed the religious credentials of Hakluyt, describing him as a propagandist for ‘militant Protestantism’.\(^10\) According to Canny, Hakluyt believed that

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England was ‘duty-bound’ to spread the word of God to the infidels of America, given that the English nation worshipped the one true church.\textsuperscript{11} As Canny argues, then, English colonial thought in the late sixteenth century, as espoused by Richard Hakluyt, was centred on religion and in particular on the task of stabilising and spreading the Protestant faith. In a somewhat inverted analysis of the development of English colonialism proposed by Jack P. Greene, Canny suggests that material gain only became a priority for English colonisers in the late seventeenth century, instigating a new concept of Empire that measured success principally in material terms, attaching little importance to religion.\textsuperscript{12}

As this chapter argues, however, these two positions were not mutually exclusive. Englishmen, including Hakluyt, recognised that material gain could be balanced with pious intentions, so long as the former was firmly defined as a result of the latter. Louis B. Wright was the first to propose that English colonialism in the New World should be interpreted as an alliance between piety and commerce. While contending that some early explorers’ motivations can only be read, at best, as superficially religious, Wright nonetheless argues that religion was far more important to these earlier ventures than has previously been recognised.\textsuperscript{13} Extending the work of Wright, Robert A. Williams has more recently argued that commercial incentives and religious motivations both played a central role in sixteenth-century English colonial discourse. As Williams contends, in the 1550s the work of Richard Eden had suggested that an individual could be ‘a good merchant and a good Christian at the same time’ and that commerce could be ‘the emetic by which the Indians would gradually be

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 4-5.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{13} Louis B. Wright, \textit{Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 3-56.
purged of Satan’s influence’, an idea that, according to Williams, remained consistent throughout the sixteenth century.\footnote{Robert A. Williams, Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 130.}

Although this colonial equation of religious reformation plus imperial revenue is helpful in explaining the way in which colonial thought developed in England in the sixteenth century, Williams’s and Wright’s assessments somewhat over-simplify the process by which Englishmen came to accept this colonial discourse. This over-simplification obscures the very real anxieties that English explorers and pro-colonists felt when attempting to reconcile their wish for trade and wealth accumulation with their Protestant spiritual duty of spreading God’s word to the heathens of America. They were able to do this but only by firmly couching the former in terms of the latter. English colonial discourse by the end of the sixteenth century would thus define commercial incentives and economic factors in terms of how they related to the glorification of God.

This apparent sixteenth-century belief that wealth accumulation should only ever be a by-product of piety has, of course, been explored in great detail by Max Weber in his influential work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Introducing the notion of a ‘Protestant ethic’ that saw the amassing of wealth as acceptable when undertaken for the glorification of God, Weber suggested that this belief was particularly prevalent amongst Protestants of a puritanical persuasion due to their acceptance of the doctrine of predestination and their tendency to see God’s hand at work in all aspects of life. Financial success, when not accompanied by idleness and the descent into luxury, was seen as a providential sign from God of a person’s status as a member of the elect.\footnote{Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930), 155-183. It is important to note here, however, that while it is clear that in the context of}
been suggested though, belief in providentialism was part of mainstream English religious culture in the sixteenth century, and not merely the preserve of England’s puritans.\textsuperscript{16} The doctrine of predestination had also been enshrined in the Church of England with the adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion in 1571.\textsuperscript{17} It is likely, then, that the idea that commercial success could be a positive sign from God would have been shared by the majority of English Protestants, whether puritan or Church of England.

By the end of the sixteenth century financial gain in the Americas would be seen as a reward from God, given to English Protestants in recognition of their pious intentions, trade with the New World would be seen as a necessary means to remove the English from the instability of intra-European commerce, and the development of overseas colonies would be explained as a charitable and godly way of relieving the miserable state of many Englishmen and women living in poverty back home. The process of constructing this colonial discourse, however, was complex, being shaped by both experience in the New World and the fluctuating religious, political, and economic landscape of sixteenth-century England. The idea of merging religious intentions and commercial incentives had first been proposed by Richard Eden in the 1550s but was largely abandoned by the 1570s due to its positive assessment of Spanish colonialism in the Americas. The failure of English ventures in the 1570s, however, provoked English explorers and pro-colonists to question their approach. As Richard Hakluyt had suggested in 1582, up until this point, English enterprises in the New World had focused far too much attention on commercial gain and had thus been deeply unsuccessful. This

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recognition of failure forced the English to reconsider their colonial approach and the role of religion within it. The idea that colonialism should be first and foremost a religious enterprise, and that financial gain should represent a secondary consideration, would therefore re-emerge and solidify in the 1580s, having a profound effect on the course that English colonialism would take in subsequent decades.

**Godly Enterprises and Spanish Successes**

It was in the mid-sixteenth century that a colonial ideology, formed around religious considerations, was first articulated. Until this point, English interactions with America had been limited, with only sporadic publications appearing that made reference to the new discoveries in the West. Not only were these descriptions of America and her people extremely unsophisticated, the authors of these works made no attempt to promote English exploration in the region.\(^{18}\) This, however, began to change in the 1550s, largely due to the efforts of one man: Richard Eden. Under the patronage of the Duke of Northumberland, a man who was keen to challenge Spain’s global empire, Eden’s first foray into the world of publishing came in 1553 with his partial translation of Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* under the English title *A Treatyse of the Newe India*.\(^{19}\) It is clear from the outset of this text that Eden saw these new discoveries in religious as well as commercial terms, stating on the title page that enterprises in the New World not only allow for the worldly obtainment of riches but also ensure that ‘God is glorified, & the Christian fayth enlarged’.\(^{20}\) Eden suggested,

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\(^{18}\) Examples of these earlier works include: Anon., *Of the Newe La[n]des* (Antwerp, 1520); Rastell, *A New Iuterlude*. In fact, Richard Eden suggests that the poor and limited quality of the former text inspired him to produce his first work on the new lands, *A Treatyse of the Newe India*. He describes *Of the Newe La[n]des* in his work as ‘a shiete of paper’, unworthy of the title ‘book’. Quotations from Sebastian Münster, *Treatyse of the Newe India*, sig. aa3r.


\(^{20}\) Münster, *Treatyse of the Newe India*, title page.
in his dedication to the Duke of Northumberland, John Dudley, that those travelling to new lands must keep God in mind and, until death, ‘persist in a godly, honeste, & lawful purpose’. In fact, according to Eden, those men who chose to explore the seas and new found lands for ‘the Glorye of God & commodie of our countrey’ spent their time ‘more honourably’ than those who remained ‘in soft beddes at home’. To explore new lands was thus a religious endeavour; early modern explorers were tasked with spreading the word of God and, by extension, advancing the glory of God. In recognition of their piety, and as a sign of favour, God would then reward explorers, and indeed the English realm, with financial gain. Northumberland, as the protector to the devout Protestant Edward VI, and a committed Protestant himself, would have no doubt approved of this godly concept of English colonialism. It is likely, therefore, that Eden’s view of how English colonialism should proceed in America was coloured by the Protestantism of his patron rather than solely by his own personal convictions.

In Eden’s next text that dealt with the discovery of America he was to go even further in making the link between European religion and New World conquest. Although published just two years after his first work, by the time Eden’s The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India appeared, the political and religious landscape of England had changed dramatically. In July 1553, the devout Protestant Edward VI died, throwing the English monarchy into disarray. Earlier in the year Edward had taken the unusual step of naming his successor in his ‘Devise for the Succession’. Instead of passing the Crown to his Catholic half-sister, Mary, in the event of his own lack of issue, as had been the wish of his father Henry

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21 Ibid., sig. aa4r.
22 Ibid.
23 Loades, “John Dudley.”
VIII, Edward named his cousin Lady Jane Grey, a committed Protestant, as heir to the English throne. Ever the loyal subjects, Eden’s family, including his father and uncle, supported Lady Jane’s accession on Edward’s death. When Jane was deposed, found guilty of high treason, and eventually executed, Eden was faced with the difficult task of proving his loyalty to the new Catholic Queen Mary I. Nevertheless, Eden affirmed loyalty to the new sovereign and was able to prosper, with this loyalty being clearly expounded in the prefatory material of The Decades. Undoubtedly still trying to prove his allegiance to Mary and her Spanish husband Philip, Eden constructed an image of the Spanish kings as pious, chosen by God, and even bordering on the divine. According to Eden, the ‘kynges of Spayne of late dayes’ are ‘goddes made of men’, comparable to those that Antiquity called heroes. In Eden’s opinion, moreover, the Spanish defeat of the Moors in 1492 and the recovery of Naples in 1503 was evidence that ‘the nation of the Spanyardes had byn appoynted by god eyther to subdue the enemies of the fayth or to bringe theym to Christes religion’. Within this narrative, the Spanish conquests in the New World were rendered as religious crusades ordained by God.

It was the Spanish king, Ferdinand, however, that Eden reserved special praise for, arguing that aside from Christ ‘there never lyved man to whom god hath geven greater benefites and shewed more favoure’. Continuing his lavish praise of Ferdinand, Eden hyperbolically claimed that under Ferdinand God had ‘saved not onely the bodies but also the soules of innumerable milliones of men’ and in doing so ‘planted a new Israell muche greater

26 Hadfield, “Richard Eden.”
27 Ibid.
28 Martyr, Decades of the Newe Worlde, sig. a2r.
29 Ibid., sig. a4v.
30 Ibid., sig. a3v.
then that whiche Moises ledde throughe the red sea’. It was thus religious conversion that Eden chose to focus on, rather than the commercial success of the Spanish enterprise. He admitted that there were riches to be had in the New World but it was the religious well-being of the indigenous populations and the swelling of God’s flock that should have been the true inspiration for global expansion. It was also within this framework of religious expansion and godly conquest that Eden critiqued the efforts of the English in the New World to date. Not only had England become ‘decayed and impoverysshed’, while Spain had become ‘inryched’, other Christians, like the English, had also shown ‘negligence and slackenesse’ in their task of building ‘goddes lyvely temple’. The Spanish had proven their commitment to God, and in return had been rewarded with unimaginable riches; the English, in comparison, had neglected their Christian duties leaving their society in a state of dearth and poverty. In the opinion of Eden, then, England’s economic and religious health depended on exploration and exploitation of the New World and its resources, and the successful conversion of those ‘gentiles’ who were not ‘hytherto corrupted with any other false religion’. With the word of God extolled to these heathen populations, the English, like the Spanish, would then reap the economic rewards of God’s favour.

There is, however, a subtle difference between Eden’s first and second text in regards to how this conversion and commercialisation should be achieved. In the *Treatyse of the Newe India*, Eden lamented the fact that the English had not capitalised on the explorations of John and Sebastian Cabot whose ventures had been sanctioned by King Henry VII, bemoaning how after these initial ventures the English had chosen to abandon their claim to

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31 Ibid., sigs. a3v – a4r.
32 Ibid., sigs. b3v-c3v.
33 Ibid., sig. c1v.
the New World.\(^{34}\) His purpose for translating Münster’s text, then, is to illustrate how would-be explorers should ‘behave them selues & direct theyr viage to their most commoditie’ and how they should persist in the face of adversity and failure.\(^{35}\) In this text, English expansionism was to be solely for the benefit of the English nation, securing economic wealth and God’s favour for the country. In *The Decades*, however, Eden linked English exploration to the wider expansionism of other European countries, particularly Spain. The imperative of European conquest in America, including the potential conquests of the English, was to ensure the saving of as many Amerindian souls as possible. However, Eden identified a principal problem with the process of converting the indigenous populations to Christianity and cited it as a key motivation for the publication of his text, explaining the problem in the following way: ‘the harvest is so great & the workemen so few’. If the enlarging of God’s flock was to be achieved, more Christians needed to travel to the New World and begin proselytising. For Eden, the model of conversion to be followed by these Christians was that of the Spanish as they ‘have shewed a good exemple to all Chrystian nations to folowe’. As Eden continued, there was room enough in the Americas for all Christian nations to participate in this process; for the English ‘there yet remayneth an other portion of that mayne lande reachyng toward the northeast, thought to be as large as the other, and not yet knowen but only by the sea coastes, neyther inhabyted by any Christian men’.\(^{36}\) It was in the northeast of America, in the region of Terra Florida, that the English would find their own ‘abundaunce of golde’ and do their duty to God by convincing the native population to embrace Christianity.\(^{37}\) In the mid-1550s, then, Eden identified colonisation and exploration of the Americas as a duty for all of

\(^{34}\) Münster, *Treatyse of the Newe India*, sigs. aa4r-v.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., sigs. aa3v-aa4r.

\(^{36}\) Martyr, *Decades of the Newe World*, sig. c1r.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., sigs. c1r-c1v.
Christendom. Without the cooperation of all the Christian nations, the conversion of the ‘gentiles’ would not be possible and God’s favour would not be maintained. In this interpretation of early English imperialism, religious incentives were at the fore, with the commercial gains to be reaped merely as reward for the explorers’ piety.

Of course, this praise of Spanish achievements in the Americas and the unwillingness of Eden to challenge the Spanish Empire is unsurprising given the fact that in 1555 there was a Catholic monarch sitting on the English throne, whose consort was a Spanish king. Eden’s flattery of the Spanish was, therefore, entirely appropriate and entirely expected, especially when considered in the context of Eden’s rise to a prominent position within the treasury, secured no doubt through the support of Spanish nobles at court in 1555.38 His decision to focus on the religious, rather than commercial, aspects of Spanish colonialism is, however, intriguing. Given the fact that the text is dedicated to Mary and Philip, it is possible that Eden’s Decades was a piece of royally sanctioned pro-Catholic propaganda. After all, Mary had inherited a kingdom that was Reformed in nature and thus heretical in the eyes of the zealous queen.39 The ferocity of the Marian persecutions, and the willingness of the Crown to revive medieval laws against heresy and execute those found guilty, was indicative of the English monarchy’s concerted effort to secure Catholicism in England.40 The multiple references to the ‘monstrous’ and ‘deformed’ minds of mid-century, ostensibly Reformed, English men and women, coupled with the unbridled praise of Spanish Catholicism, suggests an important function of Eden’s text was to educate the English about their sinful living, force them to see the error of their ways, and convince them to return to the Catholic flock of their own

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38 Hadfield, “Richard Eden.”
40 Ibid., 80-81.
volition. It is of course possible that Eden was in fact expressing his own opinions about Catholicism and Spanish imperialism. This, however, is unlikely given the fact that Eden was accused of heresy towards the end of 1555, forcing him to leave his newly acquired office. As early as the 1550s, then, exploration in America was impacting upon the religious debates taking place in Europe. In the case of England in 1555, the example of America was being used to exemplify the pious, divinely ordained nature of the Spanish enterprise and convince lapsed English Catholics to return to the one true religion and do their duty to God by spreading his message to the heathen peoples of the New World. America, and the Spanish involvement there, thus became symbolic of Christian piety properly expressed.

This pro-Spanish, pro-Catholic position, however, grew increasingly dangerous after the accession of Elizabeth I, as England became progressively religiously conformist, uniform and Protestant, with the Church of England being established as the official faith of the realm. A variety of laws and statutes were introduced during Elizabeth’s reign which punished lay Catholics for a variety of crimes, from not attending Church of England services, to harbouring Catholic priests and hearing masses, to actively educating their sons and daughters at Catholic schools, seminaries, and convents on the continent. Harsh anti-recusancy laws were introduced to erode English Catholicism and force outward conformity. As Arthur Marrotti has argued, these anti-Catholic laws were essentially intended to ‘terrorize Catholics into conformity’. As the sixteenth century wore on, England became increasingly intolerant of

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41 Martyr, *Decades of the Newe World*, sigs. b1v-b2r.
openly practising Catholics; as John Coffey puts it, Elizabeth had had ‘the good grace to conform under Mary, and she found it hard to understand why others would not do likewise under her’. Religion was thus a highly contested issue in sixteenth-century England. In the mid-1550s, when England had returned to Catholicism under Mary, an English colonial identity emerged that was centred on religious motivations. It called for the emulation of Spanish imperialism that sought to convert Amerindians to Catholicism and reap the material rewards of God’s divine favour. However, with increasingly hostile relations between Spain and England, and with the solidifying of the Church of England as the religion of the realm, this ideology would be fiercely challenged and eventually discarded from the 1560s onwards.

**English Piracy, New World Commodities, and the Emergence of Anti-Spanish Sentiment**

By the end of the 1560s it appears that Richard Eden’s call to the English to emulate the Spanish Empire and convert the heathen peoples of North America had fallen on deaf ears, a trend that would continue throughout the 1570s. The 1577 re-edition of Eden’s translation of Martyr is indicative of how much the English attitude towards America had changed during the 1560s and 1570s. This edition was, as the title page suggests, ‘gathered in part’ by Richard Eden, being now ‘newly set in order, augmented, and finished by Richarde Willes’. Willes, like Eden, appears to have led an ambiguous religious life. In the 1560s Willes had entered the Society of Jesus and began training for the Catholic priesthood. In the early 1570s Willes abandoned his religious training and returned to England where he declared his loyalty to the Church of England and obtained the patronage of the firmly Protestant family

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45 Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 81.
47 Ibid., title page.
of the Earl of Bedford, Francis Russell.\textsuperscript{48} Given this change in religious outlook, and given the religious views of his patrons, it is unsurprising that the references to the success of Spanish missionary activity in the New World are gone from the address to the reader.\textsuperscript{49} Rather than attempting to call the English to help support the Spanish programme of conversion in the New World, Willes, in his dedication to the Countess of Bedford, merely hopes that his patron will ‘finde delight in reading over these relations, wherein so newe, so straunge, so divers, so many recreations and delightes of the mynd are expressed’.\textsuperscript{50} Instead of attempting to promote an English colonialism that would emulate the Spanish, as Eden had done in 1555, Willes hoped to provide an entertaining text that would ‘delight a mynde travelled in weighty matters, & weeried with great affayres’.\textsuperscript{51} The religious nature of the Spanish conquest of America had thus been disconnected from Martyr’s text by Willes, being replaced by a reading that saw the value of the text in its description of strange and unfamiliar sights.

The process by which religion became disentangled from English understandings of America, and the way in which the Spanish approach to the New World became unenviable, is a complex one. As has already been suggested, the growing intolerance towards Catholics in England made any positive assessment of the success of Spanish conversion in the Americas foolhardy and increasingly dangerous. It was not only, however, the solidifying of the Church of England that encouraged a less complimentary attitude towards Spain. A number of political and economic spats between England and Spain also helped stimulate this hardening attitude. The first of these came in 1563 with a trade embargo in Antwerp, caused in part by

\textsuperscript{49} Martyr, History of Travayle, sigs. ™\textsuperscript{3r}-™\textsuperscript{5v}.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, sig. ™\textsuperscript{2v}.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
English piracy in the channel, but also by long-term disputes over duties and customs.\(^5^2\) A severe outbreak of plague in London provided the regent of the Netherlands, the Duchess of Palma, with an excuse to enact the closure of trade that she had threatened for some time, resulting in the banning of the importation of English cloth and woollen goods, not only in Antwerp, but in all the dominions of the Spanish king. The shutting down of the cloth trade in Antwerp was particularly damaging for English merchants, given that woollen cloth was England’s main export and Antwerp its largest market.\(^5^3\) It seems that this tension between the two nations was, however, temporary as this embargo was later lifted and peaceful trade with Spain resumed once more. However, just two years later England and Spain were once again embroiled in hostility. As Jason Eldred has argued, the Dutch Revolt of 1566 ‘inescapably poisoned Anglo-Spanish relations’, as Queen Elizabeth I supported the rebels in the hope of maintaining English national security.\(^5^4\) While this development led to another trade embargo and undoubtedly alarmed merchants trading with Spain, it also gave other Englishmen the opportunity to retaliate against what they saw as a tyrannical and ungodly imperial Spain.\(^5^5\) It is this group of men, with their virulent anti-Hispanicism and their aggressive approach to foreign policy with Spain, who Eldred has categorised as the ‘martial maritime faction’.\(^5^6\) This group argued that England’s national interest was best served by hostility to Spain, suggesting that economic stability would come through aggressive expansion in the form of overseas settlement and the intrusion of the English into the ‘lucrative Iberian trade routes to the Indies’.\(^5^7\) Political tensions with Spain thus became the lens through which English exploration

\(^5^2\) Jason Eldred, “‘The Just will Pay for the Sinners’: English Merchants, the Trade with Spain, and Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1563-1585,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 12.

\(^5^3\) Ibid., 13.

\(^5^4\) Ibid., 15.

\(^5^5\) Ibid., 11.

\(^5^6\) Ibid., 6. Some important members of this group included the Earl of Leicester, Francis Walsingham and Christopher Hatton.

\(^5^7\) Ibid., 9.
and action in the Americas was viewed. Gone was the adoration of the Spanish Empire and their conquest in America and gone were the religious justifications for English involvement in the New World; commercial gain was now the priority for English explorers and preferably at the expense of the Spanish.

One of the first men to tackle this new approach to the New World was John Hawkins. Hawkins had been trading in the Indies since the early 1560s, taking slaves from Africa to exchange for goods in the Caribbean. During these earlier slaving ventures Hawkins operated under a veil of legality, assuming that trade in this region was covered by the Anglo-Spanish commercial treaty of 1489. These voyages yielded Hawkins and his investors a handsome profit but they also increasingly incurred the anger of the Spanish, particularly as Anglo-Spanish relations deteriorated in the mid-1560s. After the completion of his second voyage in 1565, the king of Spain made his position in the Caribbean inescapably clear; the rival French colony in Florida was destroyed, Hawkins was forced by the Spanish ambassador to sign a bond promising not to trade with the Spanish in the West Indies, and thus Spanish hegemony in the Caribbean was restored.  

However, this would not stop Hawkins pursuing a profit in the Indies. Hawkins’s third slaving voyage of 1567, although ostensibly barred by the Privy Council to appease the Spanish, had the appearance of a ‘national undertaking’ and, more importantly, the support and indeed investment of the queen. Under the pretext that Hawkins’s voyage would merely visit the African coast to search for an unclaimed gold mine, the Spanish ambassador was reassured that Hawkins would not break the bond that he had made after the second voyage.  


59 Morgan, “John Hawkins.”
hundred slaves in Sierra Leone and set sail for the West Indies. Hawkins described what happened in the Americas in a pamphlet published after his return home in 1569. His enterprise began well despite the fact that the king of Spain had commanded that the governors in the Indies should under no circumstances ‘suffer anye trade’ with him and his men.  

At the island of Margarita, off the Venezuelan coast, Hawkins and his men met with ‘reasonable trade and courteous intertainemente’, and although they encountered Spanish resistance at the town of Rio de la Hacha they managed to force their way into the town and obtain a ‘secrete trade’, thanks to the ‘Spaniardes desire of Negrose’ and to their ‘frendship of the treasurer’.  

Hawkins was keen to point out that in all other places where he and his men had traded, ‘the Spainiards inhabitaunts were glad of u[s] and traded willingly’.  

This point becomes important when considered in the context of what happened next, for Hawkins’s voyage did not end in success but in outright catastrope.  

After failing to engage in trade at Cartagena, Hawkins decided it was time to return to England. An ‘extreme storme’, however, forced Hawkins to put in at San Juan de Ulloa in Mexico to repair his ships, take on water, and ‘obtayne vittualles’. This unplanned diversion ended badly as the Spanish ‘had furnished them selves with a supplie of men to the number of. 1000’ from the mainland and proceeded to ‘set uppon’ the English from all sides. Although many Englishmen were killed ‘without mercye’, the survivors were able to escape and eventually made it back to England with the majority of their treasure. For Hawkins, the behaviour of the Spanish was unacceptable. On arrival home Hawkins even went as far as to

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60 Hawkins, A True Declaration, sig. A4v.  
61 Ibid., sigs. A4v-A5r.  
62 Ibid., sig. A5v.  
63 Ibid., sigs. A5v-A6v.  
65 Ibid., sig. B3r.
open proceedings against the Spanish in the admiralty court, looking for compensation for
the damage and losses incurred in Mexico. Despite trading without the king’s permission,
Hawkins had categorised his dealings in the Caribbean as peaceful and mutually beneficial.
The violent response of the Spanish would not be easily forgotten by Hawkins or indeed by
the English more generally. With the Spanish illustrating just how far they would go in order
to protect their New World possessions, a new phase of even more aggressive dealings by the
English with the Spanish in the West Indies ensued. Unwelcome and unauthorised, yet
relatively peaceful, trade was now to be replaced with outright and aggressive piracy and
plundering.

The epitome of this new and more aggressive approach was Sir Francis Drake’s
circumnavigation of the world that was completed between 1577 and 1580. As well as being
a triumph for early modern navigational and shipbuilding techniques, it was also a triumph
for English piracy. From the account of the voyage published some years later in Richard
Hakluyt’s voluminous Principal Navigations, it is clear that English respect for Spanish
possessions in the New World had entirely disappeared. While Hawkins had traded with the
Spanish for the treasure he brought home, albeit secretly and illegally, Drake’s approach was
far more forceful, taking what he wanted and ransacking Spanish towns in the process.
Throughout this narrative of the voyage there are multiple references to Drake’s overt piracy.
One of the greatest Spanish prizes taken by the English was the Cacafuego, a Spanish ship
that the English had followed from Lima to near the coast of Panama. After entering the
ship, Drake and his men ‘found in her great riches, as jewels and precious stones, thirteene

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66 Morgan, “John Hawkins.”
67 Ibid.
68 Anon., “The Two Famous Voyages Happily Perfourmed Round About the World, by Sir Francis Drake, and M.
Thomas Candish Esquire,” in Principal Navigations, 3:735.
chests full of royals of plate, foure score pound weight of golde, and sixe and twentie tunne of silver’. This robbery continued on land in the town of Guarulco as the English ‘ransaked the Towne’, taking silver, gold, and other precious jewels from the inhabitants. According to the author of this account, this aggression towards the Spanish was Drake’s revenge for the ‘private injuries received from the Spaniards’ and also for the Spanish ‘contempts and indignities’ towards the English nation and her majesty the queen.69 Poor relations with Spain, and the perceived injustices dealt by the Spanish to the English, thus became justifications for piracy in the Americas. The English no longer wished to emulate the Spanish model of conquest and colonisation, but instead wished to take from the Spanish, by force, the treasures procured from their New World possessions. For Drake and Hawkins, the spiritual health of the Amerindians was irrelevant to their enterprises. The purpose of their ventures was to acquire treasure, not to see the native inhabitants converted to Christianity. In fact, both accounts of these voyages had very little to say about the native populations of America in general, save for sporadic details about the Indians’ nakedness and undoubted savagery and ungodliness.70 For Drake and Hawkins, then, the procurement of Spanish treasure was the principal, and indeed only, motivation for travelling to the Americas. The idea that the spiritual health of the native inhabitants should be at the heart of English involvement in the New World had disappeared entirely. However, outside this circle of the ‘martial maritime’ elite, it appears that the model established by Richard Eden in the 1550s may not have died out completely.

The work of one author and translator that seems to challenge this notion of extreme Anglo-Spanish hostility in the late 1570s is that of Thomas Nicholls. He was responsible for

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69 Ibid., 3:736.
bringing the events of the Spanish conquest of Mexico to an English audience in his 1578 translation of Francisco López de Gómara’s *Historia General de Las Indias*, published under the English title, *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the Weast India, Now Called New Spayne*.\(^71\) In Nicholl’s dedication to Sir Francis Walsingham, a man who clearly saw Spain as a threat to English security, being as he was a principal member of the martial maritime faction, the ventures of Hernando Cortés in Mexico were described as ‘valiant’ and ‘princely’.\(^72\) Cortés was also cast by Nicholls as something of a religious crusader who had defeated the infidel Aztecs and implanted Christianity in the recently conquered and renamed New Spain. In fact, the entire narrative of the conquest was summarised by Nicholls as a tale of religious success in which the ‘ignorant Indians’ were saved by the Spanish from ‘worshipping Idolles’, being given the knowledge of Jesus Christ and true Christian religion.\(^73\)

It is extremely difficult to determine why Nicholls may have had such a positive attitude towards the Spanish conquests in America and their religious successes given what we know about Nicholls himself. From the scant biographical information we have on Nicholls, it would seem that he had little reason to praise the Spanish Crown and its achievements in the New World. He had, after all, been imprisoned in both the Spanish Canary Islands and in Spain for heresy.\(^74\) After his acquittal for this second charge of heresy, Nicholls returned to England where he began translating works that would inform the Privy Council’s strategy towards the military and financial strength of the Spanish monarchy.\(^75\) However, there are

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\(^72\) Ibid., sigs. a2r–a4r.

\(^73\) Ibid., sigs. b1r–b1v.


\(^75\) Ibid.
several possible explanations for this surprisingly positive interpretation of the conquest of Mexico.

An important factor to consider is the reception of Gómara’s original Spanish text in his home country. The conquest of Mexico represented a watershed moment in the cultural encounter between Spain and America, and provided an influx of New World gold into Europe. It was, however, not without its controversies. From the very start of his explorations of Mexico in 1518, Cortés had been acting in open rebellion, defying the authority of the governor of Cuba, Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, who had instructed Cortés not to settle or conquer the lands that he discovered.\textsuperscript{76} Therefore, although the conquest of Mexico represented a stunning success for the Spanish, the way that Cortés had achieved it increasingly drew criticism from the Crown. Gómara’s account of Cortés’s conquest of Mexico was first published in Zaragoza in 1552 and despite being an immediate success, just a year after publication Charles V demanded that all copies of the book be seized. This censorship of Gómara occurred at a time when the Spanish Crown was attempting to diminish the power and influence of the \textit{conquistadors} in New Spain. An intrinsic aspect of this campaign was to ban and seize texts that would support the \textit{conquistadors’} claim for material compensation by praising their achievements.\textsuperscript{77} Gómara’s excessive praise of Cortés made his book one such text, and it remained banned in Spain until 1726.\textsuperscript{78} The fact that the Spanish Crown condemned this book may have appealed to men hostile to Spain such as Sir Francis Walsingham; Cortés may have been a Spaniard, but he was a Spaniard who had defied the authority of his superiors, and who continued to trouble imperial Spain well after the

\textsuperscript{77} Valencia Suárez, \textit{Aztecs Through the Lens}, 38.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 39.
completion of the conquest. Indeed, the threat from Cortés to Spanish power in Mexico continued into the next generation when his son Martín attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish an independent Mexico in 1566.\(^79\) Cortés and his conspiratorial heirs were thus considered traitors in Spain in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This goes some way to explaining why Nicholls, with the support of the vehemently anti-Spanish Walsingham, was able to characterise Cortés as valiant and princely without compromising his loyalty to the queen. What it does not explain, however, is why Nicholls chose to frame the conquest as a predominantly religious event.

María Valencia Suárez has argued that this may be, in part, down to the source material that Nicholls chose to translate. Through her comparison of the English edition with its original Spanish, Suárez illustrates that Nicholls was heavily influenced by Gómara’s mode of description and in particular his ‘religious portrayal of the conquest’ and his ‘negative view of Aztec culture’.\(^80\) Alongside this, Nicholls’s own religious leanings can help explain his focus on the spiritual aspects of the conquest. Nicholls was clearly a very pious man, having endured two imprisonments for heresy abroad and having secured his induction as a rector at Widford on his return to England.\(^81\) Nicholls was not only a religious man, but an apparently committed Calvinist. In fact, his extreme Calvinist preaching eventually led to his removal from Widford by the Bishop of Oxford in 1577.\(^82\) It is clear from Nicholls’s address to the reader that he was less than impressed by the religiosity of English society. According to Nicholls, the converted heathens of Mexico were ‘more devout unto heavenly things’ than the ‘wretched Chrystians’ of England, especially in ‘Charitie, humilite, and lively works of faith’.\(^83\) Nicholls’s decision to

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\(^79\) Ibid., 38-39.  
\(^80\) Ibid., 40.  
\(^81\) Baldwin, “Thomas Nicholls.”  
\(^82\) Ibid.  
\(^83\) Gómara, Pleasant Historie, sigs. b1r-b1v.
categorise the conquest of Mexico as a religious conquest can thus be read as a critique of English piety, rather than as a celebration of the success of Spanish conversion in the New World. For pious men such as Nicholls, then, religion was central to their understanding of European contact and conquest in the Americas, and yet on closer reading and contextualisation it is possible to deduce that this religious position was one of strictly Reformed Protestantism rather than one of pro-Hispanicism and pro-Catholicism. Nicholls’s Reformed Protestantism, and his interpretation of Spanish imperialism, clashed with many other authors of the sixteenth century, reflecting the wide spectrum of English Protestant belief in Elizabethan England and the increasing puritan push for further religious reform.

It is clear, then, that different groups of people had varied approaches to how the English could and should be involved in New World projects. Men like Nicholls advocated a religious understanding of the encounter between Europe and America, but in general Englishmen moved towards a more commercial, anti-Spanish-centred ideology in the 1570s. This began with the trading of Hawkins and the piracy of Drake but continued with the independent exploration by the English in North America. In 1578 another book appeared on the booksellers’ stalls of St. Paul’s Churchyard, a book that took a very unambiguous approach to the record of the Spanish in the New World and towards English colonialism in the region. The author of the text, George Best, had been a member of Martin Frobisher’s crew during his three explorations of Meta Incognita in 1576, 1577, and 1578. Best had strong opinions about the way he thought English exploration in America should proceed, and it categorically did not involve emulating the Spanish model. Although not openly critical of the Spanish, it is clear that Best felt the English were more than capable of holding their own in the New World, even being ‘greatly superior’ in their ‘hard adventures, and valiant resolutions’ than their
Spanish and Portuguese counterparts.\textsuperscript{84} In fact, according to Best, ‘by our Englishmens industries, and these late voyages, the world is grown to a more fulnesse and perfection’. Thanks to the English the following had been achieved: ‘Christs name spred: the Gospel preached: Infidels like to be converted to Christianitie, in places where before the name of God hath not once bin heard of’.\textsuperscript{85} On closer reading, however, this celebration of the English evangelisation of the infidels of America appears a little disingenuous, given the actual motives of Frobisher’s exploration.

From the announcement on the text’s title page it is clear that religious conversion of natives was not the principal motivation of the English ventures. Instead they were conducted ‘for the finding of a passage to Cathaya, by the Northwes’.\textsuperscript{86} The concept of a Northwest Passage to Asia, which could be accessed from the Arctic region of America, flourished in the 1560s and 1570s. For the proponents of this theory, most notably the promoter of grand schemes, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the scientist and mystic, John Dee, and the merchant and supporter of commercial ventures, Michael Lok, this new route would provide the English with a ‘shorter and less arduous’ journey than those undertaken by the Spanish and Portuguese in the southern oceans.\textsuperscript{87} For the adventurers and promoters who subscribed to this theory, exploring America was merely a means of securing access to the wealth of the East. Frobisher’s voyages, however, were entirely unsuccessful in this respect; the Northwest Passage remained hidden. Best’s suggestion of the religious significance of Frobisher’s voyages can thus be read as a narrative of consolation. The English explorers had not managed

\textsuperscript{84} Best, \textit{A True Discourse}, sig. a4v.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. sigs. a4v – b1r.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., title page.
to achieve the objectives of their voyage but they had managed to implant the Christian faith in a land that had previously been devoid of true religious understanding.

Indeed, Best was not the only Englishman to categorise the exploration of Meta Incognita in religious terms. Thomas Churchyard, who also published his account of the third voyage in 1578, suggested that ‘no further gaine then Goddes glorie were looked for’ in the execution of this expedition.\(^\text{88}\) In fact, he went even further than Best in establishing the venture’s evangelical purpose; the preaching of Christianity to the natives was not merely a consolation, but a principal motivation. According to Churchyard, Frobisher, alongside his captains Fenton, York, and Best, hoped to ‘spread Gods glorie farther then ever hath bin by our common knowledge understoode’. It was not just the personal drive of these men, however, that led them on their godly mission, but that of the entire English nation as being ‘suche a christian sorte’, it ‘refuseth no hazarde nor daunger, to bryng Infidelles too the knowledge of the omnipotente God’.\(^\text{89}\) In Churchyard’s opinion, then, Frobisher’s explorations of Meta Incognita were not undertaken to secure wealth and access to the East for the English, but to satisfy a godly mission for the entire nation.

However, there is also an entirely different interpretation of the exploration, an interpretation that is seen throughout the remainder of Churchyard’s text and in surviving documents relating to the voyage. The main objectives of this final expedition were to mine for gold and colonise the region, not to proselytise the Christian faith and convert the infidel Indians. Exactly how these objectives were to be achieved was outlined in great detail by the royal commission that had been established to oversee the venture. Frobisher was to travel

\(^{88}\) Churchyard, *A Praye and Reporte*, sig. A7r.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., sig. A6v.
to the Countess of Warwick’s Island, secure it against attacks from the native Inuit, set his miners to work in search of gold, and to leave a group of men under the control of Edward Fenton to inhabit Meta Incognita.\textsuperscript{90} Once again, then, the commercial aspects of Frobisher’s explorations were at the fore. The remainder of Churchyard’s text also unwittingly identified the economic motivations of the voyage, despite his initial insistence that the glory of God was the central concern of all those involved with the enterprise. For example, at no point in the rest of the book did Churchyard describe any encounter with the local Inuit in which the word of God was preached. In fact, the majority of the encounters that Churchyard described are categorised by violence. The native inhabitants were clearly not happy with the arrival of the English as they ‘tooke up’ their arrows and ‘most obstinatly shot those arrowes’ at the English ‘without regarde of their owne lives’.\textsuperscript{91} These scuffles with the natives continued throughout the expedition, and eventually led the English to pack up their ships, conclude their business, and return home.\textsuperscript{92} Although employing the language of religious conquest, both Best’s and Churchyard’s descriptions illustrate the centrality of commercial incentives in their voyages. The religious motivations that Best and Churchyard identified were retrospectively attached to their ventures in order to compensate for failing to achieve their intended aims. The voyages to Meta Incognita thus inverted the colonial ideology of the 1550s; commercialisation was the project’s main objective while the spreading of God’s word was a mere consolation prize.

\textsuperscript{90} McGhee, \textit{Arctic Voyages}, 99.
\textsuperscript{91} Churchyard, \textit{A Praye and Reporte}, sig. B8v.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., sig. C1r.
English Failure and God’s Disfavour

During the 1580s the tone of some English texts produced on the subject of exploration in the New World began to subtly change. After a number of bitterly disappointing voyages to America in the 1570s, Englishmen began to question their approach. Rather than the optimism of George Best, English explorers such as Dionyse Settle had been less than impressed with the harsh landscape of Meta Incognita. Settle was also a member of Frobisher’s crew and published his account of the second voyage in 1577, a year before Best published his own account of the three Frobisher expeditions. Rather than re-working the narrative of the voyage as an example of English religious accomplishment in the New World as Best and Churchyard had done, Settle was willing to explain the failures of the expedition. As he frankly suggested, the lands that they had explored had ‘nothing fitte, or profitable for the use of man’. The country was ‘barren and unfertile’, the people ‘rude and of no capacitie to culture’. The natural environment in general was extremely hostile; there was a ‘great likelyhood of Earthquakes’ and avalanches due to the ‘huge and monstruous mounteynes’. On a slightly more positive note, Settle did suggest that the country might possess some useful commodities ‘couched within the bowels of the earth’, but as no extensive trial had yet been made, he preferred not to speculate further.

It would seem that this negative assessment of the exploration did not go unnoticed by other members of the Frobisher expedition. Indeed, Best himself refers to texts such as Settle’s in the dedication of his book to Sir Christopher Hatton, an important English courtier who would go on to become the Lord Chancellor, stating that he had decided to publish his

93 Settle, A True Reporte, sig. D1v.
94 Ibid., sigs. D1v-D2r.
95 Ibid., sig. D3r.
own ‘true discourse’ of the exploration as the ‘common reporte’ was ‘vaine and uncertain’, being as it was the product of ‘sundrie mens fantasies’. These ‘fantasies’ and ‘untruths’, according to Best, had been spread abroad ‘to the gret slander of this so honest and honorable an action’.\textsuperscript{96} The fact that Settle’s account had been published a year previous to Best’s, and had been translated into French, Italian, German, and Latin, suggests that his narrative was part of this untrue ‘common reporte’ of which Best spoke.\textsuperscript{97} This apparent English bad luck in the New World continued throughout the 1570s with Frobisher’s next voyage to Meta Incognita also ending in failure. As Robert McGhee has argued, the failure of Frobisher’s final voyage, despite the gloss provided by Best and Churchyard, was a bitter disappointment for the venture’s investors, leading to much acrimony between themselves and the man ultimately responsible for how the voyage had proceeded, Martin Frobisher himself.\textsuperscript{98}

This bitterness and pessimism towards English exploration in America was further compounded in the early 1580s by Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s untimely death at sea. Gilbert, as has already been suggested in chapter one, had been a keen advocate of English exploration in the New World, believing like Frobisher in a Northwest Passage that would take them and their countrymen to the riches of the East. He was also, like many of his contemporaries who promoted English exploration and colonisation in the Americas, virulently anti-Spanish. In 1577 Gilbert famously presented Queen Elizabeth I with a proposal entitled \textit{A Discourse How Her Majesty May Annoy the King of Spain}, suggesting that the English should complement Drake’s raids on Spanish ships by attacking Spain’s Atlantic fishing fleet.\textsuperscript{99} Possibly in

\textsuperscript{96} Best, \textit{A True Discourse}, title page and sig. a3r.
\textsuperscript{97} McGhee, \textit{Arctic Voyages}, 95.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 142-149.
\textsuperscript{99} Williams, \textit{American Indian in Western Legal Thought}, 154.
recognition of Gilbert’s enthusiasm to extend English influence in the Americas and to temper Spanish power, in 1578 the queen awarded Gilbert letters patent to conduct a voyage of exploration to the New World, giving him the authority to ‘discover, finde, search out, and view such remote heathen and barbarous lands, countreys, and territories not actually possessed by any Christian prince or people’.

In total, Gilbert conducted three expeditions to America. The first was inconsequential, being aborted early due to a shortage of supplies and fierce sea battles. The second was more successful and brought back important information on the site that Gilbert hoped to realise his American colonisation scheme. The third, however, undertaken in 1583, ended in disaster. The events of this final voyage were recorded by Edward Hayes, the captain and owner of one of the principal ships involved in the venture. Although probably written soon after his return to England in late 1583, Hayes’s account was not published for the first time until 1589 when it appeared in Hakluyt’s Principal Navigations. The voyage began well enough with the company of ships arriving successfully in the New World and Gilbert ‘taking possession of those Countries’, ostensibly without resistance. After securing possession, Gilbert went about obtaining money from his newly procured lands. Gilbert distributed these lands amongst his investors, crew, and the ‘strangers’ that he had encountered, all of whom ‘did covenant to pay a certaine rent and service unto sir Humfrey Gilbert, his heires or assignes for ever’. Alongside this, Gilbert also enacted a tax upon every ship ‘which did fish upon the coast adjoynin’.

Like those other English voyages before his own, Gilbert focused on acquiring monetary gain from the lands and peoples that he had explored and conquered. However, disaster struck as Gilbert and his

101 Williams, American Indian in Western Legal Thought, 157.
102 Ibid., 158.
men continued their explorations of the North American coast. After days of battling bad weather, and after losing one of their ships, *The Admiral*, it was decided that the expedition would head back to England.\textsuperscript{104} The bad weather, however, continued and on Monday 9 September, Gilbert called out to Hayes on *The Golden Hind*, from his own sinking ship, ‘we are as neere to heauen by sea as by land’ before the ship was eventually ‘devoured and swallowed up of the Sea’. After a fruitless search for survivors, Hayes and *The Golden Hind* headed home, with God’s help, arriving in Falmouth on 22 September 1583.\textsuperscript{105}

Rather than seeing Gilbert’s death as a result of the bad weather and dangerous conditions inherent in early modern sea voyages, Hayes saw it as a providential warning from God. Although Hayes celebrated Gilbert’s ‘Christian pietie’ and ‘zeale’, he also suggested that he had a tendency to ignore signs from God. His failure to listen to other men’s opinions and find suitable land to settle on, ‘pleased not God to prosper in his first and great preparation’. Rather than taking this initial failure as a sign from God, Gilbert, according to Hayes, threw himself in to another venture without proper organisation, ‘presuming the cause pretended on Gods behalfe, would carie him to the desired ende’. As Hayes suggested, Gilbert was given no signs of encouragement from God to continue in his explorations; Gilbert was ‘foyled in his first attempt, in a second should utterly be disgraced’.\textsuperscript{106} In the end, ‘it pleased the divine will to resume him [Gilbert] unto himselfe’.\textsuperscript{107} Gilbert’s explorations were ultimately unsuccessful because of his poor planning and his inability to recognise God’s will.

Not only was Hayes critical of the Gilbert expeditions, he was also critical of the direction that all English exploration in America was taking. As he stated in the first sentence

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Ibid., 3:156-157.
\item[105] Ibid., 3:159.
\item[106] Ibid., 3:160.
\item[107] Ibid., 3:161.
\end{footnotes}
of his account, ‘many voyages have bene pretended, yet hitherto never any thorowly accomplished by our nation’.\textsuperscript{108} Hayes was clear about why he thought this was the case. Firstly, the English had not capitalised on the early expeditions of the Cabots; if they had done, Hayes believed that not only would ‘her Maiesties territories and revenue’ ‘bene mightily enlarged and advanced’, but also ‘the seed of Christian religion’ would have been ‘sowed amongst those pagans’. Another reason for the ineffectuality of English expeditions in America was the apparent motivations of the explorers themselves who had shown that ‘Gods cause hath not bene chiefly preferred by them’. Hayes called on future would-be explorers and colonisers to put aside ‘ambition’ and ‘avarice’ as these motives ‘commeth not of God’. Without more pious intentions, English enterprises in the New World would never be successful, as explorers and colonisers would not enjoy the ‘confidence of Gods protection and assistance’.\textsuperscript{109} This increasingly providential view of English projects in America, in which establishing God’s favour and reading divine signs were perceived to be critical to success, is unsurprising given the prevalence of providential thinking in sixteenth-century England. As Alexandra Walsham has convincingly argued, providentialism was not a ‘marginal feature’ of early modern English religious culture, but part of the mainstream, representing ‘a cluster of presuppositions which enjoyed near universal acceptance’.\textsuperscript{110} Ephemeral literature of the period was ‘saturated’ with references to divine providence, with such texts reaching a broad cross-section of English society.\textsuperscript{111} The spread of providential news was encouraged by Protestant clergy who were anxious to undermine vestiges of the Old Faith, such as devotion to the saints, by emphasising God’s omnipotence and providential power.\textsuperscript{112} Within this

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 3:143.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 3:144

\textsuperscript{110} Walsham, \textit{Providence in Early Modern England}, 2.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 33-38.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 329.
context, then, Hayes’s understanding of Gilbert’s last voyage, and the reasons behind its failure, reflected the religious culture of sixteenth-century England in which providentialism was a key feature. The call to abandon worldly gain in preference of God’s favour and spiritual enlightenment was thus a product of both negative English experiences in the New World and the religious culture of the period.

In fact, even before Gilbert’s untimely death at sea it appears that advocates of the Newfoundland enterprise were already beginning to articulate their concerns about how the project was proceeding. In a letter written to Richard Hakluyt the elder in 1578, a letter that was eventually published in Richard Hakluyt the younger’s Principal Navigations, the Bristol merchant Anthony Parkhurst, who had visited Newfoundland, lamented the fact that the men of sixteenth-century England could not ‘suffer any thing (or at least few) to proceed and prosper that tendeth to the setting forth of Gods glory, and the amplifying of the Christian faith’.113 Echoing the words of Richard Eden from decades earlier, Parkhurst complained that for the purpose of converting those native peoples currently in the ‘captivitie of that spiruall Pharao, the devil’, ‘the labourers as yet are few, the harvest great’. Parkhurst encouraged Hakluyt to continue his work in bringing ‘good and godly desires to some passe’, believing him to be ‘an instrument’ of God that would ‘moove men of power, to redeeme the people of Newfoundland’.114

Parkhurst’s wish that something be done to change the direction and focus of English colonial projects was ostensibly fulfilled by Hakluyt’s younger cousin of the same name. Like

Parkhurst, Hakluyt the younger believed that English explorations in America had been too focused on the acquisition of treasure and commodities rather than on the saving of native souls. Expressing these concerns in print for the first time in 1582, Hakluyt suggested that had English explorers cared more about ‘Gods glorie’ than ‘gaine’, their projects would have had a ‘farre better effecte’, because as Hakluyt suggested, ‘Godlinesse is great riches, and that if we first seeke the kingdome of God, al other thinges will be given unto us’.

By the early 1580s, then, a return to the colonial ideology that Richard Eden had proposed in the 1550s, in which the advancement of God’s glory was the motive and economic gain the reward, had been set in motion. The way in which this colonial model would be achieved, however, was significantly different to what Eden had suggested. Neither Hayes, Parkhurst, or Hakluyt, nor the Englishmen who agreed with their assessment of English exploration in America, encouraged the emulation of the Spanish Empire. Indeed, the colonial ideology that would develop in England from the 1580s would position itself in staunch opposition to Spanish experiences and techniques in America, forging a discourse that was based on the peculiarities of both English religious life and society.

**Godly Enterprises and Spanish Atrocities**

In the early 1580s, English propagandists and promoters of colonial enterprises were fighting against a tide of English disillusionment. Up until this point, English exploration in America had achieved very little and increasingly this was being blamed upon the English focus on commercial gain at the expense of God’s glorification. Once this uncomfortable fact had been articulated by the likes of Hakluyt and Hayes, other English colonisers and promoters could begin constructing an idealised, religiously-inspired conquest and

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115 Hakluyt, *Diverse Voyages*, sig. ¶2v.
colonisation programme. One text that attempted to express coherently this new colonial message was George Peckham’s *A True Reporte, of the Late Discoveries, and Possession, Taken in the Right of the Crowne of Englande*, published in London in 1583. Like Hayes, Peckham was close to the voyages of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and wrote his book in response to Gilbert’s last voyage. It is likely that Peckham composed this text almost immediately after the completion of Gilbert’s third voyage as it appeared in 1583 and expressed uncertainty about Gilbert’s fate; at the time of publication there was ‘no certaine newes’ as to what had become of Gilbert.\(^\text{116}\) As chapter one has suggested, it is also clear that Peckham published this text in a bid to encourage further investment in the project after Gilbert’s death. Like Hayes, Peckham began to worry about the spiritual validity of Gilbert’s venture, given what had happened during the final exploration. Peckham pondered whether or not this final voyage was ‘as well pleasing to almightie God, as profitable to men?’, ‘as well gratefull to the Savages, as gainfull to the Christians’.\(^\text{117}\) The rest of the book is dedicated to proving that English ventures in North America were indeed pleasing to God and beneficial to the native inhabitants. Not only was English colonialism ‘commodious to the whole Realme’ and ‘profitable to the adventurers’, it was also ‘beneficial to the Savages’ and, most importantly, ‘a thing likewise tending to the honor and glory of almighty God’.\(^\text{118}\)

Peckham was clearly echoing the sentiments of Hayes and Hakluyt, yet some historians have categorised his approach to the New World as something unique. In fact, Loren E. Pennington has argued that Peckham was the only commentator of the 1580s that attempted to fit the conversion of natives into a comprehensive theory of colonisation, with

\(^{116}\) Peckham, *A True Reporte*, sig. B3r.  
\(^{117}\) Ibid., sig. B3v.  
\(^{118}\) Ibid., sigs. C1r.-C1v.
other Englishmen only following suit in the seventeenth century as a way of legitimising their claims to American lands. As a Catholic nobleman, hoping to establish a refuge for other English Catholics in the New World, it is possible that Peckham’s view on English colonialism in America may have been significantly different to those of his Protestant contemporaries.

In reality Peckham’s faith was not an impediment to advancement. He was knighted in 1570, appointed sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1572, and given a letter of recommendation by Sir Francis Walsingham to aid his mission to secure investment for further exploration and settlement in the New World after the death of Gilbert. However, that is not to say that Peckham’s Catholicism was left unchecked. He was imprisoned twice for offences relating to his religion and fell into debt due to the penalties incurred by his religious nonconformity. This did not appear to stop Peckham moving within the circles of the English Protestant elite, especially in the 1570s and 1580s. In fact, James McDermott has even argued that Peckham’s plans for wide-scale Catholic emigration to America actually reflected a de facto recognition of the Acts of Supremacy (1559) and Uniformity (1559), thus illustrating Peckham’s loyalty to the English Crown.

Peckham’s loyalty to Elizabeth is clear throughout his treatise. He was convinced that Elizabeth held the rightful title over the lands of Newfoundland, virulently arguing that Elizabeth had more legitimacy than any Christian prince in the Indies. Not only was Peckham loyal to his monarch, he also outwardly accepted that the principal faith of any New World colonies should be that of the Church of England, reiterating the laws established

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121 James McDermott, “Sir George Peckham.”
122 Peckham, A True Reporte, sigs. D4r.-E1r.
by Humphrey Gilbert that stated that ‘religion publiquely exercised, should be such and none, other then is used in the Church of *England*.\(^{123}\)

It is also clear, from a close reading of Peckham’s text, alongside the views of Hayes, Parkhurst, and Hakluyt that have already been examined, that he was not the only Englishman that espoused a strong religious motivation for colonial enterprise. At the beginning of the book, before Peckham’s main text begins, there are a number of endorsements for the tract from a variety of famous, well-connected explorers, adventurers, and courtiers. While some of these endorsements focused on the financial aspects of colonialism in America, notably the one composed by Francis Drake, a number of others suggested that religious motivation should be at the front of any investor’s mind.\(^{124}\) Sir William Pelham, the former Lord Justice of Ireland and an important diplomat to the Netherlands throughout the late sixteenth century, stated in his commendatory verses that he was sure that if the English motivation for colonisation was virtuous, God’s favour would be enjoyed by the English; ‘For where the attempt, on vertue dooth depend: / No doubt but God, will blesse it in the ende’.\(^{125}\) John Hawkins, the slave trader and man who was bent on turning a profit in the West Indies in the 1560s, had also, by the 1580s, incorporated religious motivations into his opinion on how enterprises in America should proceed. Under the English, for the first time ‘the name of God shall founde, / Among a nation in whose eares the same did never sounde’ and to those who bring glory to the name of God ‘a private gaine shall bring’.\(^{126}\) This connection between pleasing God and reaping financial reward in return is also clearly expressed by Captain John

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\(^{123}\) Ibid., sig. B2r.

\(^{124}\) The endorsement from Francis Drake is clearly focused on the pursuit of private gain, stating that ‘If anie one there bee, that covettes such a trade: / Lo, here [in America] the plot for common weath, and private gaine is made’. Quotation taken from Peckham, *A True Reporte*, sig. *4v.

\(^{125}\) Peckham, *A True Reporte*, sig. *4r.

\(^{126}\) Ibid., sig. *§1r.*
Chester who likely acted as a commander during Francis Drake’s voyage that circumnavigated the world. Chester believed that it was providence that the English should be successful in the New World, claiming that ‘God hath left this honour unto us / The journey knowne, the passage quicklie runne, / The land full rich, the people easilie wunne. / Whose gainses shalbe the knowledge of our faith, / And ours such ritches as the country hath’. In the 1580s, then, it was believed by a number of leading English explorers, pro-colonialists, and their supporters that the successful spreading of God’s word amongst the infidel Amerindians by the English, and the financial rewards that this would bring, was divinely ordained by God. Once this notion had been firmly established, the English could begin constructing how God’s plan would be achieved in practice.

As well as promoting a religiously-centred programme of English overseas exploration and settlement, Peckham’s text also indicated the ways in which it could be achieved. This godly discourse of colonialism not only extended to improving the religious lives of indigenous Americans but also to rectifying the miserable state of many living in sixteenth-century England. As Peckham neatly summarised it, English settlement in North America should be ‘principally undertaken for the enlargement of the christian fayth abroade, and the banishment of ydlenes at home’. The spreading of God’s word, then, collided with domestic economic necessity. Sixteenth-century England had witnessed huge population growth which had adversely affected prices. Employment opportunities and food supplies had not kept pace with these increases, leading to a peak in illegitimacy rates and levels of crime and vagrancy

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127 In an anonymous account of Drake’s voyage there is a brief reference to a fly boat of fifty tonnes that was commanded by John Chester. Given the fact that Drake himself also endorsed Peckham’s text it seems possible that the John Chester mentioned in Peckham’s text is the same John Chester that is referred to in the account; Anon., The Voyages & Travels of that Renowned Captain, Sir Francis Drake, into the West-Indies (London, 1652), 12.
128 Peckham, A True Reporte, sig. §2v.
129 Ibid., sig. H1v.
in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.\textsuperscript{130} Alongside these domestic shortages and economic crises, the intensification of England’s rivalry with Spain in the 1580s and the decline of traditional European markets for English products, encouraged England to look westwards for economic stability.\textsuperscript{131} These social uncertainties are clearly broached by Peckham and couched in terms of religious and providential thinking. Thanks to ‘Gods especiall blessing’, the many commodities and virtues of North America had been revealed. Thanks to ‘the mighty assistaunce of the omnipotent God’, ‘all odious ydlenes’ from England would be ‘utterly banished’, ‘many poore and needy persons’ would find relief, and ‘the ignorant & barbarous Idolaters taught to knowe Christ.’\textsuperscript{132} Idle children, for example, would be put to work to make ‘a thousand kindes of trifeling thinges’ as merchandise for the Americas.\textsuperscript{133} Men would be employed in ‘draging for Pearle, working for Mynes, and in matters of husbandry’ as well as in ‘fishing for Codde, Salmon and Herring’.\textsuperscript{134} By stimulating trade with the ‘savages’ of America, who once having tasted English civility would become ripe consumers of English goods, ‘all such Townes and Villages, as bothe have beene and nowe are utterlye decayed and ruinated’ in England would be ‘restored to theyr pristinate wealth and estate’.\textsuperscript{135} In return for their trade and natural resources, the natives would be recompensed by being ‘brought from falsehood to truth, from darknes to lyght, from the hieway of death, to the path of life, from superstitious idolatry, to sincere christianity’.\textsuperscript{136} By revealing the lands of North America, God had bestowed his favour on the English, providing


\textsuperscript{132} Peckham, \textit{A True Reporte}, sigs. G1r-H1v.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., sig. E2v.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., sig. E3r.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., sig. E2v.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., sig. F2v.
them with resources from America that would help banish poverty from the realm and a land in which the English idle poor could be put to good use. In return for God’s good grace, the English would fulfil their pious duty by spreading the gospel to the Amerindian heathens, raising them to civility and converting them to Christianity.

It was not just the Catholic Peckham, however, that presented English New World projects in this way. Christopher Carleill, in a short pamphlet aimed at inducing the Muscovy Company to invest in English enterprises in America, also illustrated the spiritual rewards that trade and settlement in the West would bring. While it is clear that Carleill produced his text to illustrate the economic incentives of voyages to America, stating as he does that it was ‘the Merchandizyng, whiche is the matter especially looked for’, it is also evident that he believed the religious aspects of such enterprises were important draws for potential investors. This consideration of the spiritual rewards of such enterprises may have been in part down to Carleill’s association with Richard Hakluyt the younger, who had made his own printed plea for godly colonisation just a year earlier. As Rachel Lloyd has argued, although Hakluyt may have been one of the brains behind the text, Carleill was nonetheless able to transform Hakluyt’s ideas into more practical terms. In a similar fashion to Peckham, but in fact with a much more explicit religious message, Carleill explained to his readers that ‘Christian charitie’ ‘perswade the furtherance’ of English action in America. Not only would English trade and settlement in North America reduce ‘the savage people, to Christianitie and civilitie’, it would also help find employment for the great number of ‘poore sorte of people’,

137 Rachel Lloyd has suggested that in the 1580s the Muscovy Company’s trade with Russia came under increased pressure for a variety of reasons, causing the company to search for new trade markets. It was within this context that Carleill’s text appeared. Rachel Lloyd, *Elizabethan Adventurer: A Life of Captain Christopher Carleill* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1974), 63-64.
who were ‘livyng altogether unprofitable, and often tymes to the great disquiet of the better sorte’. Involvement in English New World projects, according to Carleill, did not merely reflect a sound monetary investment, then, but also a spiritual one. As well as reasserting the religious benefits of English engagement with America that had been identified in the same year by Peckham, Carleill also introduced another spiritual advantage that would be well received by the more ‘godlie mynded’ of his potential investors. Trade with the Americas would provide the unique advantage of sheltering merchants from ‘Idolatrous Religion’, allowing them a ‘free libertie of conscience’. By trading in a land that was inhabited by irreligious natives who could easily be converted to the form of Christianity most agreeable to the English, Carleill argued that those involved with the trade could avoid having profane religions ‘enforced upon them’, being instead able to practice the faith which was ‘most agreable unto their parentes and Maisters’. It is unclear from the context exactly which idolatrous religions Carleill was referring to, but it is likely to be either the religions of Muscovy and the Near East or the Roman Catholicism of some of England’s nearer neighbours in Europe, given the extensive amount of English trade undertaken in these regions in the late sixteenth century. Trading in regions with a different religion could be perilous, leading to imprisonment for heresy, or even worse, and as Carleill suggested, indoctrination into idolatry. Trading with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, then, would not only open up a vast new market for English products and a new arena in which to source critical

140 Carleill, Breef and Sommarie Discourse sig. B1v.
141 Ibid., sig. A2r.
142 Robert Brenner has argued that trade with the Near East increased during Elizabeth’s reign. He also argues, however, that trade with Catholic Europe was critical in the sixteenth century, with trade with Spain growing substantially in the 1570s and the chartering of the Venice Company in 1583; Robert Brenner, Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550-1653 (London and New York: Verso Books, 2003), 14-18. Rachel Lloyd has suggested that in the 1580s the Muscovy Company’s trade with Russia came under increased pressure, causing the company to search for new trade markets. It was within this context that Carleill’s text appeared; Lloyd, Elizabethan Adventurer, 62-64.
commodities for English import, it would also help protect the piety of those involved in such trade, insulating them from the dangers of idolatrous religions.

The idea that godly exploration and settlement in America was intimately tied to commercial gain and domestic economic stability, an idea which had been percolating amongst English advocates of New World colonialism since the 1580s, solidified at the turn of the century. Not only were Peckham’s and Carleill’s accounts reprinted in 1600 in Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* alongside Hayes’s and Parkhurst’s descriptions of Newfoundland, another tract also emerged in 1602 that synthesised the argument that had first been put forward in the early 1580s in which economic gain would follow godly settlement. The pamphlet, although attributed to John Brereton, an explorer who made the first English attempt at settling the region which is now modern-day New England, was in fact a composite text that included a number of works that promoted the idea of English settlement in the New World. Within these multiple works, written at different times but published together in 1602, many of the ideas that had first been introduced to English readers in the 1580s on the nature of English activity in the Americas were clearly rearticulated. Richard Hakluyt the elder composed a series of notes in 1585 outlining the many ‘inducements’ for planting the English in North America which were eventually printed posthumously in Brereton’s text. Setting out the goals for English projects in America, Hakluyt argued, as his cousin had done in 1582, that

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144 Alongside Brereton’s own account of his voyage to North Virginia, the pamphlet also included additional texts, one composed by Edward Hayes on the possible existence of the Northwest Passage to Asia, the published version of a text written by Richard Hakluyt the elder for the inducement of English settlement in Virginia, some brief extracts taken from René de Laudonnière’s *L’histoire notable de la Floride* which had been translated into English by Richard Hakluyt the younger in 1587, a short extract taken from Thomas Harriot’s account of Virginia published in 1588, 1590 and in 1600, and some very brief testimonies extracted from a variety of printed accounts of European exploration in North America, from Jacques Cartier to Fernando de Soto; John Brereton, *A Briefe and True Relation of the Discoverie of the North Part of Virginia Being a Most Pleasant, Fruitfull and Commodious Soile* (London, 1602), 15-48.
‘the glory of God’, achieved ‘by planting of religion among those infidels’, should be the principal motivation for English explorers and would-be colonisers. In fact, Hakluyt helpfully listed and prioritised what the objectives of English activity in America should be: ‘1. To plant Christian religion. / 2. To trafficke. / 3. To conquer’. Alongside reaffirming the ideas that had been put forward by his cousin in 1582, Hakluyt also argued, as Peckham and Carleill had done in 1583, that English settlement in America should provide an ‘ample vent of the labour of our poore people at home’. By engaging the poor in the production of merchandise to be sold to the native inhabitants of North America, the ‘great reliefe’ of England’s poor and the ‘woonderfull enriching’ of the English realm would be achieved. In another tract printed within Brereton’s volume, Edward Hayes, the vocal critic of Gilbert’s final voyage to Newfoundland, also reasserted these claims. As Hayes suggested, in sixteenth-century England there was a worrying surplus of people and a dearth of employment. This ‘want’ of jobs had led to the decay of English towns and ports and had caused ‘the realme to swarme full with poore and idle people’. By stimulating new trade routes in the West through the exploitation of the diverse range of commodities found in North America, Hayes argued there would be an increase in the ‘imploiment also of our [English] people and ships’. Moreover, by settling in North America and by sourcing critical commodities from the region, such as fish oils, tar and pitch, timber, hemp, and flax, English merchants would ensure that other European nations in need of such products would trade directly with them. Once the lands of North America had been brought under the power of the English crown, competing European

146 Ibid., 30.
147 Ibid., 29.
148 Ibid., 29-30.
149 Edward Hayes, “A Treatise, Containing Important Inducements for the Planting in these Parts, and Finding a Passage that Way to the South Sea and China,” in A Briefe and True Relation, 17.
countries would no longer be able to procure these commodities from the region without engaging in trade with the English. Instead, the English would reap the benefit of settlement by exchanging these essential products for luxury commodities from the Spanish and Portuguese such as wines, sweet oils, fruits, spices, sugars, silks, gold, and silver.150 Continuing the providential framing of English overseas projects that he had begun in his account of Gilbert’s last voyage, Hayes concluded that, in terms of settling North America, there was ‘no nation of Christendom’ ‘so fit for this action as England’.151

At the same time that writers were exploring the various ways to banish idleness and poverty from England through trade and settlement in the New World, they were also considering the best way to approach the Christianisation of the indigenous peoples of North America. Another critical aspect of this resurgent godly discourse of colonialism, then, was the English approach to the spiritual health of the native Amerindians. English commentators addressed this issue in two distinct ways, firstly by criticising the Spanish approach to the conversion of Amerindians and secondly by suggesting a method that would see the natives reduced to civility and converted to Christianity through gentleness rather than force. Although English criticism of Spanish colonialism had been implicit in works produced from the late 1560s onwards, it was not until the 1580s, when relations between Spain and England were at an all-time low, that this criticism became more overt. As will be explored later, while the English planned to care and nurture the native populations they encountered, the Spanish, in contrast, were busy torturing and murdering, in huge numbers, the communities of Amerindians that they had conquered. Arguably, this new highly critical interpretation of Spanish colonialism first emerged with the publication of the first English edition of Bartolomé

150 Ibid., 17-18.
151 Ibid., 19.
de Las Casas’s infamous tract *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* in 1583. Under the English title *The Spanish Colonie*, the idea of the tyrannical, cruel, and ungodly *conquistador* burst its way into the English consciousness.\(^{152}\) Originally published in Seville in 1542, Las Casas’s text was written to convince the king of Spain to rethink the ways in which the indigenous populations of America should be treated, encouraging him to abolish the *encomienda* system and introduce policies that would protect the Indians and curb the violence of the *conquistadors*.\(^{153}\) Despite Las Casas’s undoubted allegiance to the king, his assessment of those Spaniards conquering and colonising in the New World was damning. His account of Spanish atrocities in the New World thus became, as Lewis Hanke has argued, the ‘choicest weapon of anti-Spanish propaganda’ for Spain’s political and religious enemies, with various foreign editions of the text being produced in the late sixteenth century.\(^{154}\)

It is clear from the address to the reader from the 1583 edition that the purpose of the translation was to illustrate the cruelty and barbarity of the Spanish towards the ‘poore reasonable creatures’ of the Americas.\(^{155}\) The preface of the text, presumably composed by the translator who only identified himself with the letters M. M. S., was dedicated to ‘all the provinces of the Lowe countrieys’, highlighting once again how intra-European politics

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\(^{154}\) Ibid., 57.

impacted upon English representations of the Americas in the late sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{156} This nod towards the Netherlands in 1583 is unsurprising given the fact that a resurgent Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule had been raging for a number of years. Although Elizabeth I attempted to maintain a sense of neutrality to the fighting taking place in the Netherlands, at least until 1585 when the English position was re-examined in the light of the Prince of Orange’s assassination, the Dutch Revolt nonetheless had a profound effect upon the English.\textsuperscript{157} The history of the Dutch Revolt in England was largely written from the perspective of the Dutch rebels or by those who sympathised with their cause, thus demonising the Spanish and polluting still further the already tense relationship between England and Spain.\textsuperscript{158} Within this context, then, the English edition of Las Casas’s work, and its damning account of the atrocities committed by the Spanish in relation to the native inhabitants of the New World, reflected the growing criticism of Spanish colonialism in America and Spanish subjugation of the Netherlands. It was thus a reaction to the realities of the Spanish conquest in America and its perceived parallels with the violent dispute taking place back in Europe.

In the address to the reader, the Spanish were described as a most ‘barbarous or cruell’ nation, an unsurprising assessment given the entirely negative account of the Spanish conquest written by Las Casas.\textsuperscript{159} According to Las Casas, the Spanish \textit{conquistadors} had put ‘to death unjustly and tyrannously more then twelve Millions of soules’ in the Americas.\textsuperscript{160} They ‘roasted and broyled’ the native chiefs, they ‘taught their houndes, fierce dogs, to teare them [the natives] in pieces’, and they took babies from their mothers, chopping them in

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., sig. ¶2v.
\textsuperscript{157} Maltby, \textit{Black Legend}, 44-55.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 44-47.
\textsuperscript{159} Las Casas, \textit{Spanish Colonie}, sig. ¶2v.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., sig. A2v.
‘small gobbettes, giving to every dog his livery or part there of’.\textsuperscript{161} Las Casas also made it clear what had caused this despicable behaviour on the part of the Spanish; they destroyed an infinite number of Amerindian souls in order to ‘gette golde, and to enriche them selves in a short tyme’\textsuperscript{162} The Spanish conquests in the Americas had thus illuminated for English readers what could happen if worldly gain was put before godly intentions, a point that was not lost on the writer of the address to the reader. As the author of the prefatory material explained, his motivation for translating Las Casas’s text was to awaken the English ‘out of their sleep’ so they may begin to ‘thinke upon Gods judgement: and refraine from their wickednes and vice’. The translator also encouraged his readers to ‘consider with what enemie’ they were to deal with, advocating that the English abandon their own ‘quarrels, controversies, and partialities’ in order to unite against the real enemy of Spain.\textsuperscript{163} Not only did the publication of Las Casas’s text encourage the English to heal the bitter divisions of their society, then, it also reinforced the notion that godly endeavour, rather than material gain, should be at the heart of overseas exploration.

This negative English assessment of Spanish colonialism in the Americas continued for the remainder of the sixteenth century, being explored by authors writing both directly and indirectly about European overseas projects. Sir Walter Ralegh, although less concerned with the religious implications of Spanish colonialism, was nevertheless highly critical of the Spanish approach to the native inhabitants of the New World. In his account of his voyage to Guiana, published in 1596, Ralegh presented the Spanish as tyrannical and greedy, describing how they would sell Indian girls for a profit and satisfy their carnal lusts by taking from the

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., sigs. A3v-F4v.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., A2v.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., sig. ¶2v.
natives ‘both their wives and daughters daily’, causing great enmity between themselves and the indigenous population. Others were more concerned with the spiritual tyranny of the Spanish conquistadors. The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, in his published dialogue with one Dr Hill over whether there was a need to uphold papistry in England, clearly articulated a hostile position towards Spain’s evangelisation in the New World. In contrast to Richard Eden, who had claimed in the 1550s that the Spanish had been responsible for the saving of millions of Amerindian souls, Abbot saw nothing commendable about the mass baptisms of native Americans by Spanish missionaries. In a sentence loaded with irony, Abbot replied to Hill’s claim that the Catholic faith had been responsible for converting thousands in the West Indies to Christianity, by suggesting that the Spanish friars were indeed ‘exceeding nimble in administering baptism, to those who knew very little’. Would not it have been better, so Abbot asked, to have preached the teachings of the Bible to the peoples of the Americas before ‘the Sacrament had been imparted’? In fact, instead of proselytising effectively and making sure the natives had a true understanding of the Christian faith, Abbot suggested that the Spanish chose to engage in ungodly and sinful activities, spending their time ‘swearing, cursing & blaspheming God, in rapes & violent deflourings of the wives & daughters of the Americanes, & in all such incogitable & execrable vilainy, as if they had bin Divels and infernal spirits, let loose and sent from hell’. Rather than being the saviours of Amerindian souls, then, the Spanish conquistadors, as both Las Casas and Ralegh had also suggested, were villainous, tyrannical, violent, and ungodly. Concluding his diatribe on

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164 Ralegh, The Discoverie, 33-62.
165 George Abbot, The Reasons Which Doctour Hill Hath Brought, for the Upholding of Papistry, which is Falselie Term'd the Catholike Religion (London, 1604).
166 Ibid., 135.
167 Ibid., 201.
Spanish evangelisation in the New World, Abbot stated that it was plain that ‘dwellers in those parts of America which are said to be Christia[n], are few others but Spaniards’.\textsuperscript{168}

This intensely critical reading of the Spanish approach to the native inhabitants of the New World and their conversion to Christianity contrasted starkly with English understandings of their own methods. As James Axtell has argued, merely desiring the conversion of American natives was ‘insufficient’ to accomplish the task.\textsuperscript{169} Europeans realised that in order for Christianity to take hold, the Indians had to be ‘educable’ and have the potential for civility. Without education and the raising to civilisation, the savages of America would forever remain too degenerate for the Christian religion to flourish.\textsuperscript{170} It was this process of civilising, followed by converting, that the English advocated in their own New World projects. A similar debate had, of course, taken place with regards to Spanish colonialism and yet, as we have seen above, it was the Spanish penchant for mass baptisms and violent coercion that became emblematic of Spanish missionary activity in the English imagination.\textsuperscript{171} From the 1580s onwards, then, the English increasingly defined their methods in opposition to what they perceived the Spanish model to be, calling for a gentle and friendly approach to the natives that would see them adopt English civility and, in turn, English Christianity.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 43-44.
\textsuperscript{171} Axtell, for example, makes no distinction between the approaches of different colonising nations, arguing that all European missionaries, whether Protestant or Catholic, recognised the need to civilise the savages before converting them to Christianity. Axtell, \textit{European and the Indian}, 44. Patricia Seed, in her analysis of Spanish missionary activity in Hispaniola, has argued that the mass baptisms practised by the Franciscans did not go unchallenged by other Spanish missionaries. In fact, and as Seed suggests, in Hispaniola, Dominicans wished to challenge the Franciscan monopoly on conversion by stimulating debates about the humanity of the natives and the proper approach to Christian instruction. Patricia Seed, “‘Are These Not Also Men?,’” 629-652.
In 1582 Richard Hakluyt the younger had distinguished between the Spanish approach and the English one directly. While the Spanish, and indeed Portuguese, merely pretended ‘that they made their discoveries chiefly to convert Infidelles’, their actual aim being to procure the ‘goods and riches’ of the New World, the English would instead, ‘with great affection and zeale’, actually reduce ‘those gentile people to christianitie’. Both George Peckham and Christopher Carleill agreed with Hakluyt that the native peoples of North America should be treated with affection by the English. Peckham suggested that the Christian settlers should ‘endeavour to take away such feare as may growe unto them [the natives]’ by engaging in ‘quiet & peaceable conversation’ and by ‘letting them live in securitie’. Likewise, Carleill advocated a policy that ‘by gentle and familiar entreatyng’ would encourage the native population to see what was ‘better for them’. In approaching the Amerindians with kindness and affection it was to be hoped that they would ‘daiely by little & little, forsake their barbarous, and savage livyng, and grow to suche order and civilitie with us’. Thomas Harriot, a principal participant in the first English attempt to settle Virginia, also agreed with this approach, arguing that by ‘meanes of good government’, and through ‘friendships & love’, the native Virginians would in ‘short time be brought to civilitie, and the imbracing of true religion’. This approach that saw the gentle entreating of Amerindians to civility as a critical step towards conversion, would not only enable the English to distinguish themselves from the Spanish, but would also help them achieve their secondary colonial aim of establishing strong trade links with the natives. Both Peckham and Carleill suggested that the raising of the natives to civility would have the added advantage of creating a new set of

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172 Hakluyt, Diverse Voyages, sigs. ¶1v-¶2v.
174 Carleill, A Breef and Sommarie Discourse, sig. A3r.
175 Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 25.
consumers who would find English merchandise desirable; as Peckham put it, once the Indians ‘shall begin but a little to taste of civillitie’ they would become a perfect ‘rente for our English clothes’. By introducing English standards of civility to the peoples of North America, then, not only would English settlers be able to convert these newly rational and civilised Amerindians to Christianity, they would also be able to trade civilised English wares, such as clothing, with them. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the English approach to the native inhabitants thus mirrored the English approach to colonisation more generally. While the spreading of God’s word was the principal aim, trade and commerce remained a crucial, if ostensibly secondary, concern.

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From the 1580s onwards, commercial incentives and religious imperatives collided in English approaches to trade and settlement in the Americas. Advocates of English settlement in the New World increasingly began to promote a type of colonialism which had godly endeavour at its heart. By revealing the lands of North America to the English, lands that were believed to be home to critical commodities needed in England and to an untapped market for English products, God had bestowed his divine favour upon England. In thanks for this sacred revelation, and with the hope of procuring more economic gains in the future, English commentators promoted an English colonialism which was first and foremost centred on spreading the word of God, bringing true Christianity to the godless natives of the New World. Through kindness and gentleness, the English would raise the natives to civility, providing them with the necessary mental state to receive the word of God. By the end of the sixteenth century, then, the English approach to colonisation was one in which God’s good favour would

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176 Peckham, A True Reporte, sig. E2r; Carleill, A Breef and Sommarie Discourse, sig. A3r.
inexorably lead to material and monetary gains. It was also one that was developed in opposition to that of the Spanish. While in English minds Spanish *conquistadors* raped and pillaged, using godliness as a disguise for greed, English colonisers would forge friendly relations with the native populations in order to create a suitable environment for both conversion and trade.

This approach to English projects in the New World was shaped by reciprocal influences from direct experience in America and from political, religious, and economic changes taking place back home. In the mid-1550s, when the Catholic Mary I still sat on the throne, a godly enterprise that emulated and bolstered the Spanish model of colonisation was advocated by Richard Eden. As Anglo-Spanish relations began to deteriorate, this religiously orientated approach was replaced by one in which commercial gain, preferably at the expense of the Spanish, took centre stage. As English explorers continued to fruitlessly search for riches in the Americas throughout the 1560s and 1570s, England continued to experience population growth, shortages of supplies, the contraction of traditional European markets, and an increase in poverty, vagrancy, and idleness. The disappointment and failure of English activity in America, coupled with the worsening economic and social conditions back home, forced English pro-colonialists to consider that God may have abandoned the English cause. With this growing realisation, a new providential and godly approach to English projects was put into practice, seeking to rectify the perceived avarice and greed of the preceding decades. While trade and commerce remained critical aspects of this new colonial scheme, the profits to be had from the New World were now seen through the lens of Christian charity and morality and as evidence of God’s increasing favour. The reality of life, both at home and in the embryonic English settlements in North America, dictated the English approach to the Americas, forcing commentators to confront the harsh realities of overseas exploration and
the oscillating political and religious landscape of sixteenth-century England. As the final two chapters will illustrate, at the same time that English writers were developing this godly theory of colonialism, they were also considering the ways in which the appearance and behaviour of the native inhabitants of the New World could provide information on the practicalities and necessities of English settlement in America.
Chapter Three: American Apparel and New World Nakedness

‘Apparel oft proclaims the man’.¹

Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 3

The above quotation from Shakespeare’s Hamlet, spoken by Polonius, reflects an integral aspect of early modern culture: the importance of clothing. Clothing could reflect a person’s social and economic status, identify a person’s occupation or religion, and illustrate their civility or barbarity; in short, clothing in the early modern period made the man, or indeed woman.² Early modern Europeans not only cared about what members of their own societies were wearing, but were also captivated by the clothing of people from far-flung parts of the world. The popularity of costume books in the sixteenth century, which visually represented the dress of foreign nations, illustrates this apparent fascination.³ Unsurprisingly, then, when Europeans began to explore the new lands of America, the clothing, or indeed lack of clothing, of the native peoples they came across drew significant comment.

This chapter examines the multi-faceted English understanding of both American clothing and nakedness, analysing the various ways that English explorers, writers, and translators described the appearances of the diverse groups of native Amerindians that they encountered. Descriptions of American clothing and nakedness in English print varied throughout the sixteenth century and performed a variety of functions, from shaping English approaches to trade and colonisation in the New World, to informing and framing moral and religious debates taking place back home, to reflecting shared European cultural values. The image of the naked Amerindian was employed both positively and negatively, as was that of the clothed Indian. Native nakedness could be seen as indicative of impiety or as a sign of natural primitivism, while the simple clothing of other groups of Indians could either be read as a refreshing alternative to the decadent clothing of early modern Europe or as yet more evidence for the savagery and barbarism of the New World. English interpretations of Amerindian appearance, then, was used on the one hand to draw conclusions about the controllability of native populations and their potential to become consumers of English cloth and on the other to inform debates taking place back home on a range of issues relating to decadence and impiety.

Historians who have studied cultural encounters between Indians and Europeans have only briefly assessed the meaning of Indian clothing, and more especially Indian nakedness, to European commentators, often categorising it as just one of a series of markers that Europeans used to denote Indian inferiority and savagery. As Beatriz Pastor Bodmer has argued, from Columbus’s first voyages to the New World, the nakedness of the native peoples, alongside their lack of material wealth, trade, and weaponry, became a clear marker
of their lack of civilisation.\textsuperscript{4} Anthony Padgen has largely agreed with this assertion, illustrating how Spanish jurists such as Juan López de Palacios Rubios used the image of the naked Amerindian to critique the sexual life of the people of the New World in which promiscuity, communal life and ignorance of proper marriage were believed to stem from the increased and unnatural intimacy caused by nakedness.\textsuperscript{5} Alden T. Vaughan has suggested that in the early decades of the encounter between Europe and America, the naked bodies of New World peoples became one of the many stereotypes of Indian shortcomings, alongside their sexual license, idolatry, and cannibalism, leading to the formation of a strongly pejorative image of native Americans.\textsuperscript{6}

As Philippa Levine has shown, however, this attitude towards the nakedness of non-Europeans was not specific to the sixteenth-century American context. Nakedness, and what it said about foreign ‘others’, became a stable feature of European colonial discourse, connoting the primitiveness and savagery of a wide-range of non-Europeans, from Africans, to aboriginal Australians, to the natives of the Pacific Islands.\textsuperscript{7} Jill Burke, in her fascinating study of the nakedness of foreign ‘others’ and their relation to the development of the Italian Renaissance nude, has also argued that in European accounts of far-flung locations nakedness became ‘a mark of bestial passions’, of ‘violence and sexual profligacy’.\textsuperscript{8} Whether in the Americas or in sub-Saharan Africa, nakedness, in the minds of Europeans, implied a complete lack of a social system in which hierarchy and delineated communal roles were entirely

\textsuperscript{4} Bodmer, Armature of Conquest, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{5} Pagden, Fall of Natural Man, 52-53
\textsuperscript{8} Jill Burke, “Nakedness and Other Peoples: Rethinking the Italian Renaissance Nude,” Art History 36, no. 4 (September, 2013): 724-726.
absent. This negative attitude towards nakedness was commonplace in a diverse range of accounts of foreign ‘others’ during the Renaissance, and it continued to be prevalent in European colonial discourse beyond the early modern period. As Levine has illustrated in her study of nakedness in the Victorian colonial imagination, many of the assumptions that had been made about native Americans in the sixteenth century were still being employed to describe the colonised peoples of Asia, Africa, and Australasia in the nineteenth century. The nakedness of non-Western peoples continued to denote an inherent excessive sexuality and a lack of shame, social order, and civility in the European colonial imagination. As this chapter suggests, however, English ideas relating to native nakedness and clothing were by no means static. English understandings of Amerindian clothing were in fact extremely dynamic in the sixteenth century, being moulded to meet the demands of both author and reader, and the requirements of both colonial activity in America and of a divisive and fractious society back home. This chapter particularly builds upon the work of two scholars who have begun to unearth some of the ambiguities and versatilities of English perceptions of Amerindian appearance: Michael Gaudio and Karen Ordahl Kupperman. According to Gaudio, individual and national identity in early modern England was located in the clothing that one wore. Due to its centrality in early modern identity formation, clothing could be at once stabilising and destabilising, both a means of conforming and transgressing. Clothing could not only fix one’s identity, then. It could also transform it. Because of its power in the formation of identity, however, clothing in early modern Europe was also highly

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9 Ibid., 726.
12 Ibid., 29. Jean E. Howard has made a similar argument in her discussion of crossdressing in Elizabethan England. As Howard argues, dress became a primary site where ‘a struggle over the mutability of the social order was conducted’, with crossdressing being just one manifestation of this struggle. Howard, “Crossdressing,” 422.
regulated. Sixteenth-century England witnessed a burst of state legislation that attempted to regulate the clothing of the English population. The primary function of this type of sumptuary legislation was to control the luxuriousness of clothing and to maintain social distinctions. For example, purple silk and gold cloth were reserved only for the King and members of the Royal Family, and men beneath the rank of duke, earl, and marquis were not permitted to wear crimson, scarlet, or blue velvet, nor any clothing that had been embroidered.\footnote{13} Despite their limited success, sumptuary laws would continue to be introduced throughout the sixteenth century, reflecting the contemporary perception that clothing had the potential to be a tool of both social control and rebellion.\footnote{14}

As Gaudio also argues, identity could likewise be performed through the naked body as skin, like clothing, is an unstable surface that can be marked and ornamented in various ways, oscillating between signifying a natural state and cultural difference. While, for example, tattooed skin could represent a permanent cultural difference, the body paint used by various groups of Amerindians reflected, as did clothing, a reversible alteration that could be replaced.\footnote{15} Clothing and indeed the naked skin is thus ‘an ambivalent surface upon which culture is endlessly performed’.\footnote{16}

The fluidity and ambiguity of clothing and bodily ornamentation as cultural markers is something that is clearly identifiable in English accounts of America written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As Kupperman has brilliantly argued, despite the obvious differences in appearance between the English and the natives of North America, English

\footnote{15} Gaudio, “Truth in Clothing,” 30.
\footnote{16} Ibid., 31.
observers still believed that they saw a society that recognised the same kinds of gender distinctions and social hierarchies as their own. Kupperman highlights how, for example, the tattoos of the native Virginians, rather than reflecting native alterity, were in fact signs of a social hierarchy that illustrated the native potential to receive English civility.17 In a similar fashion, the way that the natives wore their hair also seemed to confirm to the English that they, like the English themselves, delineated between genders and marked important life events through their appearance.18 The men of Virginia, for example, were said to shave the hair on one side of their heads when coming of age. It was also possible to distinguish between maids and married women by their hairstyles.19 As Kupperman argues, the primary purpose of many of these texts that described native appearance was to argue for English colonisation in America. Assessing the potential civility of the native North Americans through their clothing and bodily adornments, then, was an intrinsic aspect of this kind of English promotional literature from the late sixteenth century onwards. By identifying ‘cultural priorities shared across the Atlantic’, an English society in America could be construed as being authorised by nature.20 English observers of America had convinced themselves that American society preserved all of the important social distinctions present in English society, making the possibility of recreating English society in the New World, in which the natives would be raised to English standards of civility, all the more likely.21

20 Ibid., 226.
21 Ibid., 226-228.
While this type of cultural assimilation for promotional purposes is undoubtedly critical to our understanding of English perceptions of Indian appearance, ideas relating to native clothing and nakedness also served other important functions, from the utilitarian, to the moralistic and spiritual. Kupperman briefly refers to some of these other English perceptions of native appearance but does not explore them in detail. This chapter, then, extends the work of Kupperman and establishes the multi-faceted English understandings of native clothing, going beyond the positively constructed images of native dress and bodily adornment that served a particular promotional function from the late sixteenth century onwards. These representations of Indian appearance were variously influenced by what the Spanish, French, and Portuguese had experienced in the New World, by the practicalities and demands of early English colonialism in which securing private investment was critical, and by the moralistic and religious debates taking place back home that identified clothing as a tool of both social conformity and disruption.

**Clothing, Savagery, Impiety, and Sexuality**

It is clear that in the sixteenth century a variety of images of native Americans were presented in English print. From the natives of Central and South America, and indeed the Caribbean, to the indigenous inhabitants of the Far North and coastal areas of North America, portrayals of indigenous Amerindians found in English print varied not only across the entire geography of the New World, but also across the regions controlled by competing colonial nations. What becomes obvious from a detailed analysis of early English Americana are the

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22 For example, Kupperman references the fact that some English observers believed the simplicity of native dress reflected the innocence of the Amerindians and was, therefore, a virtue. Kupperman also briefly alludes to the fact that social distinctions in clothing were particularly important to the English as there was a perception that their own society was breaking down, with gender and social distinctions being elided. This chapter will explore the origins and manifestations of both of these ideas in the sixteenth century in more detail. Kupperman, “Presentment of Civility,” 194-203.
disparities between representations of Amerindians put forth in English promotional texts towards the end of the sixteenth century and those found in English translations of texts first produced in continental Europe. English understandings of Amerindian clothing were produced on a spectrum, with the naked, ungodly, and entirely savage natives of the Caribbean found at one end, and the primitive, innocent, and modest peoples of Virginia found at the other. Conflicting images of native Americans thus coexisted in English print throughout the sixteenth century, highlighting the various concerns of those involved in bringing these images to an English readership.

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, in which English readers caught their first tentative glimpse of the new and exotic lands across the Atlantic, it is clear that positive assessments of Indian appearance were far from coming to fruition. Instead, the earliest English texts dealing with the European encounter with America presented the clothing of these newly discovered natives as befitting their savage and degenerate state. The clothing, or more accurately lack of clothing, of these individuals could reflect their lack of civility and culture or their excessive idolatry and sexuality. Borrowing imagery from the Spanish, Portuguese, and French, the earliest printed accounts of America in England established a mostly pejorative representation of native peoples that confirmed their inherent savagery and need for European civilisation and religion.

In one of the first English texts to explicitly reference the new land of America, the peoples of the New World were presented as lacking any real clothing. The anonymous author of this short, and it must be said hugely limited, description of America, described how the people of the region ‘goeth all naked’, save for their heads, necks, arms, knees, and feet which
were covered with feathers. The people of America, moreover, according to the author, ‘lyven lyke bestes’, had ‘no kynge nor lorde nor theyr god’, were ‘dysposed to lecherdnes’, and would commonly ‘ete also on a nother’. Signified by their lack of clothing, then, the Amerindians also lacked religion, civility, sexual restraint, and basic humanity. The juxtaposition of a lack of clothing with an abhorrent lack of civility is also clearly identifiable in the image that accompanies this portion of the text. The woodcut, which is both included on the title page and as an insert to the text describing America, depicts two native Amerindians, naked save for the feathers that adorn their heads, necks, arms, groins, and legs. While the female Indian serenely cares for and nurses her children in the foreground, a severed human head and leg dangle from a tree, while being roasted over a fire in the background (Fig. 2) The cannibalism depicted in the image highlights the depravity of the native peoples, as does their obvious lack of appropriate clothing. In the earliest English printed image of native Americans, then, cannibalism and nakedness were both rendered emblematic of American savagery.

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23 Anon., Of the Newe La[n]des, sig. A1r.
25 This image is consistent with the types of early sixteenth-century images identified by Alden Vaughan in which naked bodies and cannibalism, alongside common ownership, sexual licence, frequent warfare and idolatry, were common themes; Vaughan, “People of Wonder,” 15. Susi Colin has also explored the use of these behavioural traits in early sixteenth-century images of Amerindians, arguing that these early depictions were largely based around the European pictorial tradition of the wild man; Susi Colin, “The Wild Man and the Indian in Early 16th Century Book Illustration,” in Indians & Europe, 5-36. For more on early images of America and the modification of traditional European imagery see William C. Sturtevant, “The Sources for European Imagery of Native Americans,” in New World of Wonders, 25-33; William C. Sturtevant, “First Visual Images of Native Americans,” in First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, ed. Fredi Chiappelli (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1976), 417-454.
The connection between clothing and native savagery continued throughout the 1550s with Richard Eden’s translations of Peter Martyr’s *Decades* and Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia*. Despite the occasional sympathetic interpretation of the native peoples of America, Martyr was obsessed by their nakedness. Time and again Martyr referred to the swarms of naked people that the Spanish *conquistadors* came across in the many ‘naked nations’ of the New World. More than a mere bodily description, however, the nakedness of the natives, as described by Martyr, became indicative of their manner of living. In Cuba, the people were ‘naked and contente with a lyttle’, while in Darién the natives were perceived to be ‘pore naked wretches’. In the mountains of Cibaua the people lived ‘in nakedness, and rude simplicitie’, while the man-eating Canibales were believed to be nothing more than

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27 Vaughan, “People of Wonder,” 16.
28 For just a small number of references that Martyr makes to naked peoples and naked nations see: Martyr, *Decades of the Newe Worlde*, fols. 47, 51, 52, 67, 73, 78 and 87.
29 Ibid., fols. 49 and 68.
‘naked Barbarians’. The nakedness of the natives was thus symptomatic of their savage living. Even when the natives managed to illustrate some level of civility and education, Martyr appeared surprised. In skirmishes with the Spanish, some natives, ‘althowgh they bee naked’, were able to overcome their aggressors. Other indigenous Americans, despite being naked, were also able to appreciate the superiority of some European tools; as Martyr explained, ‘even these naked men doo perceive that an axe is necesarye for a thousande uses’. Nakedness, then, became synonymous with savagery in the European colonial mind, being used to connote a variety of traits from barbarity and rude simplicity, to poverty and material destitution.

The nakedness of native Americans could also point towards other behavioural shortcomings, most notably sexual promiscuity and a lack of shame. According to Münster, Amerigo Vespucci came across a ‘nacion of naked people’ who ‘goe all as naked as they came forth of their mothers wombe’. Despite willingly submitting to the Spanish, these naked Indians were nonetheless regarded as entirely savage, living in many ways ‘fylthy and withoute shame’, especially in regards to marriage practices; the naked natives observed ‘no lawfull conjunccion of mariage’, with every man having ‘as many women as him listeth’, leaving them again ‘at his pleasure’. In Münster’s retelling of Vespucci’s encounter with this naked nation, then, a lack of clothing was once again an implicit cause of native licentiousness and brazenness. This uncomfortable relationship with nakedness had begun at the very

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30 Ibid., fols. 20 and 114.
31 Ibid., fol. 48.
32 Ibid., fol. 100.
33 Karen Kupperman has defined the complex meaning of the word ‘naked’ in early English travel literature thus: ‘naked as a description seemed automatically to go with the word savage’. Rather than just being used alongside the word ‘savage’, it is my contention that the word ‘naked’ in fact became a synonym for the word ‘savage’; Kupperman, “The Presentment of Civility,” 201.
34 Münster, Treatyse of the Newe India, sig. K7r.
35 Ibid., sigs. K7r-K8r.
beginning of human history with the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. The story of Adam and Eve would have been one that almost all Christian Europeans were familiar with in the sixteenth century. In the story of their fall from grace, nakedness was central, with the shame associated with it becoming a 'prerequisite for Christian salvation'. Those who displayed their nakedness with no shame, moreover, were identified as people whose souls were in danger.

As well as reflecting a lack of shame, voluntary nakedness was also connected to sexual promiscuity in Christian doctrine. The Bible clearly links the sin of adultery with nakedness, with multiple references to both appearing in the book of Leviticus. For Europeans well aware of the sin of adultery, the nakedness of the indigenous populations of America became emblematic of their loose sexual morals. Indeed, biblical scholars such as Jon Levenson have suggested that ‘to uncover nakedness’ was actually euphemistic for sexual intercourse, thus illustrating the strong connection between nakedness and sexuality in Christian tradition. The licentious lives of the naked nation that Vespucci had come across, coupled with their lack of shame for their filthy manner of living, was thus unsurprising given their nakedness. The Bible had taught early modern Europeans that living nakedly was a sin and was reflective of a promiscuous and ungodly lifestyle.

The ungodly nakedness of the natives of America remained a constant image in English print throughout the sixteenth century, appearing in various texts both directly and indirectly related to the European conquests of the New World. In 1568 an English edition of André

Thevet’s account of the New World appeared in London.\textsuperscript{39} Thevet had been given the position of chaplain for a French voyage to Brazil in 1555, returning to France just ten weeks after the beginning of the expedition due to illness. Upon his return Thevet wrote an account of his experiences that was printed in Paris in 1557 under the title \textit{Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique}.\textsuperscript{40} Thomas Hacket’s English translation of Thevet’s text was dedicated to Sir Henry Sidney, the Lord Deputy of Ireland at the time.\textsuperscript{41} Thevet’s various descriptions of the wild, savage peoples of America would no doubt have been somewhat recognisable to Sidney, who, at around the same time, was dealing with the expanding power of the O’Neill chief, Shane, causing increased animosity between the English and the native Irish.\textsuperscript{42} It is important to note here that in his text, Thevet divided the New World roughly into three parts: America, from Argentina to the Amazon; Peru, from the Amazon to Florida; and Canada, from Florida and Mexico northwards.\textsuperscript{43} These distinctions should be kept in mind throughout this analysis as Thevet’s opinions on different groups within these three regions could vary wildly. It was the peoples of America that were awarded the most damning of descriptions, particularly in relation to their lack of clothing and ungodly behaviour. Thevet explained to his readers how the people of America were far more intolerable than the savages of the East. Whereas the peoples of the East Indies covered their private parts, those of America lived ‘all naked even as they come out of their mothers wombe, as well men as women without any shame’. Responding to debates that were apparently taking place back in Europe, Thevet condemned those who argued that Europeans ‘ought to goe naked as \textit{Adam} and \textit{Eve}’ had in the Garden

\textsuperscript{39} Thevet, \textit{New Found Worlde}.
\textsuperscript{41} Thevet, \textit{New Found Worlde}, sigs. *2r-*3v.
\textsuperscript{42} E. W. Lynam, “Sir Henry Sidney,” \textit{Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review} 2, no. 7 (September, 1913): 188.
of Eden, explaining how nakedness was not found to be ‘Gods commaundement’. Those in Europe who had chosen to live naked ‘as these Americans of which we speake’, were, in Thevet’s opinion, heretics.44 Expanding his denunciation of nakedness still further, Thevet argued that not even the pagan Romans ‘remained naked’, even though they were ‘very straunge in their livings’.45 Thevet neatly summed up the savagery of the Americans, claiming them to be ‘a marvellous strange wild and brutish people, without faith, without Lawe, without Religion, and without any civilite: but living like brute beasts, as nature hath brought them out, eating herbes and rootes, being alwayes naked’.46

It is clear that English writers of the sixteenth century largely agreed with Thevet’s religiously motivated understanding of nakedness. The theologian and later Bishop of Worcester, Gervase Babington, for example, explained in his published notes on the book of Genesis that the ‘beginning of apparell’ came from the beginning of sin, with nakedness only being appropriate in ‘the life to come, when nakednesse shall shame us no more’.47 Henry Smith, a Church of England clergyman, agreed, arguing in his book of sermons that nakedness was indicative of sin, as sin is ‘no shrowder but a stripper’.48 The English published works of Reformed Protestants such as John Calvin made the same point. In Calvin’s commentary on Genesis, published in England in 1578, nakedness was once again something to be ashamed of, for as Calvin suggested, it reflected ‘the fowlnesse of the vice’ by which Adam and Eve defiled themselves.49 Whether Catholic, Church of England, or Calvinist, then, it appears that

44 Ibid., fol. 45.
46 Ibid., fol. 36.
nakedness was almost universally considered a sin within Western Christendom as it reflected the shame bestowed upon mankind by God, and enhanced ungodly and lustful behaviour. By living nakedly and crucially without shame, the native Americans were not only leaving themselves vulnerable to licentious behaviour, they were also illustrating their failure to acknowledge the fault of original sin.

The resilience of the image of the naked and ungodly native American, amongst writers of varying religious persuasions, is thus unsurprising given the shared religious teachings on nakedness of the period. Even as more positive assessments of the peoples of North America were appearing in English print, as we shall see later, the naked and ungodly Amerindian remained a potent force. In 1604, the king of England himself employed this image. James I of England and VI of Scotland, in a short treatise denouncing the use of American tobacco, invoked the image of the naked, ungodly Indian to illustrate the corrupting force of the New World herb. As James argued, if Englishmen were to imitate Indians by smoking tobacco, why should they not also imitate them ‘in walking naked as they doe’ or by ‘denie[ing] God and adore[ing] the Devill as they doe’.50 By referencing nakedness and ungodliness together, the former became an indicator of the latter. Throughout the sixteenth century, then, the nakedness of the indigenous peoples of America was used by various European commentators, whether writing directly about the New World discoveries, or about the corrupting potential of New World products, to illustrate the savagery, ungodliness, and licentiousness of the Americas. The Bible taught Europeans to be shameful of nakedness and to wear clothes in remembrance of man’s sinful nature. The fact that the Amerindians

appeared to live naked without any shame highlighted just how far removed from God’s word they really were, exemplifying the need for European education in civility and true religion.

**European Superiority and Charity**

The impious and naked Indian was not the only prevalent image of native Americans to emerge in English print in the sixteenth century. Europeans were keen to illustrate their superiority in relation to the peoples of the New World, with the outrageous clothing, or indeed lack of clothing, of the inhabitants of America providing ample evidence for this. Not all the peoples of the New World seemed to wear their nakedness without shame, however, leading some Europeans to conclude that they were open to the possibility of being raised to European standards of civility. The inadequacy of Indian dress, in contrast to the luxurious clothing of the visiting Europeans, not only illustrated their lower level of civility and religiosity, but also the means by which Europeans could begin to take control. Clothing the Amerindians thus became a tool with which to wield colonial mastery, exemplifying European superiority and charitable good will, and the perceived Indian urge to become more like Europeans.

In Eden’s 1555 work, which included an abridged version of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s history of the Indies and a number of other texts, alongside Martyr’s *Decades*, it is clear that not all native American peoples seemed to be happy to go unclothed. As Martyr explained, many of the Indians that the Spanish had come across in the New World were naked, ‘savynge that theyr pryvies partes were covered with breeches of gossampine cotton’. Similarly, Oviedo suggested that the people of Hispaniola, although going ‘naked as

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51 Martyr, *Decades of the Newe Worlde*, fol. 23.
they were borne’, would wear ‘on the partes which may not with honestie bee seene’ ‘a certeyne leafe as brode as a mans hande’. To be naked, then, in the early modern European mind at least, did not necessarily mean being entirely without any form of clothing or covering. Indeed, English writers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries often tied the term ‘naked’ to simplicity in clothing. While in the context of English colonialism, as we shall see later, this simplicity could be rendered as a positive exemplification of modesty, in the earlier accounts of America, written by continental Europeans and Englishmen who did not necessarily have a stake in English colonial projects, this kind of frugality was not described in positive terms.

What these earlier descriptions have in common is the fact that native Americans were perceived to have an implicit sense of their own savagery, as evidenced through their attitude towards clothing. Just as Martyr and Oviedo suggested, they felt shame at their nakedness and attempted to cover it to the best of their abilities. Thevet, like Oviedo, suggested that some groups of Indians attempted to maintain their modesty by hiding ‘their privie partes with leaves’. The Amerindian attempts at covering their shame with leaves is particularly interesting, given its parallels with the story of man’s fall taken from the book of Genesis. As chapter three tells us, once Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree of knowledge, their eyes were opened and they perceived their nakedness for the first time. In order to cover their shame, they sewed together fig leaves and made for themselves aprons. God, on learning of their sin, punished Eve by bringing her sorrow in child birth and subordination to her husband, and Adam by forcing him to toil and labour for his food. God then made for

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52 Ibid., fol. 213.
54 Thevet, New Found Worlde, fol. 45.
Adam and Eve garments made of skin, thus clothing them for the first time. The sorry tale ended with man’s banishment from Paradise. The fig leaves that Adam and Eve used to cover their modesty were thus inappropriate and unsuitable, being replaced with proper garments by God. The attempts of the native Americans to hide their shameful nakedness with leaves, then, were likewise considered feeble and insufficient. In fact, according to Thevet, only the peoples of Canada managed to achieve any form of appropriate clothing; after Adam and Eve’s sin, ‘God gave them garments of lether to cover their nakednesse, as the Canadians use at this day’. As Thevet suggested, the Canadians had ‘much more civilite than the inhabitants of America’ as they, unlike their neighbours to the south, knew how to ‘cover and cloth themselves in beasts skins’. This decidedly more positive description of the people of Canada is unsurprising, given the fact that French efforts in the Americas were largely centred on this region. This inclination for positively describing indigenous peoples from regions of particular colonial interest, would be repeated in English accounts of Virginia, as will be explored later. Indian clothing could undoubtedly exhibit savagery, but it could equally delineate potential for civility.

The paltry attempt of the native Americans to cover their shame was not, however, the only way in which they indicated that they were aware of the importance of clothing to the visiting Europeans. According to those writing about America, including English authors, the indigenous peoples of America had a tendency to steal clothes. Thevet recorded how, despite their nakedness, the Indians appeared to be ‘very desirous of gownes, shirts, hats, and other clothing’. In fact, if they came across a stranger or a Christian they would ‘rifle

55 Genesis 3, King James Bible; Genesis 3, Vulgate Bible; Anon., Holy Byble, The First Part, fol. 3.
56 Thevet, New Found Worlde, fol. 45.
57 Ibid., fol. 127.
58 Ibid., fol. 45.
him’ of his ‘garments’, leaving behind any gold or silver as they had ‘not the knowledge nor use therof’. European clothing, then, in the eyes of the natives, was far more precious than gold or silver. In a specific English example of clothing theft taking place in the Americas, both Job Hortop and Miles Philips described an encounter they had had in the wilderness of Mexico. Both men had been members of John Hawkins’s privateering venture in the Caribbean in 1568. The two Englishmen, along with another ninety-four members of the crew, were abandoned on the shores of Mexico when provisions became critically low amongst the fleet. On their second day on land, the Englishmen came across a group of Indians in a field. Speaking in Spanish, the ‘Captaine of the Indians’ willed the Englishmen to give them some of their clothes and shirts, which the Englishmen duly agreed to. The Indians, however, were not satisfied and demanded that the English explorers give them all of their clothes. The explorers refused, a skirmish ensued, and eventually the English retreated. Sometime later, five members of the English company went to search for ‘reliefe’. They were captured by the Indians and ‘stript as naked as ever they were borne’. Later still, the entire company of the English, while marching ‘betwixt two groves’ were once again set upon by the Indians who robbed them of all of their clothes, leaving them stark naked. Miles Philips, who had also written an account of the many miseries endured by the Englishmen who had been abandoned in Spanish America, corroborated Hortop’s story, save for one minor adjustment. According to Philips, the English were indeed set upon by the native Indians who took from them ‘any coloured clothes’, choosing not to meddle with those men ‘apparelled in blacke’. Having stripped the men who had been unlucky enough to be wearing coloured clothes

59 Ibid., fol. 46.
61 Hortop, Travailles of an English Man, 18-19.
62 Ibid., 19.
‘starke naked’, the Indians then went on their way.\textsuperscript{63} What these stories of clothing theft suggest then, is that European garments ostensibly became sought-after items amongst the native peoples of America.

This revelation that Amerindians coveted European clothing would not have come as a particular surprise to the English men and women who would have read the works of Thevet, Hortop, and Philips, given the prevalence of clothing theft in early modern English society. As Beverly Lemire has argued, in early modern England there was a strong connection between crime and consumerism, with one of the most obvious examples of this being the theft of clothing.\textsuperscript{64} Stealing clothing, which was a particularly sought-after commodity in the early modern period, reflected the new popular ambitions and aspirations of the period.\textsuperscript{65} By stealing the clothes of people higher up the social scale, the thieving poor or disloyal servants could feed their desire for luxury. This ‘involuntary and illegal redistribution’ of fashionable clothing through the social hierarchy extended the volume of attire available to the public and fuelled a growing consumerism that perceived clothing as a desirable and marketable commodity.\textsuperscript{66} When early modern English men and women read tales of Indians stealing European clothes, then, it is entirely possible that they interpreted these actions as a sign of native aspiration. Like the poor of England wishing to improve themselves through the acquisition of refined clothing, the natives of America could have been equally illustrating their desire for European civility through their illicit procurement of cultured European attire.

\textsuperscript{63} Philips, “A Discourse Written by One Miles Philip,” 3:474.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 258.
It is likely, of course, that Amerindians had their own motives for stealing the clothes of the interloping Europeans. By taking European clothing, items that were obviously of huge cultural importance, native peoples may have been expressing their own defiant resistance rather than their desire for civility. Whatever the true motivations behind clothing theft were, it is all too obvious that in European minds clothing was intimately connected to civility. Whether the natives stole colonisers’ clothes in an attempt to gain this civility or not, it is apparent that the Europeans quickly identified clothing as a tool that could be used to control native populations and construct a civilised American society. From the outset of European contact with America, clothing became symbolic of European civility and superiority. Jennifer Morgan, for example, has asserted that a common technique used by Europeans, particularly the Spanish, to establish their authority and superiority in the New World, was to use Indian women as emissaries. They would take the naked Indian woman, give her gifts and clothe her and return her to her people as a symbol of Spanish generosity and civility.\(^67\) English texts produced in the sixteenth century recounted tales such as this. For example, both Münster and Richard Eden, in his preface to Martyr’s work, told the story of Columbus taking an Indian woman whom he ‘commanded to be gorgeously decked after the maner of our [European] women, and with many rewardes to be sent agayne to theyr owne companye’.\(^68\)

Martyr clearly articulated what he thought the purpose of such actions was. When describing another similar instance of the Spanish clothing of natives, Martyr explained how a native king’s son was apparelled ‘gorgiously’ by the Spanish and then sent back to his father


\(^{68}\) Quotation taken from: Münster, *Treatyse of Newe India*, sig. H2r. The same story from Martyr reads: the Spanish ‘tooke onely one woman, whom they brought to the shyppes: where fyllinge her with meate and wyne, and apparelinge her, they let her departe to her companye’; Martyr, *Decades of the Newe Worlde*, fol. 2.
in order to ‘persuade hym of the puissaunce, munificence, liberalitie, humanitie, and
clemencie’ of the visiting Europeans. The giving of clothes was thus meant to signify to the
native peoples a number of important European traits, from wealth and dominance, to
Christian humility and charity. Clothing indigenous peoples, then, was not only considered a
way of indicating European superiority, but also as a remedy for both material and spiritual
poverty. In the sixteenth century, naked could mean poverty-stricken, suggesting that the
clothing of natives by Europeans may have represented an act of Christian charity towards a
people poorer and more destitute. In the case of Columbus, the man who began the trend
for clothing natives in luxurious European garments, the charitable aspects of such acts should
therefore not be underestimated. The religious zeal of Columbus was made legendary in
contemporary accounts of the Admiral. Columbus was well-known for his connections with
monks and friars, particularly the Franciscans, with his staunchest supporters to be found in
mendicant Franciscan religious circles. Contemporary accounts also suggested that
Columbus dressed simply, in the manner of a Franciscan monk. This connection with the
Franciscans would therefore suggest that ideas relating to poverty and charity would have
been particularly meaningful for Columbus, given the order’s rejection of material wealth and
dedication to charitable and social acts. This, combined with the fact that almsgiving
remained an important way to achieve salvation in the late medieval Catholic Church,
indicates that Columbus’s personal piety and achievement of grace would have been
intimately bound up with the way in which he dealt with the ‘pore naked wretches’ of the

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69 Martyr, Decades of the Newe Worlde, fol. 93.
71 Leonard I. Sweet, “Christopher Columbus and the Millennial Vision of the New World,” The Catholic
Historical Review 72, no. 3 (Jul., 1986): 378.
New World. By clothing the poor, naked people of America, then, men like Columbus could simultaneously illustrate superior European civility and wealth and ensure their own spiritual health through the alleviation of Indian poverty.

In the most famous example of the English gifting of clothes in the Americas, Francis Drake and his men claimed that the natives of California, a region named by the English Nova Albion, were so pleased with English clothing that they mistook the Englishmen for gods. According to an account written by an anonymous author that was printed in the third volume of Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations*, when the people of North America came to the English ‘they greatly wondered’ at the things they brought. Drake ‘curtesously intreated them [the natives], and liberally bestowed on them necessarie things to cover their nakednesse, whereupon they supposed us [the English] to be gods’. As Joan Pong Linton has argued, in this account of European apotheosis clothing is the ‘crucial semiotic identifying Englishmen with gods’, with the cloth in this case being directly responsible for this supposed Indian misconception. This tale once again has striking parallels with the one told in Genesis. Just as the Christian God bestowed clothing upon Adam and Eve to help them cover their shame, so too did the supposed English gods with the natives; as Linton eloquently puts it, ‘the Edenic reference invokes a biblical typology in which God’s clothing of the fallen couple finds repetition and fulfilment in the colonists’ clothing of Indians’. The fact that the Indians

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75 Ibid., 3:440-441.


77 Ibid., 79.
had clearly been mistaken, as the author is clear to point out, in fact validated the colonists’
desire to be viewed as gods without them having to confront the blasphemous implications
of such a desire. For Englishmen such as Drake, then, the nakedness of the Indians, and their
mistake that the Englishmen were gods, was reflective of their spiritual poverty. By clothing
the peoples of California, the English not only imposed their own sense of religiously inspired
shame onto the natives, but also invented for themselves a mission of saving souls. Just as
Martyr had suggested that the Spanish clothing of natives indicated much more than a mere
attempt to illustrate European superiority, so too did the author who depicted Drake’s story.
Drake did not bestow clothing on the indigenous peoples as a way of emphasising English
wealth and power, but as a way of exhibiting their ‘naturall and accustomed humanitie’. The
act of providing appropriate clothing to the natives was thus an act of Christian charity, an act
that would help the indigenous peoples recognise their own shame and place them on a path
towards Christian enlightenment and salvation.

Whether these charitable acts were successful or not, and indeed sincere or not, these
anecdotes illustrate that the gifting of clothing as a form of charity was well established and
was something that seems to have been prevalent in both Catholic and non-Catholic societies
in the early modern period. As Robert Jütte has argued, Christian citizens were more likely
to give alms when faced with people dressed in rags or even with nudity, as this meagre or

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78 As the author suggested, the natives would ‘not be perswaded’ that the Englishmen were not gods which implies that the English explorers did at least attempt to dispel their mistake. It is not clear, however, what methods they actually employed. Anon., “The Course Which Sir Francis Drake Held,” 3:441; Linton, Romance of the New World, 79.
79 Linton, Romance of the New World, 79.
non-existent clothing was ‘the symbol of extreme poverty in Christian theology’. Dolly Mackinnon has argued that the giving of clothing to the poor was also popular in pre-Reformation and post-Reformation religious communities in rural England, especially amongst pious women. As Mackinnon suggests, charity clothing was a ‘constant visual reminder’ of the generosity of the benefactor. Europeans who gave the gift of clothing to American Indians were thus simultaneously doing their duty as good Christians and exerting their power and wealth visually and materially over the bodies of the natives. The clothing of Amerindians by Europeans was thus an act of religious, economic, cultural, and political dominance.

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, then, a number of representations of native American appearance emerged in English print. From the brazen, naked, and ungodly Indian, to the shamefaced, scantily clad native who desired European clothes, the dress of indigenous peoples became a device for assessing levels of savagery and for concocting methods of European control. By framing their colonial exploits in religious terms, Europeans involved in the exploration and exploitation of America could legitimise their ventures, proving that they held the spiritual health of the natives to be just as important as the riches that could be derived from the New World. The nakedness of New World peoples identified their desperate need for Christian conversion, while their apparent desire for clothes established a viable method for achieving this. By clothing the ungodly peoples of America, Europeans, in their own eyes at least, forced the native peoples to confront their own

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83 Dolly Mackinnon, “‘Charity is worth it when it looks that good’: Rural Women and Bequests of Clothing in Early Modern England,” in Women, Identities, and Communities in Early Modern Europe, eds. Susan Broomhall and Stephanie Tarbin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 79-81.
84 Ibid., 89.
savagery and ungodliness and accept the superiority of both European culture and religion. Clothing, in the American context, was thus symbolic of both civility and proper piety. By compelling natives to wear appropriate clothing, European explorers and colonisers could also compel them to accept true religion and Old World notions of civility. These images would remain influential in English Americana throughout the sixteenth century, being adopted by English authors to illustrate the savagery of some American peoples, to comment on the use of New World commodities, to reflect the perceived difficulties and abnormalities of some English encounters with Amerindians, and to bolster shared European cultural values that taught that nakedness was inherently sinful and shameful. Despite the continued utilisation of the image of the ungodly, naked Indian amongst some Englishmen, both directly and indirectly involved in overseas exploration, another more potent image was to emerge from the 1570s onwards in which English colonial aims and ventures vigorously collided with ideas relating to clothing.

**Clothing, Climate, and Consumerism**

In the 1570s the English began their first proper foray into colonial projects in the New World. With this new focus on establishing English settlements in America came new interpretations of native appearance that could help bolster and validate English colonial plans. While the Spanish had been preoccupied with the religious implications of native appearance, using their lack of clothing to indicate their ungodliness and need for Catholicism, English explorers and colonisers began to develop their own more worldly and utilitarian views of native dress. This difference in focus is unsurprising, given the very different models of colonialism employed by the two competing nations. As chapter one has already identified, while Spanish conquest and colonisation was a state-run and state-funded programme in
which Spanish claims to the New World were dependent on the conversion of the natives to Catholicism, English colonial ventures were largely reliant on private investors, meaning that the commercial viability of each English project was of critical concern.

In the late 1570s, when commercial incentive was the principal concern of those exploring the New World, English explorers writing about their experiences in the Far North used native clothing to validate their opinions on the viability of successful English settlement in the region. As chapter one has already suggested, for early English colonisers of the New World, proving that America enjoyed habitable climates was paramount, with this being particularly true for those involved in the explorations of the Far North. George Best, in particular, had done his utmost to try and prove that the lands of Meta Incognita enjoyed a temperate and hospitable climate, arguing that in the Far North ‘the Sommers are warme & fruitful, & the Winters nights under the pole, are tollerable to living creatures’.85 Unfortunately, Dionyse Settle, a fellow member of Frobisher’s second voyage to Meta Incognita in 1577, undermined Best’s arguments in a variety of ways, including through his description of the inappropriate clothes of the native Inuit.

Like many European commentators before him, Settle appeared thoroughly unimpressed by native American clothing. While the Inuit did not go about naked, like many of the indigenous peoples encountered by Europeans in the warmer, southerly regions of America, their appearance still reflected their savage character. In contrast to Thevet, who had seen the leather clothing of the peoples of Canada as a positive sign, Settle identified the beast-skin clothing of the Inuit as yet another indication of the desolate, barbaric, and

85 Best, A True Discourse, sig. h2r.
impovertished nature of the region. Firstly, Settle described the Inuit appearance as thoroughly beastly. Not only did they use beast-skin to clothe themselves, they also created bodily adornments that rendered their appearance even more feral and animal-like. The Inuit clothed themselves ‘in the skinnes of such beastes as they kill, sewed together with the sinewes of them’. As well as using fibrous tissue, rather than thread, to sew together their garments, they also used ‘a bone within their hose’ ‘in place of garters’ to stop their clothes from falling ‘downe about their feete’ and fashioned ‘tailes’ for their apparel which they gave to each other as tokens of friendship. By utilising base materials that had not gone through sophisticated processes of manufacture to make their clothes, and by including bestial tails in their attire, the native Inuit were illustrating their savage manner of living. In fact, Settle concluded that the indigenous people of Meta Incognita were entirely ‘rude’ with absolutely ‘no capacitie to culture’.

As well as this, the clothing of the Inuit also reflected their poverty. As Settle claimed, ‘all their riches’ were the beasts, fowls, and flesh they killed and used for ‘both meate, drinke, apparel, houses, bedding, hose, shooes, thred, [and] saile for their boates’. For early modern Europeans, clothes were regarded as the most visible marks of high living. Conversely, then, the indigenous Americans’ inability to differentiate the materials they used for clothing and, for example, housing, was a visible mark of their low living. This is also reminiscent of descriptions of the clothing of the early modern European poor. In the case of the very poor, clothing was often no more than a piece of canvas, a material usually associated with ships’

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86 Settle, A True Reporte, sig. C6r.
87 Ibid., sigs. C6r-C6v.
88 Ibid., sig. D1v.
89 Ibid., sig. C6v.
90 Belfanti and Giusberti, “Clothing and Social Inequality,” 359.
sails.\textsuperscript{91} The poor of Europe, therefore, used whatever materials they could access to make their clothing. It is likely, then, that Englishmen such as Settle would see the Inuit use of materials for various purposes as a marker of their poverty rather than as a sign of Indian resourcefulness. In fact, this poverty in clothing echoed Settle’s wider description of the region. The natives had to use whatever materials they could access in a variety of ways as the region was essentially ‘barren and unfertile’.\textsuperscript{92} Not only did the clothing of the Inuit reflect the destitution and savagery of the region, it also, in Settle’s opinion, was more than likely completely ineffective for the harsh climate of the region. Their apparel, so Settle concluded, was ‘of no such force to withstand the extremity of cold, that the country seemeth to be infected with all’. If not even the natural inhabitants of the region could protect themselves from the cold, what chance did the English have? Despite the perceived technological, and indeed cultural, superiority of the English, Settle nonetheless believed that the climate was so intolerable that it seemed unlikely that the English would be able to withstand the cold either.\textsuperscript{93} The clothing of the Inuit, then, confirmed Settle’s assumption that the region was populated with rude and savage peoples and home to an inhospitable, even uninhabitable, climate. Inuit apparel, alongside the many other disappointments noted by Settle, suggested that settlement in the region was not viable. It was too cold for the English to survive, and even if they did manage to withstand the harsh climate, the landscape offered the explorers little of any commercial worth.

Conversely, George Best utilised ideas relating to Amerindian clothing to make the exact opposite claims to Settle. As chapter one has shown, Best began his quest to prove the

\textsuperscript{91} Jütte, \textit{Poverty and Deviance}, 78.
\textsuperscript{92} Settle, \textit{A True Reporte}, sig. D1v.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., sig. CBr.
habitability and temperance of Meta Incognita by firstly exploring the many falsehoods of classical understandings of the hot, torrid zone and contemporary misunderstandings relating to Indian nakedness. According to Best, some ignorant people claimed that the middle, torrid zone of the earth was ‘extreme hote, bycause the people of that Countrie can live withoute clothing’. Best, on the other hand, argued that, in fact, the native use of clothing illustrated that the West Indies enjoyed a climate that fluctuated between hot and cool. As Best suggested, the Spanish had found that in this region of America the natives were ‘often forced to provide themselves clothing’ due to the cold weather—something they would not otherwise do as wearing clothes was a ‘griefe and trouble’ for them. This was especially true in the winter months when ‘with their heate, there is colde intermingled’. Alongside this, Best also suggested that the wearing of ‘many cloths’, as was the common practice of those living in England during the winter, was ‘a remedy against extremetie, & argueth not the goodnesse of that habitation’. In Best’s interpretation, then, clothing was a necessity born from colder climates, rather than an indication of the ‘goodnesse’ of a particular region. In fact, the wearing of clothes, whether in England or in the West Indies, was an indication of temperate climes, rather than extreme ones; just as the weather in England fluctuated between warm and cool throughout the seasons, so too did the weather of the equatorial region of America.

The seasonality of America, and how it was reflected in the native use of clothing, was also critical to Best’s arguments about the climate of the Far North. In the introductory remarks to a chapter of the book entitled ‘of the temperature of colde Regions all the Sommer long, and also howe in Winter the same is habitable’, Best promised to keep his arguments ‘very shorte bicause the same reasons serve for this purpose, which were alleaged before in

94 Best, A True Discourse, sig. f2v.
the proving the middle Zone to be temperate’. Just as the climate of the middle zone ranged between hot and cold, so too did that of the Far North. Just as the temperature varied between summer and winter in the West Indies, so too did the temperature of Meta Incognita. Presumably, then, just as the nakedness of the natives of the equatorial region did not indicate a land of extreme heat, the leather and fur clothing of the Inuit did not point to a climate that was too cold to endure. For Best, the clothing of the native inhabitants of America was evidence of the temperateness of the climates of both the middle and the northern zones of the earth. In proving that the Far North enjoyed habitable, temperate climes, especially during the summer months, Best also proved, in his mind at least, that English settlement in the region was possible and even desirable. Both Best and Settle had used the appearance of Amerindians, and especially their clothing, to articulate their differing views on the Meta Incognita project. For Settle, the beastly and ineffective clothing of the Inuit reflected the savage, desolate, and impoverished nature of the region, while for Best, the fact that natives, who preferred to go naked, occasionally wore clothes to protect themselves from the cold illustrated a continent that experienced fluctuating temperatures that made all regions of the Americas habitable and temperate.

This suggestion that the natives of America did in fact require more appropriate clothing may have also pricked the interest of some of England’s struggling cloth merchants as another feature of early English colonial discourse was the assertion that the natives of North America would become great consumers of English clothes. Throughout the sixteenth century, English exports of cloth had been contracting, with the trade experiencing a slow but

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95 Ibid., sigs. g2v-g3v.
96 Ibid., sigs. g2v-h2r.
significant decline in the latter half of the century. The cloth trade in Antwerp, England’s most significant market, had been negatively affected throughout the sixteenth century, with trade embargos being placed on England due to English piracy in the Caribbean, ongoing disputes over the payment of duties, and later, English support of Dutch rebels during the revolt against Spain. These disruptions were compounded by disputes taking place between the Merchant Adventurers, a group whose main business was the export of undressed cloth to Europe and the Levant, and the Clothworkers of London, a confederation of clothiers and tradesmen in various finishing crafts. From the 1570s onwards, the Clothworkers of London were essentially shut out of European markets altogether by rival monopolistic parties, leading to a turn westward for new markets for dressed English cloth. This new focus on American markets may have also been influenced by Richard Hakluyt’s dealings with the company. As well as being a vigorous supporter and promoter of English settlement in the New World, for nearly ten years he was also a pensioner of the Clothworkers’ Company. Hakluyt, and indeed the other Englishmen associated with New World projects, appeared to welcome the Clothworkers’ increasing attention towards long-range trades, making it an integral aspect of their promotional writing on potential English settlements in North America.

George Peckham, a key protagonist in the English attempt to settle Newfoundland in the late 1570s, made his distaste for the Merchant Adventurers’ tendency to export undressed cloth to short-range markets all too obvious. As he suggested, multiple towns and

97 Appleby, “War, Politics, and Colonization,” 56.
100 Linton, Romance of the New World, 64.
villages throughout England were now ‘utterlye decayed and ruinated’ due to the simple fact that the poor people of England were not being put to work finishing cloth ‘by reason of the transportation of rawe wooll of these late dayes, more excessively then in tymes past’.\textsuperscript{102} Luckily, Peckham, alongside many of the other men involved in early English colonial projects in the Americas, had a plan to rectify this, which centred on the scantily-dressed, if not naked, peoples of the New World. According to Peckham, it was ‘wel known that all Savages’, once they had begun ‘but a little to taste civilitie’, would ‘take mavailous delight in any garment be it never so simple’. As Peckham also claimed, Englishmen who had experience in the more southerly parts of America had confirmed that the people of those regions were ‘easily reduced to civilitie bothe in manners and garments’, suggesting that the same could be hoped for the indigenous people of Newfoundland.\textsuperscript{103} Just like the Spanish and French explorers before him, then, Peckham also subscribed wholeheartedly to the notion that native Americans desired European clothing. Peckham viewed this desire as an economic opportunity that was advantageous for both English workers and merchants, and native peoples. The natives would be reduced to civility, while the poor clothworkers of England would be put to work, producing garments that could be traded with the Indians for critical commodities, such as pitch, tar, hemp, flax, gold, silver, copper, timber, and furs.\textsuperscript{104} The clothing of the Amerindians was thus the gateway to a new and lucrative trading network that had the potential to enrich the realm, increase England’s dominions, and reduce domestic unemployment and idleness.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{102} Peckham, \textit{A True Reporte}, sig. E2v.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., sig. E2r.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., sigs. E1v-F1v.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., sigs. E1v-E2v.
The notion that the natives of North America were likely to become great consumers of English cloth was reasserted time and again by authors promoting English overseas expansion in America in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Christopher Carleill, the stepson of Sir Francis Walsingham and, just like his step-father, a keen promoter of English voyages to the New World, similarly used the idea of native American consumerism to entice merchants of the Muscovy Company to invest in his project to settle and trade in North America.\(^{106}\) Like Peckham, Carleill also believed that trading clothing with the natives was key to the success of English trade in the region. As he suggested, if the project prospered ‘there muste of necessitie fall out, a verie liberall utteraunce of our Englishe Clothes, into a maine Countrey, described to be bigger then all Europe’.\(^{107}\) Not only would English settlement in North America provide a new market for the struggling cloth trade, then, it would also be a market much greater in size than that of Europe. Edward Hayes, who had been a member of Gilbert’s final disastrous voyage to Newfoundland, was once again busy promoting English settlement in the New World at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Hayes also believed that trade with the natives was critical to the success of any English project in the Americas. Once again, clothing was regarded as the principal English commodity that would be desired by the native peoples. While the Amerindians would provide the English with a ‘staple of all vendible commodities of the world’, the English, in return, would ‘vent a very great quantitie of our English cloth into all the cold regions of America’.\(^{108}\) Similar proposals were made for the Virginia enterprises of the 1580s. Richard Hakluyt the elder, in his inducements for planting an English settlement in Virginia which were written in 1585 but not published until 1602, argued that the region would provide ‘an ample vent in time to come of

\(^{106}\) Lloyd, *Elizabethan Adventurer*, xi.


the Woollen clothes of England’. Like Peckham, Hakluyt claimed that trading clothes with the natives would revitalise the cloth industry, aiding ‘the maintenance of our [English] poore, that els sterue or become burdensome to the realme’.\textsuperscript{109} Aside from confirming that English settlement in the New World would help stimulate the English cloth trade, promoters of the Virginia enterprise from the 1580s onwards went even further to harness the appearance of Amerindians to promote their project back home, using the modesty and simplicity of Algonquian dress to illustrate the natives’ potential for civility and the ease with which colonial control could be established. By employing contemporary English views on appropriate appearance, English writers assessed the civility of the native Virginians, concluding that although in some respects their appearance pointed towards a certain level of savagery, in other ways it also highlighted their natural modesty and thirst for civility.

**Modesty, Simplicity, and the Foundations of Civility**

As chapter two has already suggested, in the latter half of the sixteenth century English pro-colonists were increasingly defining their own projects in opposition to Spanish methods, both implicitly and explicitly. This differentiation in approach is clearly identifiable in English attitudes towards native dress and partial nudity. While those writing about the Spanish conquests in America viewed the simplicity, or indeed absence, of native clothing as an indication of American spiritual and material poverty, for those Englishmen writing about Virginia from the 1580s onwards the basic clothing of the indigenous people was more positively construed as illustrating an appropriate level of modesty and a promising

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 25.
foundation on which to build English civility. Nowhere is this clearer than in the engravings that accompanied the 1590 edition of Thomas Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report*.

First published in 1588, Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report* was most likely written in response to John White’s voyage of 1587 to Virginia that found the English settlement deserted and the garrison who had been left behind in 1586 to protect the English claim to the region nowhere to be found. Harriot’s text went through a second edition in 1590, with the Virginia colony’s poor fortunes once again likely motivating its publication. Once White had found the 1585 colony completely deserted, he, and the new colonists that had accompanied him, set about establishing a new colony on Roanoke Island. After a number of terrifying skirmishes with the indigenous population, White, who had been made governor, was persuaded to leave the colony in order to procure help and further supplies from England. Plans to send a relief fleet to the colony were met with a series of delays, caused in large part by the sequestering of all English ships to fight the Anglo-Spanish war that was instigated by the Armada of 1588. White was unable to mount a voyage to Virginia until 1590 when he gained passage upon a privateering venture that agreed to put in at Roanoke on the return voyage from the Caribbean. White found the colony deserted with absolutely no trace of the 115 colonists that had been left behind. While the re-edition of Harriot’s text was conceived before White’s discovery of August 1590, it is still likely that the text was produced in order to drum up support for a venture that looked to be faltering. As the colonists had not been

110 Harriot himself referred to some of the negative opinions about Virginia circulating in England at the time, arguing that the publication of his book would dispel them. Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report*, 5-6.
112 As Michiel van Groesen has argued, de Bry’s project began in England in the late 1580s when he met Richard Hakluyt who convinced him to publish Harriot’s book; Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages, 1590-1634* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 112.
heard of since White’s departure in 1587, it is possible that Harriot’s text was reproduced in 1590 in part, at least, to remind English men and women of the colony and its likely success. The promotional nature of the text no doubt took on a new sense of urgency once White had discovered that the colonists were missing and the English settlement completely deserted. Within this context, then, English perceptions of the appearance of the indigenous people became a critical tool for reasserting the viability and favourability of the English venture in Virginia.

The 1590 edition of Harriot’s text was an elaborate affair. Not only was it printed in folio, it was also accompanied by an exquisite set of engravings created by the printer of the book, Theodore de Bry. These engravings were based on watercolours that had been produced by John White, the future governor of the Roanoke colony, during his time in Virginia in 1585 and 1586. The watercolours depicted the people of the region and many aspects of their daily life, from their burial rituals and religious dances, to their fishing techniques and methods of cooking. Both White’s original watercolours and de Bry’s subsequent engravings have been the subject of a large amount of scholarly interest, not only in terms of their artistic value but also in terms of what they can tell us about early English encounters with the people of North America. Opinion is somewhat divided over whether or not either set of images are ethnographically accurate. As Stephanie Pratt has suggested, scholars have tended to make a clear distinction between White’s watercolours and de Bry’s engravings, arguing that in the former, ‘authentic American Indian content’ can be found while in de Bry’s images the subjects are ‘derivative, manipulated and manipulative,

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ideologically suspect and Europeanized'. More recently, historians including Pratt have begun to move away from this absolute distinction, exploring the ways in which both sets of images have been manipulated by their creators. According to Pratt, Joan-Pau Rubiés, and Michael Gaudio, White’s watercolours were not immune to the artistic conventions of the period, with Mannerist forms and books of habits and customs influencing his depictions of the native Virginians. In the de Bry engravings, these artistic manipulations become even more pronounced. As Rubiés argues, the conventions of copper engraving explain the heightened ‘classicizing proportions’ of de Bry’s engravings, while the images themselves appear to convey a stronger visual message of the natives’ capacity for civilisation, a theme that is central to Harriot’s entire text. In their engraved form, then, White’s images take on a more conspicuous promotional quality, reaffirming Harriot’s arguments that English colonialism in the region would proceed with ease. Pratt also argues that the de Bry engravings are even further removed from the truth than White’s watercolours, particularly in terms of the structuring and sequencing of this visual material. De Bry’s engravings incorporated the native Virginians into a clear scheme of European history and ethnography. As Pratt illustrates, the images of the Virginians are placed between those depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and those depicting the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles. By sequencing the engravings in this way, the Virginians were framed genealogically by Adam and Eve and anthropologically by the ancient Picts and Britons. The Virginians are thus

114 Stephanie Pratt, “Truth and Artifice in the Visualization of Native Peoples: From the Time of John White to the Beginning of the 18th Century,” in European Visions, 35.
115 Pratt, “Truth and Artifice,” 34-35; Joan-Pau Rubiés, “Texts, Images, and the Perception of ‘Savages’ in Early Modern Europe: What We Can Learn from White and Harriot,” in European Visions, 129; Gaudio, “Truth in Clothing,” 24-25. Joyce Chaplin has argued that aside from incorporating artistic conventions of the period, White’s watercolours were, in their content, highly propagandistic, being intended to publicise the English outpost at Roanoke; Joyce Chaplin, “Roanoke ‘Counterfeited According to the Truth’,” in A New World, 51-61.
deprived of any sense of their own history; there are no ‘in times past’ for the indigenous peoples of Virginia beyond the original moment of first contact with the English.\textsuperscript{117}

These subtle manipulations of White’s images are unsurprising given the objectives of de Bry’s edition of Harriot’s account. Richard Hakluyt, the avid promoter of English settlement in North America, was heavily involved with the edition’s conception and production, convincing de Bry to produce a text that not only disseminated the Tudor claim to Virginia throughout Europe, but also promoted the region’s abundance, fertility, and gentle natives.\textsuperscript{118} While Harriot’s original publication of 1588 had prioritised descriptions of the many commodities of the region over a detailed account of the peoples of Virginia, the supplementary visual material included in the 1590 edition effectively equalised this previous imbalance.\textsuperscript{119} De Bry’s decision to include engravings of White’s images of the natives, rather than those that depicted the flora and fauna of the region highlights what he considered the most important aspects of Harriot’s account to be.\textsuperscript{120} It is possible, as Michiel van Groesen has argued, that de Bry rejected White’s botanical and zoological images solely for financial reasons, instead providing his engravings of the native peoples with backgrounds that emphasised the region’s fertile environment as a compromise.\textsuperscript{121} Whatever the motivation behind this exclusion, it is clear that the visual material included in the 1590 edition served a particular promotional function that emphasised Harriot’s assertion that English settlement in the region would prevail thanks to a temperate and abundant environment and a gentle

\textsuperscript{117} Pratt, “Truth and Artifice,” 35-36.
\textsuperscript{119} The 1588 edition dedicates twenty five pages to commodities and just eleven to the manners and nature of the native inhabitants; Thomas Harriot, \textit{A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia} (London, 1588). For commodities see sigs. B1r-E1v and for people sigs. E1v-F2v.
\textsuperscript{120} Groesen, \textit{Representations of the Overseas World}, 128-146.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 147.
and industrious native population. The analysis of the images undertaken in both this chapter and the next, contends that although undoubtedly depicting accurate aspects of Amerindian life, these illustrations should nonetheless be viewed as functional, representational and, like Harriot’s text, promotional.\textsuperscript{122}

De Bry’s engravings, in conjunction with English textual descriptions of native Virginians, when viewed through the lens of contemporary understandings of appropriate appearance and dress, present a clear rhetorical message. The native Virginians, while currently savage and vastly inferior to the English, possessed a natural sense of modesty and shame and a promising capacity for civilisation and assimilation into English culture. Through their appearance, the native Virginians were rendered simultaneously savage and civilised. The superior English would nurture these seeds of civility, using the natives’ inherent pliable and impressionable nature, which were symptoms of their simple and savage form of living, to exert complete colonial and cultural control.

The first thing to note is that in the de Bry engravings, and indeed in White’s original watercolours, the nudity of the natives is presented as a pleasing sign of simplicity rather than as one of perversity. In contrast to other visual images of native Americans produced in the sixteenth century, the nakedness of the Virginians is not represented alongside instances of inhuman, abhorrent native behaviour such as cannibalism. Instead, the partially nude Virginians partake in normal, every-day activities; they craft their boats, they fish, the children play with toys (Figs. 3-5).

\textsuperscript{122} My analysis of the de Bry engravings therefore follows an approach similar to that of Pratt and Chaplin.
Figure 3. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “The Manner of Makinge Their Boates” (c. 1590).

Figure 4. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “Their Manner of Fishynge in Virginia” (c. 1590).


124 De Bry, “Their Manner of Fishynge in Virginia,” in *Briefe and True Report*, pl. XIII.
As well as not engaging in the perverse behaviour often associated with nakedness in the early modern European mind, the poses and gestures of the natives in de Bry’s engravings also reflect a more positive English attitude towards their appearance. The use of the ‘Renaissance elbow’ in the depiction of a Virginian chief served to establish similarity between the native North Americans and the colonising English. This pose that depicts the subject with one hand placed on the hip was considered one of arrogance, afforded only to those men who could ‘command respect’. This pose, as Pratt has argued, also signified someone fit and active in European iconography, and thus amounted to an ‘idealization and Europeanization’ of the original Amerindian sitter. By recreating this pose in the portrait of the native chief, White and de Bry were emphasising the subject’s power and dominance, awarding him a degree of English respect and esteem (Fig. 6). The women of Virginia are

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125 De Bry, “A Chieff Ladye of Pomeiooc,” in Briefe and True Report, pl. VIII.
likewise depicted respectfully, despite their obvious nudity. In one illustration, a young woman from Secota wears an apron that covers both her front and behind from her midriff to her thigh. She places her arms across her chest to cover her breasts (Fig. 7). The caption helpfully interprets this gesture for the viewer; she did this in ‘token of maydenlike modestye’. The young native woman was thus depicted as recognising the need for modesty. Unlike Spanish tales of shameless naked South Americans, the English showed that the native North Americans wore their partial nakedness with shame. The perceived modesty of the native Virginian women was also broached by James Rosier in his account of his travels to the north of the region in 1605. When the English arrived on the New England shore, the native women retreated to the woods, leading Rosier to speculate that the reason for this shyness was their ‘owne naturall modestie’.

Figure 6. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “A Weroan or Great Lorde of Virginia” (c. 1590).

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128 Harriot, *Briefe and True Report*, pl. VI.
130 De Bry, “A Weroan or Great Lorde of Virginia,” in *Briefe and True Report*, pl. III.
This modest posture could also have been used to identify the native woman in question as high-born, for European portraiture often depicted women of status with their arms ‘self-enclosing’ in this manner. The high status of the young woman was corroborated in the caption which claimed she was a virgin of ‘good parentage’. The chief and young woman were shown to exhibit normative early modern European gender roles—the chief through his apparent power and dominance, the young woman through her natural modesty. These images also suggest that English observers such as White saw distinct social hierarchies in the communities that they encountered in North America. By illustrating the fact that it was possible to differentiate between various strata of Virginian society, de Bry and White

133 Harriot, *Briefe and True Report*, pl. VI.
134 This point has also been explored in great detail by Karen Kupperman; “Presentment of Civility,” 196-218.
imbued the native North Americans with a degree of civility that would in turn convince potential investors that the recreation of English society in America was entirely possible.

Not only did these images of ostensibly civilised native Americans contrast heavily with the other depictions of Amerindians explored in the first half of this chapter, they also diverged with other illustrations included in the de Bry edition of Harriot. Alongside de Bry’s positive rendering of the native Virginians, a number of other images illustrating the ancient peoples of the British Isles also appeared. Gone are the allusions to female modesty and male dominance, and to harmless behaviour and civil living. The people of ancient Britain, as depicted by both de Bry and White, were illustrative of utter savagery. The females fail to cover their breasts out of modesty, instead opening up their largely naked bodies to the viewer (Figs. 8 and 9). In fact, in the image of a young daughter of the Picts, the Renaissance elbow, a gesture normally associated with authoritative and dominant males as discussed earlier, is reproduced, thus inverting and transgressing normative European gender traits; it was the female Pict, rather than her male counterpart, who was awarded this iconic posture of aggression and authority (Fig. 9). While the Virginians were depicted engaging in every-day activities, the Picts were exclusively shown participating in, or preparing for, violent action. Both the men and women carry terrifying swords and spears, while in the image of a male Pict the subject clutches the severed head of his enemy by the hair (Figs. 8, 9, and 10).

It is clear why these images of the ancient Picts were included alongside those of the native Virginians. As the writer of the introduction to the Pict images stated, they were there to illustrate that ‘the Inhabitants of the great Bretannie have been in times past as sauvage
as those of Virginia’. As the caption to the first image of a male Pict explained, their savagery was evidenced by their long unruly hair, the painting of ‘sum feere full and monstres face’ upon their bellies, and the fact that after overcoming their enemies ‘they did never felle to carye a we their heads with them’. The message here is clear; just as the ancient, savage tribes of England were civilised by the Roman Empire, the Virginians could also be tamed and brought to culture by the civilised Englishmen of the sixteenth century.

Figure 8. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “The True Picture of a Women Picte” (c. 1590).

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135 Harriot, *Briefe and True Report*, title page to images of the ancient Britons from the appendix to the illustrations of the Indians.
136 Ibid., pl. I
Figure 9. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “The True Picture of a Yonge Dowgter of the Pictes” (c. 1590).  

And yet, and as has already been suggested, the appearance of the Virginians was rendered far more civilised than that of the Picts by both de Bry and White. The Virginians engaged in civilised activities, they covered their private parts with simple clothes, and they arranged their society into a clearly defined hierarchy. This implicit suggestion that the Virginians were a step further along the path to civility than the Picts of ancient Britain, served a useful rhetorical function. It illustrated, as had much of Harriot’s text pertaining to the local

people, the ease with which English colonial control could be achieved in the region. While the Romans had had their work cut out with the savage and brutal Picts, the English subjugation of Virginia would be a far simpler affair thanks to the natives’ obvious desire for civility.

Having said all this, the images also attest to the savage traits that the Virginians were believed to possess but, once again, this fact was rendered useful for the English colonial strategy in the region. The blending of the Virginians’ potential civility with their current savagery was critical to the English validation of their colonial project. It was crucial that proponents of colonisation in Virginia were able to illustrate that the natives needed, and indeed wanted, access to English civility and religion. The savage aspects both of de Bry’s illustrations and written accounts of the people of Virginia should therefore not be underestimated. It is obvious from the illustrations that the garments of the indigenous peoples of North America were not particularly sophisticated, especially in comparison to the, at times, ostentatious clothing of the early modern English. The Virginians were depicted wearing simple deer skin aprons, tied about their waist, their backs and behinds often remaining exposed. Even the high-born chiefs and ladies of the region wore these simple garments, being represented in much the same fashion as those engaged in laborious activities such as crafting boats and fishing (Figs. 3-7). Native clothing, as depicted by de Bry, was thus not used as a tool with which to distinguish between peoples of different social statuses, a fact that contrasted heavily with common English practice.141

140 Ibid., 24-33.
141 Although clothing did not seem to help distinguish between lords and commoners, the clothing of the religious men of Virginia did seem to be more distinctive. A religious man of Secota, for example, is depicted as wearing a cloak of hare skin rather than the deer skin aprons shown in a majority of the other images; “On the Religious Men in the Towne of Secota,” by de Bry, pl. V, Briefe and True Report. As Karen Kupperman has
Sixteenth-century England witnessed a flurry of state proclamations and legislation designed to regulate clothing. The primary function of this extensive sumptuary legislation was to maintain social ranks and make sure people did not dress above their station. Sumptuary laws regulated what colours, fabrics, and adornments a person could wear, and in doing so defined difference between certain groups and ‘conferred the distinction of high status’. Dress, in short, was a carefully controlled symbolic system which marked out, if the rules were followed, a person’s economic and social status. These rules and expectations, when applied to the indigenous peoples of North America, confirmed that the structure of their society was far more underdeveloped than that of England. The fact that the Amerindians did not seem to distinguish between social rank through their clothing was indicative of a primitive social system.

That does not necessarily mean, however, that this primitivism was always viewed negatively. At the same time that men such as Harriot were busy exploring the lands of North America, English society was embroiled in fierce debates over religious reformation and moral decay. People of a puritan persuasion, famously described by Patrick Collinson as the ‘hotter’ sort of Protestant, increasingly used clothing as evidence for society’s descent into immorality and as proof that further religious reform was needed. One such godly commentator, Philip Stubbes, was highly concerned with the effect that fashionable apparel was having on English society. In his extremely popular pamphlet, The Anatomie of Abuses, Stubbes explained to his many readers that ‘the greatest abuse, which (.) offendeth god moste’ ‘is the execrable sinne

suggested, the Virginians did appear to differentiate social status through appearance, but via body art, tattoos, and hairstyles rather than clothing; Kupperman, “The Presentment of Civility,” 206-218.

142 Hooper, “Tudor Sumptuary Laws,” 433-449.
143 Howard, “Crossdressing,” 421; quotation from Vincent, Dressing the Elite, 124.
144 Howard, “Crossdressing,” 422.
of Pride, and excesse in apparell’. Apparel, so Stubbes’s argument went, was ‘given us of
god to cover our shame’ and ‘to put us in mind of our frailties, imperfections and sin’. Because clothing was symbolic of the sinfulness of man, Stubbes argued that it should be like
that of Adam and Eve ‘in Godly simplicitie and Christian sobrietie’. By clothing themselves
simply and modestly, the godly of England would simultaneously ‘please God a great deale
the more’ and ‘avoyd many scandals & offences which grow daily by our excessive ryot’. Stubbes also suggested that pride in apparel was a particular sin of the English. In his diatribe
against the excesses of the people of ‘Ailgna’, which is of course an anagram of ‘Anglia’,
Stubbes argued that pride in apparel had ‘infected and poysoned’ no other country as
much. While the people of Ailgna clothed themselves in ‘unhandsame, brutish and
monstrouse’ clothing, the savage peoples of lands such as Brazil had little esteem for fine
garments, preferring instead to either ‘go cleane naked’ or clothe themselves modestly and
simply in ‘Beasts skinnes’ or whatever else they had to hand. Sumptuous clothing, then, in
the opinion of Stubbes, was considered monstrous and unnatural, while the simple beast-skin
clothing of native Amerindians was deemed more appropriate and in keeping with godly
simplicity and natural modesty.

It was not just godly commentators who used the simpler, primitive dress of the
Amerindians to address the perceived degradation of sixteenth-century English society. The
celebration of native primitivism, as Jean-Pau Rubiès has argued, was also informed by the

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147 Stubbes, Anatomie, sigs. C4r-C4v.
148 Ibid., sigs. C5v-C6r.
149 Ibid., sig. B8r.
150 Ibid., sigs. B8v-C1r.
re-emergence of stoic understandings of nature amongst humanist thinkers. Both Harriot and de Bry participated in this humanist culture that expressed nostalgia for the virtues of primitive forms of living.\textsuperscript{151} The relatively primitive lifestyle of the native Virginians became a reminder of what was lost through the process of civilisation; savages were perceived to be happy, healthy, and uncorrupted, living in a state of nature in which worldly goods such as luxurious clothing were unnecessary. This notion of the healthy, uncorrupted savage is reinforced through the classicised figures of de Bry’s engravings, which depict the native Virginians as muscular and statuesque, and by textual accounts of the indigenous North Americans that highlight their robust, active bodies and gentle, loving condition. John Brereton, who explored the northerly region of Virginia in 1602, claimed that the native inhabitants were ‘of a perfect constitution of body’, being ‘active, strong, healthfull, and very wittie’.\textsuperscript{152} Alongside their healthy bodies, the people of Virginia were also portrayed as living in a state of natural serenity. As Arthur Barlowe, one of the first Englishmen to explore Virginia, put it, the people of the region were ‘most gentle, loving, and faithfull, voide of all guile and treason, and such as live after the maner of the golden age’.\textsuperscript{153} However, this did not mean that these writers and commentators rejected civilisation. On the contrary, what this celebration of the primitive reflected was the fact that the transition from barbarism to civility was not one of absolute gains but one of ‘tragic loss in the context of obvious gains’ that were impossible to renounce.\textsuperscript{154} These ideas relating to primitivism, modesty, and godly simplicity thus helped define English reactions to the peoples of North America. By invoking the image of the savage, primitive native, promoters of English voyages in the Americas could

\textsuperscript{151} Rubiés, “Texts, Images,” 127-128.  
\textsuperscript{152} Brereton, A Briefe and True Relation, 11.  
\textsuperscript{153} Barlowe, “The First Voyage,” 3:249.  
\textsuperscript{154} Rubiés, “Texts, Images,” 128.
validate the need for English colonisation. The English would eradicate the less desirable aspects of native living, while nurturing those that displayed a commitment to achieving civility on the part of the indigenous peoples. English notions of civilised and modest appearance shaped English responses to North America, allowing for the development of a rhetorical message that rendered the indigenous population as savage but ready to accept English civilisation and religion.

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Representations of native appearance in sixteenth-century English print were varied and, at times, contradictory. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, English readers were reliant on continental European ideas of America, gaining their first glimpse of Amerindians through translations of key texts that recounted the tales of Spanish, Portuguese, and French exploits in the region. It was from these texts that the image of the ungodly, naked, brazen, and perverse Indian first made its appearance, being shaped by shared European beliefs on the sinfulness of nakedness and by English authorial agendas that wished to utilise native appearance to denounce other aspects of native behaviour, such as the smoking of tobacco, and to highlight the difficulties faced while traveling through savage and exotic lands.

At the same time, however, many of these early texts also introduced the notion that native populations could be controlled and manipulated through clothing, something that would become key to English colonial aspirations from the 1570s onwards. The Spanish, and indeed some early English explorers such as Francis Drake, had illustrated the perceived power of clothing in a colonial context. Accounts of clothing theft, coupled with the
extravagant European gifting of clothes to the natives, highlighted, in European minds at least, the native desire for civility. By displaying European wealth and Christian charity through this act of gift giving, colonisers and explorers could exert their power both visually and materially over the bodies of the Amerindians, using clothing as a tool of both colonial mastery and justification.

As the English embarked on their own programme of exploration and settlement in the New World, they too used beliefs surrounding clothing and appearance to validate and justify their colonial projects, both intellectually and commercially. In the explorations of the Far North in the 1570s, Best and Settle used the attire of native Americans to comment on the climate and habitability of Meta Incognita in an attempt to bolster, or indeed, debunk arguments surrounding the most suitable regions of the New World for English settlement. In the early 1580s, when English focus shifted further southwards and securing private investment became critical to colonial success, English pro-colonists such as Peckham, Carleill, Hayes, and Hakluyt began to suggest that English clothing could be the key to successful trade in North America. Like Spanish and French commentators before them, they too believed that the peoples of the New World desired European clothing. Instead of using this idea as a means to exert overt colonial control, however, these English writers used it to convince embittered English cloth merchants to invest in their projects. In return for their money, investors would receive a vast array of vital commodities and a significant new market for their own wares. As the English moved still further southwards in the mid-1580s to explore and settle in Virginia, native appearance and clothing was once again critical to the articulation of their colonial plans. Basing their beliefs on common English assumptions surrounding clothing and on contemporary debates about appropriate dress and lifestyle, those involved in the Virginia
enterprise highlighted the potential of the native peoples to receive English civility through their appearance. By emphasising this potential, alongside traits that pointed towards a current level of primitivism and savagery, the appearance of the indigenous Virginians would illustrate to readers and potential investors back home the ease with which English society could be recreated in North America. Native clothing and appearance was thus rendered crucial to English colonial success, becoming a practical tool that had the potential to enrich investors and allow colonisers to incorporate the native peoples into their colonial plans.

Throughout the sixteenth century, then, a number of images of native Americans coexisted in English print. These representations were employed for a number of reasons: to bolster shared European assumptions about the sinful nature of nakedness, to explain the perceived negative aspects of Amerindian culture and society, to emphasise the dangers inherent in international travel, and, most crucially, to justify and validate colonial projects.
Chapter Four: Bodily Discourse in the Early English Colonial Imagination

The holsomnesse and temperature of this Climat, doth not onely argue this people to be answerable to this description, but also of a perfect constitution of body, active, strong, healthfull, and very wittie, as the sundry toies of theirs cunningly wrought, may easily witnes. For the agreeing of this Climat with us (I speake of my selfe, & so I may justly do for the rest of our company) that we found our health & strength all the while we remained there, so to renew and increase. ¹

John Brereton

This quotation, taken from John Brereton’s exceedingly favourable account of northern Virginia, illustrates the centrality of bodily discourse in early English exploration and colonialism. Brereton commented on the natural constitution of the natives but also suggested what effect the new American environment would have on English bodies. Rather than impacting negatively on the English explorers’ constitutions, the wholesome and temperate climate of Virginia in fact made English bodies stronger and healthier. Two different forces are at play in descriptions such as this; on the one hand, Brereton’s words reflect the dominance of humoralism, and more specifically geohumoralism, in English understandings of new world peoples, and on the other they highlight the ways in which both Indian and English bodies were used for rhetorical purposes to explain the perceived successes, and indeed failures, of English colonial projects.² Although the role of food and diet in the English colonial experience of the seventeenth century has been well documented by historians, the way in which food, diet, and bodily discourse relate to the English explorations

¹ Brereton, A Briefe and True Relation, 11.
² The term ‘geohumoralism’ is used by Mary Floyd-Wilson to describe regionally framed humoralism, i.e. a theory that attempted to explain climatic extremes and their relation to bodily difference; Mary Floyd-Wilson, English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-2.
and attempts at settlement in the sixteenth century has been less clearly defined. This chapter, therefore, traces the development of bodily discourse over the sixteenth century, highlighting how it was used to reflect colonial disappointment and failure in the 1560s and 1570s, and then conversely, colonial confidence and optimism from the 1580s onwards. A clearer understanding of this trajectory will enrich our understanding of the ways in which bodies impacted upon colonial processes and will show that the English negativity towards native American food that emerged in the seventeenth century was by no means inevitable. Just as the development of a strong English colonial discourse relied on explaining away the failures of the 1560s and 1570s, English uses of bodily discourse likewise reflected on the problems that the English had encountered early on in their explorations of the Americas. In the 1580s English explorers and colonists grew more optimistic, believing that they had finally found a region and indigenous population of the Americas that could be moulded and shaped in a way that would ensure English colonial success. The use of bodily discourse in a colonial context mirrored the changing attitudes of English men and women towards the American environment, which in turn reflected alternating English colonial fortunes throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

By 1602, when Brereton’s narrative was published, a bodily discourse that lauded the American environment as healthy and wholesome for both native and English bodies had been established. American food was abundant and appropriate for the English complexion, the indigenous peoples healthy and with the potential for civility. This positive assessment of native bodies and the effects of the local environment on English bodies had not always been the case, however. In the early decades of exploration in the New World, concerns surrounding English bodies and their ability to cope in a vastly new environment superseded any considerations of what native bodies could tell English explorers about the new lands. In
the 1560s when English activity in the Americas was largely confined to piracy and privateering in the Caribbean, the ability of English sailors to secure and preserve provisions, and thus maintain bodily health, was a central concern. In these early years of English encounters with the Americas, depleted victuals, the eating of inappropriate food, and corporeal corruption became emblematic of troublesome, arduous, and unsuccessful voyages.

The three voyages of Martin Frobisher to the Far North of the American continent, undertaken in the late 1570s, represented the first systematic English attempt at exploration, exploitation, and settlement in the New World. With this push for greater English involvement in New World projects came fresh concerns relating to the body and how it might react to unfamiliar climates and diets. While the privateers of the 1560s had largely ignored the native populations, for Frobisher and his men the bodies of the supposedly deformed Inuit, and their apparently atrocious diets and poor gastronomical techniques, exemplified the detrimental effects that environment and food could have on native and English bodies alike. The inability to source appropriate food would leave the bodies of the English severely weakened, if not irrevocably altered, making permanent English settlement an impossibility.

This negativity and anxiety surrounding the consumption of inappropriate food and its effect on the body, in the context of European encounters with the New World, has been explored in detail by a number of scholars including Rebecca Earle, Craig Rustici, Trudy Eden, Michael A. LaCombe, and Joyce Chaplin. Focusing specifically on Spanish attitudes towards New World foods, Earle has suggested that for Spanish conquistadors, diet was one of the principal factors that helped create the ‘bodily differences’ that underpinned the categories
of ‘Spaniard’ and ‘Indian’.\(^3\) The differing diets of Spaniard and Indian not only served to explain bodily difference, but also encouraged the belief that in order for the *conquistadors* and colonists to maintain their natural temperaments while in the Americas, the restoration of a healthy and civilised Spanish diet was critical.\(^4\) In the early modern period it was believed that a person’s natural humoral complexion was affected by external forces such as diet. Changing your diet could lead to an imbalance of humours, which in turn could cause illness. More worryingly from the Spanish perspective, if the explorers could not access Spanish food there was a real fear that sooner or later they would permanently alter their humoral complexion and ‘turn into Indians’.\(^5\)

The fear of ‘indianisation’ was also felt keenly by the English, particularly in relation to the consumption of some native goods such as tobacco. The incorporation of tobacco into early modern European markets was by no means a simple process as the herb arrived in Europe with ‘cultural baggage’ from Native America.\(^6\) Many native peoples regarded the herb as a gift from powerful deities who would respond when humans smoked or burned it. This ritualistic use of tobacco was observed by many European explorers in the sixteenth century, thus connecting the plant with the worship of false gods and devils in disguise.\(^7\) As Craig Rustici has argued, although some physicians and botanists praised what they deemed to be the various curative powers of tobacco, others, including James I, felt that by imitating the Indian cultural practice of smoking, Englishmen and women risked ‘Indianising’ their bodies,

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\(^3\) Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 2.
\(^4\) Ibid., 54.
\(^5\) Ibid., 47.
\(^7\) Ibid., 651-652. This complex European relationship with tobacco has also been explored in greater detail in Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).
implicating themselves in the devilish rituals associated with the native use of tobacco.\textsuperscript{8} This was not an anxiety merely felt by the English at home in response to the influx of new and potentially dangerous American products. As Trudy Eden has suggested, for those men and women making the voyage to the colonies of the New World in the seventeenth century, the fear of native foods was often far greater. They too worried about ‘going native’, fearing that consuming native products such as maize would strip away their very Englishness.\textsuperscript{9} In fact, Eden goes as far as to suggest that the Starving Time of 1609 to 1610, in which the majority of English colonists at Jamestown died from starvation, was in part the result of this fear; ‘some chose starvation over the possibility of becoming Amerindian’.\textsuperscript{10} Although Michael A. LaCombe has disagreed with this argument, suggesting instead that in early America ‘hunger regularly trumped fears of hybridity’, he agrees with Eden that early English colonists feared the effects of foreign environments and diets on their bodies.\textsuperscript{11} English colonists circumvented this fear in much the same way as Earle suggests the Spanish did; through the introduction of English staples to the American colonies.\textsuperscript{12} A similar point has been made by Joyce Chaplin. Chaplin argues that by cultivating English crops in the new Indian environment, English colonists were able to maintain a ‘corporeal link’ with England and prevent degradation into outright Indian savagery.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 38. For a detailed analysis of the Starving Time and its impact upon both colonial measures relating to food and the mythology of Jamestown see Rachel Herrmann, “The ‘Tragical Historie’: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown,” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly} 68, no. 1 (January, 2011): 47-74.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 49 and 62.
\textsuperscript{13} Chaplin, \textit{Subject Matter}, 211-212.
In the late sixteenth century, however, the English response to native bodies, environments, and diets was one of confidence and optimism. The negative attitude towards native products in the seventeenth century, an attitude that has been identified by Rustici, Eden, and LaCombe, was by no means a constant from the time of the first encounter between the English and indigenous Americans. English attitudes towards native bodies and diets were in no way static in the sixteenth century. Just as early modern bodies themselves were flexible and porous, responding to external forces and environmental changes, so too was English bodily discourse, mirroring the changes, adaptations, and frustrations of English explorers and colonists in the Americas. From the 1580s onwards, the English became more confident in their colonial exploits and crucially more confident in the regions of America that they explored.

While the lack of appropriate native food sources had made English settlement in the Far North unviable, the abundance and sophistication of the Virginian diet convinced English explorers that their attempts at colonisation in this region would be far more successful. If scarcity, perversity, and unwholesomeness were the defining features of the Meta Incognita environment that Frobisher and his men had explored in the 1570s, Virginian foodstuffs were conversely characterised by plenty, familiarity, and delectability. It was not just the ample provisions of the Virginian environment that were met with enthusiasm. The native people themselves, and the way in which they looked and behaved, also instilled an optimistic belief amongst the English that the natives could be brought easily to civility and thus subservience to the English Crown. Unlike the Inuit of Meta Incognita, the peoples of Virginia had food preparation techniques that mirrored those used in England, suggesting to colonists that they

had a seed of civility that could be nurtured. Alongside this, and as expressed by Brereton in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, the natives, thanks to their abundant diet and temperate climate, were robust and healthy. The strong, active bodies of the natives suggested that English bodies would not be weakened through exposure to indigenous foods and unfamiliar climates. The bodies of native Virginians were thus used by English explorers and writers to allay the concerns of those who feared the effects of unfamiliar environments on their bodies, and to validate their colonial enterprises by highlighting the ways in which the indigenous population could be incorporated into them.

Indian bodies, whether pure, debauched, or uncivil, narrated the English colonial experience in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Through analysing the specificities of English perceptions of balanced, unbalanced, and corrupted bodies, and their development throughout the later sixteenth century, it becomes clear that corporeality was vital to the formation and dissemination of English colonial discourse. Eating and the effect of food on the body became, when placed in an American context, indicative of successful and profitable ventures or unsuccessful and troublesome ones. In the early decades of English exploration in the Americas, in which hostile relations with the Spanish, inhospitable climates, and inappropriate food hampered efforts, Indian bodies reflected the disappointment of explorers and colonisers and were used to justify the abandonment of colonial projects. By the end of the century, however, the perception of Indian bodies as healthy, productive, and robust, and the belief that English bodies would fare equally well in the temperate climes of North America was well established, reflecting the optimism of a variety of early English pro-colonialists and their attempts to instil this sense of optimism in their readers and investors back home. Perceptions of the body were thus integral to the encounter between England and America, allowing for the defence of failed attempts at settlement, the celebration of
English colonial projects as providential and ordained by God, and for the establishment of a colonial ideology that had ideas about food and the body at its centre. Bodily discourse, in the context of the English colonial imagination, was thus a flexible tool that could be used to define, justify, and critique aspects of English colonial thought.

**Humoralism and the Early Modern Body**

Before beginning any discussion on the ways in which bodily discourse was employed in the encounter between the English and Amerindians, it is first crucial to establish how early modern Europeans understood the body. In the sixteenth century, the body was governed by a set of principles that presented it as flexible, porous, and deeply connected to external forces. In particular, it was humoral theory that helped early modern Europeans make best sense of their bodies and the diseases that affected them. Developed by classical writers, most notably Hippocrates and Galen, humoral theory posited that the human body was ruled by four bodily fluids, known as humours. The balance of these humours—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile—were thought to directly influence a person’s health and temperament. When the humours remained balanced and in equilibrium, the body remained temperate and healthy. However, when a person’s humours became unbalanced through the excess or deficiency of one or more humours, the body became diseased and unhealthy.\(^\text{15}\)

The body’s humoral balance was believed to be affected by exposure to what was known as the six non-naturals, listed by the sixteenth-century physician Thomas Elyot in the following manner: ‘ayre’, ‘meate and drynke’, ‘slepe and watche’, ‘mevyng and rest’, ‘emptynesse and repletion’, and ‘affections of the mynd’.\(^\text{16}\) Each of these external forces


could affect the level of any one humour in the body. The moderate use of the six non-naturals was therefore seen as the most reliable method for preserving bodily health.\textsuperscript{17} Healthcare in sixteenth-century Europe was thus based around long-term prevention rather than short-term curative treatment.\textsuperscript{18} Maintaining a healthy body may have been more difficult than it seems, however, as each individual was believed to have their own ‘naturalle complexion’ that determined the levels of each humour in their bodies.\textsuperscript{19} Sanguine men were believed to have a hot and moist complexion, their bodies governed by the humour of blood. Those of a phlegmatic disposition were believed to have a cold and moist complexion that was caused by an abundance of phlegm. Choleric men were hot and dry, their bodies ruled by yellow bile, while melancholic men were cold and dry, their bodies more active in black bile.\textsuperscript{20} Because each individual had their own specific humoral make-up, the way in which they engaged with the six non-naturals and maintained a healthy body was also specific and highly individualised. Given this deeply personal and precarious understanding of how to maintain bodily health it is unsurprising that the body, when placed in the context of international travel, took on an even greater significance.

In the early modern period, individuals were encouraged to establish a good regimen, namely the rules to be followed in order to maintain a healthy body, particularly in relation to the six non-naturals.\textsuperscript{21} These health regimens, as well as being based on classical medical discourse, were underpinned by Christian principles of sobriety and moderation. For each specific humoral complexion—sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic—the rules

\textsuperscript{17} Lindemann, \textit{Medicine and Society}, 14.
\textsuperscript{18} On preventative healthcare during the Renaissance see Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, \textit{Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
\textsuperscript{19} Elyot, \textit{Castel of Helth}, fol. 18.
\textsuperscript{20} Boorde, \textit{A Compendyous Regyment}, sigs. H2r-H3r.
\textsuperscript{21} Lindemann, \textit{Medicine and Society}, 23.
were different. In order to help early modern Europeans traverse the difficult path towards bodily, and indeed spiritual health, regimens became extremely popular. As Ken Albala has proposed, the fact that such texts were increasingly published in the vernacular in cheap octavo or quarto format suggests that a good proportion of the literate population took an active interest in nutrition and medical theory. In these handbooks, authors set out exactly how to avoid humoral imbalance through a detailed discussion of the six non-naturals and their effects on bodies of different complexions.

The advice for maintaining a good diet was complex and tailored to particular humoral complexions, relative states of health, and environmental considerations. One general rule surrounding food for people of all complexions, however, related to quantity. Moderation in food and drink was seen to be key to maintaining good health and humoral balance. As will be discussed in more detail later, in Virginia the natives’ moderation in eating was identified as a positive attribute, illustrating their relative self-restraint compared to elite members of English society. The fact that their bodies remained healthy and active despite their moderation served to reinforce the arguments of both physicians and clergymen that over-eating and gluttony were vices that corrupted the body.

Alongside the quantity of food eaten, the type of food eaten was also of critical importance. In general, people were advised to eat foods that matched the qualities of their complexions. As the physician Thomas Elyot suggested in his discussion on the quality of different foods, ‘qualitie is in the complexion’. Each complexion, ‘temperate & untemperate is conserved in his state, by that which is lyke therto in fourme and degree’. Following this

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logic, Elyot advised that ‘to them whose naturall complexio
n is moyste, ought to be gyven meates that be moste [moist] in vertue or power’ while those whose complexion is dry ‘ought to be gyven meates drye in vertue or power’.\(^{26}\) By eating foods that possessed similar ‘complexions’, a person could maintain the balance of their humours. However, in cases ‘whiche excedeth moche in dystemperaunce’, the opposite advice was given.\(^{27}\) In order to restore balance to a ‘distemperate’ body, it was advised that a person follow the principle of \textit{contraria contrariis curantur}: conditions are cured by their opposite.\(^{28}\) The sixteenth-century English physician William Bullein, for example, advised that when a person was sick they ‘must have meate, contrarie to their complexion’; those that are cold ‘must have hote meate’ while those ‘that be drie, must have moyst thinges’.\(^{29}\) The logic here was that different foods, and their inherent qualities, could counter-balance excessive humours. For example, if a person was suffering from an excess of phlegm which was both moist and cold, a physician would prescribe a food with the opposite composition, such as hot, dry pepper. The heat in the pepper was thought to help dry and heat the body internally and thus banish any excess phlegm. In the sixteenth century, then, it was not only imperative that a person knew their own humoral complexion but that they also knew the complexions of various foods.

This complex assessment of the elemental qualities of food would prove problematic in the context of English travel to America. With unfamiliar foods came the potential for unfamiliar side effects. The question of how English bodies would react to new, previously unknown foods in America became a central feature of both English travel writing and colonial rhetoric in the sixteenth century. While the region of the Far North lacked many of the key

\(^{26}\) Ibid., fol. 18.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., fol. 17.
\(^{29}\) Bullein, \textit{Government of Health}, fol. 28.
components needed to maintain a good diet and thus a healthy body, the food of Virginia, although different to that found in England, could provide many of the constituent parts of the traditional English diet. Maintaining a temperate body through diet thus went hand in hand with creating successful, permanent English settlements in the New World.

Humoralism as a general theory was largely accepted by most Europeans in the sixteenth century, but it also incorporated regional specificities. Despite the general principles of the theory being the same throughout Europe, writers of the sixteenth century also believed that different regions of the world had different natural complexions. The English, as northern Europeans, were often characterised by their continental neighbours as being temperamentally inferior. As the French philosopher Jean Bodin argued in the late sixteenth century, the people of the North were ‘sanguin and warlike’, and did nothing but ‘laugh and leape in their fooleries’. The naturally choleric French, on the other hand, were described by Bodin as ‘active and prompt’, showing ‘diligence and quicknesse in all their actions’. Pierre Charron, the French theologian and philosopher, was equally disparaging about the Northern temperament. Unlike Bodin, however, Charron suggested that Northerners were ‘of a phlegmatick and sanguine temperature’. Whether sanguine or phlegmatic, the Northern temperament was not to be envied as it made men ‘cruell and inhumane’, ‘stupid’, ‘inconstant’, ‘little religious’ and ‘want of judgement, whereby like beasts, they know not how to conteine and governe themselues’. Conversely, the inhabitants of the middle, temperate region of the world, which unsurprisingly included France, were considered to enjoy more temperate, balanced complexions. These ‘midlers’ were, according to Charron, ‘sanguin and

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31 Ibid., 553-554.
cholericke’ which made them ‘ingenious’, ‘wise’, and ‘temperate in all those things as neuters’. These positive attributes, and the temperateness they generated, led Charron to conclude that those who inhabited the middle, temperate zone of the earth were, in fact, ‘perfect men’. The English, then, in their relatively cold, wet, northern clime were ascribed distemperate complexions of either extreme sanguine or phlegmatic composition by continental writers such as Bodin and Charron and were thus vulnerable to the various diseases and illnesses that were thought to spring from unbalanced humours.

The goal of many early modern Europeans, then, was to maintain a temperate and healthy body. For the English, with their naturally distemperate northern bodies, this goal seemed particularly difficult to achieve. Whether naturally temperate or distemperate, eating, and indeed regulating the body more generally, was a hazardous affair. The equilibrium of their bodies and humours could be disrupted by unfamiliar air, unfamiliar foods, and changes in the environment. It was within this framework of bodily discourse that travel became seen as either damaging or curative. For those whose bodies enjoyed relative temperance, like early modern Mediterraneans, travelling to a new and unfamiliar environment could be treacherous, while for those who had unenviable intemperate complexions, like the early modern English, travel could be seen as a treatment that would actually aid their pursuit of bodily temperance. While unfamiliar and exotic foods could damage European bodies by unbalancing the humours, the new environments of America could also provide an array of health benefits due to the temperate climate and the abundance of natural and miraculous remedies. Food, and its effects on the body, was thus

33 Ibid., 164-167.
34 Ibid., 167.
central to early modern understandings of health and character. Unsurprisingly, then, food and eating played a significant role in early modern colonial discourse. For the English in particular, American food, diet, and gastronomy, and its ability to produce temperate, healthy bodies, became a barometer by which to measure colonial success and failure.

Depleted Victuals and Troublesome Voyages

In the mid-sixteenth century, English involvement in the New World was largely confined to raids on Spanish ships and port towns in the Caribbean. As Anglo-Spanish hostility at home intensified so too did English piracy and privateering. Unsurprisingly, the Spanish-American towns and ports that the English attempted to raid were often inhospitable, with Spanish governors refusing to openly trade with the marauding visitors. Within this context of hostility and conflict the maintenance of appropriate and plentiful provisions became central to successful privateering ventures. Nowhere is this clearer than in the writings of those involved in John Hawkins’s raids on the Caribbean in the 1560s. These accounts highlight the centrality of food in the early English encounter with America, reflect the disastrous effects that eating a poor diet could have on the body, and illustrate the myriad difficulties faced by European explorers in the sixteenth century.

In 1567 John Hawkins and his men set sail for a third privateering voyage to the New World. Hawkins’s previous two expeditions had caused much animosity between the English and the Spanish. As outlined in chapter two, the first voyage of 1562 resulted in a ban on English ships trading in the West Indies, while after the second in 1564 Hawkins was forced to sign a bond promising not to trade with the Spanish in the Caribbean. By 1567 the attitude of the Spanish towards Hawkins and his crew was so inimical that a fiction was created to explain the impending English voyage; the ships were bound for the coast of Africa to extract
reparations for previous injury and to investigate vague claims of an extensive goldmine that was surrounded by rich and fertile lands. With this illusion apparently fooling the Spanish ambassador to England, Diego Guzmán de Silva, Hawkins and his fleet set sail from Plymouth in October 1567.\textsuperscript{35}

In Hawkins’s own account of the expedition, published after his return home in 1569, it is clear that the voyage was anything but straightforward. Hampered by bad weather in Finisterre and attacked by a native village in Cape Verde, Hawkins and his men eventually managed to capture, with great difficulty, around five hundred slaves in Guinea, setting sail for the West Indies in February 1568.\textsuperscript{36} Despite the king of Spain commanding the governors of the Indies ‘by no meanes to suffer anye trade’ with the English, Hawkins and his men did manage some ‘reasonable trade and courteous intertainemente’ with the Spanish at Margarita.\textsuperscript{37} This, however, was where their luck ran out. After being refused trade and water at Rio de la Hacha the English attacked the town, taking it by force so that trading could take place.\textsuperscript{38} Hawkins decided against landing at Cartagena, a heavily fortified port on the Caribbean coast, deciding instead to return home.\textsuperscript{39} Appalling weather, however, battered Hawkins’s ship, forcing him to put in at the port of San Juan de Ulloa to make vital repairs and to obtain victuals.\textsuperscript{40} After securing entry into the port, Hawkins became suspicious of Spanish intentions, suspecting a ‘great number of men to be hid in a great ship of 900 tonnes’ that was moored next to the English ship, \textit{The Minion}.\textsuperscript{41} Hawkins’s suspicions proved accurate as

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Morgan, “Sir John Hawkins.”
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Hawkins, \textit{A True Declaration}, sigs. A2r-A4r.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., sig. A4v.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., sigs. A4v-A5v.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., sig. A5v.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., sigs. A6r-A6v.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., sig. B2v.
\end{itemize}
the English were ‘set uppon’ from all sides by three hundred Spaniards. After hours of fighting, Hawkins and his surviving crew managed to escape in *The Minion*, yet ‘having a great number of men and lytell victuals’ their ‘hope of life waxed lesse & lesse’.

After two weeks at sea, ‘honger inforced’ the crew to seek land. The situation became so desperate that ‘hides weare thoughte verire good meate, ratts, cattes, mise and dogges none escaped that might bee gotten’. Foods that would have normally been deemed inappropriate for the European diet increasingly became a ‘great pris’ and thought ‘verie proffitable’. After more fruitless searches for victuals and a ‘haven of relife’, some of Hawkins’s men ‘being forced with honger desired to bee sett a land’. Ninety-six members of the crew were deserted somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico and left to fend for themselves. Hawkins and the rest of the crew continued their tortuous journey home. During the lengthy Atlantic crossing, many more of the crew perished being ‘oppressed with Famine’. Eventually the fleet arrived in Vigo, Spain but this was not the end of their misery. After so long without appropriate and nourishing food, still more men succumbed to disease due to the ‘excesse of freshe meate’ that they consumed at Vigo, a great number of them dying from their illnesses.

The experiences of Hawkins and his men illustrate just how vulnerable bodies were to changes in diet. It was not only starvation that decimated the crew, but also over-zealous eating after a prolonged period without food. The equilibrium of the crew’s bodies had been

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42 Ibid., sig. B3r.
43 Ibid., sig. B5r.
44 Ibid., sig. B5v.
48 Ibid., sig. B7r.
disturbed by the interruption of normal eating patterns. This disruption had forced the fleet to put in at San Juan de Ulloa to obtain victuals, which had led to the English retreat and the onset of starvation. Food, therefore, or more accurately the lack of it, had proven to be the downfall of the expedition. Without enough provisions, and without the knowledge or means to secure food from the American environment or the Spanish colonies, voyages such as Hawkins’s could end in complete disaster. The expedition of 1567 had shown that maintaining victuals could be extremely difficult, especially when dealing with the hostile Spanish. It had also illustrated the centrality of food in English voyages to the New World, demonstrating how hunger and poor diet could decimate a crew and devastate an expedition. It had highlighted how a lack of basic sustenance could foil the plans of even the most experienced sailor such as Hawkins. And yet, the publication of Hawkins’s narrative was not the end of the story. The fate of those sailors who had been left in Mexico would exemplify how a lack of food could transform the fortunes of explorers and force them to confront the realities of the American environment.

In 1591, some twenty-three years after those ninety-six men were left in the Gulf of Mexico, an account of their experience was published in London. Composed by Job Hortop, powder-maker and gunner for The Jesus on Hawkins’s third voyage, the narrative documents the ‘sundrie calamities’ endured by Hortop and the other men in the intervening years between when they were set ashore and when they managed to return to England.49 Like Hawkins, Hortop referenced the desperate food situation that the crew faced after their retreat from San Juan de Ulloa. He too explained how ‘victuals were so scarce’ that he and the other surviving members of the crew were ‘driven to eat hides, cats, rats, parrats,

49 Hortop, Travailes of an English Man, title page.
munkies, and dogges’. After mutiny broke out among the crew ‘for want of victuals’, Hortop and a number of other men decided to take their chances in the unfamiliar lands of Mexico, preferring to be ‘on the shoare to shift for themselves amongst the enemies, than to sterve on shippe-boord’. Not only had depleted victuals led to the abandonment of the expedition, it had also caused mutiny and the splintering of the crew, an action that would have considerable consequences for those men who chose to remain in the Americas.

Hortop and the other men began making their way towards the Pánuco river, walking day and night for seven days, ‘feeding on nothing but roots, and Guiavos [guavas], a fruite like figges’. On being captured by two Spanish horsemen on the banks of the Pánuco, the English explorers were transported to the town where they were able to gain sustenance from other indigenous foods. As well as eating guavas, Hortop also tried a number of other unfamiliar foods, from manatees that apparently tasted ‘not much unlike to bacon’, to avocados which were described by Hortop as ‘an excellent good fruite’. Engaging with the native environment and experimenting with indigenous foods was crucial for Hortop’s survival. Not only was he willing to try these unfamiliar foods, he found them to be tasty and comparable to foods back home. While many of his fellow crew members had succumbed to starvation on the voyage home, Hortop and the other men who had remained in the Americas survived through consuming native produce.

English readers had already been reminded of the plight faced by these men in 1589 when Richard Hakluyt published, in his Principal Navigations, another account written by a member of Hawkins’s crew who had stayed behind in America. Like Hortop, Miles Phillips had

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50 Ibid., 17.
51 Ibid., 20.
52 Ibid., 20-21.
spent many years trying to get back to England, eventually returning to his native country in 1582. In Phillips’s account, as in Hortop’s, the search for food was a prominent theme. His account of the crew’s quest to find food is far more detailed than Hortop’s, describing the varied reactions of English bodies to American foods, and noting the fatal effects of restored diet and nutritional rehabilitation on severely malnourished and starved bodies. Immediately after coming ashore, Phillips and the other men managed to find fresh water but some ‘dunke so much’ that they ‘almost cast themselves away’, while others ended up ‘cruelly swollen’ from ingesting too much. Alongside this excessive consumption of water, the English explorers also ate a fruit that they found on the land called a Capule [a type of black cherry]. Rather than providing nourishment to the starved adventurers, the fruit made them ‘very ill’, leaving them ‘both feeble, faint and weake’. Their first foray into native foods had thus not been a success, the cherries damaging their already weakened bodies. Phillips also made reference to eating guavas as Hortop had done, but unlike Hortop, Phillips explained the effect that the unfamiliar fruit had on the Englishmen’s bodies. The fruit made the bodies of the men ‘so sore’, creating a pain that could not be eased for the space of ten or twelve days.

Not all native food made the English explorers sick, however. On being captured by the Spanish on the Pánuco river, the men were given loaves of bread ‘made of that countrey wheat, which the Spaniards call Maiz’. According to Phillips, the bread was ‘very sweet and pleasant’ for he and the other men had ‘not eaten any in a long time before’, but, as he went on to ask, ‘what is it that hunger doth not make to have a savory and a delicate taste?’ Subsequent experiences of eating maize were not so pleasant. Having been imprisoned in a

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54 Ibid., 3:474.
55 Ibid., 3:477.
small house ‘much like a hogstie’, the Englishmen were given sodden maize to eat, a food which the Spanish ‘feede their hogs’. Although not deadly, this unprocessed version of maize was only suitable for animal consumption. After surviving this ‘miserable state’ the men were released to be transported to Mexico City.\textsuperscript{56} On the way they stopped at the town of Santa Maria where a house of ‘white friers’ [Carmelites] fed them with ‘hote meat, as mutton and broth’. Unfortunately, the men could not control themselves, feeding ‘very greedily of the meat’, causing them ‘to fall sicke of hote burning agues’.\textsuperscript{57} As Thomas Elyot had suggested in his health regimen, ‘contynuall gourmandyte’ was the ‘greatest ennemy to helth’.\textsuperscript{58} For those who had been starved, like Phillips and the other Englishmen, excessive eating would therefore have been even more dangerous. Starvation was thus not the only problem that the remainder of Hawkins’s crew faced. They also had to deal with the dangers of eating after a period of deprivation as this could be equally damaging to their carefully balanced and vulnerable English bodies.

Having managed to avert starvation, Hortop and Phillips were nonetheless unable to return to England for a number of years. They were imprisoned then forced to work in the Spanish monasteries and galleys, only making it home by convincing English ships to allow them aboard.\textsuperscript{59} The ‘sundry great troubles and miseries’ endured by these men stemmed from the English inability to preserve and obtain provisions.\textsuperscript{60} The experiences of Hawkins, Hortop, and Phillips had highlighted how food could be the key to explorative and privateering success or failure. Hunger had forced Hortop and Phillips to engage with native foods and native peoples for survival. It had led to their imprisonment, forced labour, and extended

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 3:476.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 3:477.
\textsuperscript{58} Elyot, \textit{Castel of Helth}, fol. 45.
\textsuperscript{60} This quotation is taken from Phillips, “A Discourse Written by One Miles Philips,” 3:487.
displacement abroad. By 1600, when both Hortop’s and Phillips’s narratives appeared together in Hakluyt’s second edition of the *Principal Navigations*, English explorers had learned how critical provisions were to the success of overseas voyages. The reappearance of both Hortop and Phillips in England served as an excellent reminder for what could go wrong if food became scarce during international travel, reaffirming the belief that diet, and the English ability to source appropriate native food, was critical in the colonial decision-making process. Another set of expeditions in the 1570s, before the tales of Hortop’s and Phillips’s calamitous experiences were published, once again illustrated the detrimental effect that a lack of provisions and a hostile native environment could have on English overseas projects.

**Native Diets, Bodies, and Early English Colonial Failure**

By the 1570s, English readers had a basic understanding of how food and diet impacted upon European voyages of discovery. As has already been suggested, John Hawkins’s account of his third voyage had highlighted how expeditions could end in disaster if provisions became depleted and could not be replenished. Although Hawkins barely mentioned the indigenous environment of the lands to which he and his men travelled, nor the dining practices of the region’s inhabitants, English readers had been exposed to ideas about American food from translations of key histories documenting the Spanish and Portuguese explorations and conquests in the Americas. In both Richard Eden’s translated versions of Peter Martyr’s *Decades* and Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia*, American food played a crucial role in disseminating the idea of a new world different to anything Europeans had experienced before. The exoticisation of native food by Martyr and Münster was very much in keeping with the overall messages of their texts; America was a fundamentally new world in which strange and marvellous peoples and products could be found. Both Martyr
and Münster commented on the radical strangeness of American food and native diets. According to Münster, the native American diet was filled with innumerable fruits ‘utterlye unlyke’ any found in Europe.\(^61\) Elaborating on this claim, and giving English readers a greater insight into the American diet, Martyr explained that in the Americas all the ‘accustomed foode’ of the Spanish such as ‘wyne, oyle, flesshe, butter, chiese, and milke’ were ‘lackynge’.\(^62\) Instead, the inhabitants of the New World subsisted on a diet filled with strange and unknown fruits and roots, and exotic, and somewhat peculiar meats. The people of the Caribbean ate ‘Guannaba [guanábana or soursop]’, a fruit ‘unknowen’ to the Spanish but ‘sumwhat lyke vnto a quynse’.\(^63\) Instead of making bread from wheat, which was the traditional European method, Amerindians made their bread from roots such as ‘Maizium, Iucca, and Ages’.\(^64\) Even the meat of the native diet was unfamiliar, being largely centred around fish and in some cases ‘serpentes they caule luannas [iguanas]’ which, according to Martyr, were ‘lyke vnto Crocodiles’.\(^65\) In an endeavour to categorise these new fruits, roots, and sources of meat, Martyr attempted to assimilate them into Old World frameworks of understanding; although the guanábana was a fruit unknown to the Spanish, and although Europeans did not eat serpents such as iguanas, they became somewhat comprehensible to readers in Europe through their comparison to quinces and crocodiles. And yet, despite a narrative that highlighted the pronounced differences between native and European food, Martyr did not seem to find these divergences particularly alarming.

The food was undoubtedly different but not necessarily unappetising or dangerous. In fact, Martyr claimed that the king of Spain himself was partial to some of the newly discovered

\(^{61}\) Münster, Treatyse of the Newe India, sig. L1v.
\(^{62}\) Martyr, Decades of the Newe Worlde, fols. 105-110.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., fol. 45.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., fol. 17.
\(^{65}\) Ibid., fol. 25.
American foodstuffs, declaring that the king had eaten of a ‘frute browght from those landes, beinge full of scales with keyes much lyke a pine apple in forme and coloure, but in tendernes equal to melopepones, and in taste excedyng al garden frutes’. It was not only American fruits that proved delectable to Spanish tastebuds. Even the strange crocodile-like iguanas were confirmed to be particularly agreeable to the European explorers. Despite none of the men at first wishing to ‘adventure to taste of them by reason of theyr horrible deformitie’, a lieutenant, having been ‘entysed by the pleasantnes of the [native] kynges syster, determined to taste of the serpentes’, followed quickly by the rest of his men who were ‘behynde hym in greedines’. According to the men who had tried the serpent, the flesh was of a delicious ‘sweetenes’, being a ‘more pleasaunte taste’ than either pheasant or partridge.

This openness to trying native food, however, did not last for long. The Spanish pined for their Old World foods, complaining that they fell ill when they did not eat familiar foods and indeed could only be healed through the restoration of their normal diets. This more negative opinion on native food is also found in Martyr’s writings. As he worked his way through the first decades of discovery, the attitude towards native food became more negative. The conquistadors, so Martyr argued, were unable ‘to abyde suche calamities as to lyue onely contented with the breade of those regions, and wylde herbes without salte’ as their ‘stomakes had byn vsed to good meates’. Columbus, in an attempt to avoid mutiny, even returned to Spain ‘for vitailes, as wheat, wyne, oyle, and such other which the Spanyardes are accustomed to eate, bycause they coulde not yet well agree with such meates

66 Ibid., fol. 81.
67 Ibid., fol. 25.
68 Ibid., fols. 25-26.
69 Earle, Body of the Conquistador, 47.
70 Martyr, Decades of the Newe Worlde, fol. 99.
as they fownd in the Ilandes’.  

By the mid-sixteenth century, then, an ambiguous template for attitudes towards native food had been established in the English imagination. On the one hand, some of the newly discovered foodstuffs were highly delectable, and yet on the other they were perceived to do harm to the European constitution, unbalancing temperate complexions and leading to inevitable bodily disease.

This knowledge about indigenous foods, and the uncertain attitude it provoked, combined with the conviction that plentiful provisions were needed in order for voyages to be successful, impacted significantly on the Martin Frobisher voyages of the 1570s. From the published narratives of the second voyage in particular it would seem that English attitudes towards native foods and eating habits were confused and even contradictory. George Best’s account draws an especially conflicted picture of the American diet, focusing on both the fantasy and reality of New World food. This divergence between fantasy and reality is clearly seen in the front matter to Best’s text. On the book’s contents page, Best laid out the topics to be discussed. The eighth section of the text dealt with how ‘pleasaunt and profitable’ new discoveries were, both for experiencing ‘different manners and fashions of diverse nations’ and for discovering ‘straunge trees, fruite, foules, and beastes, the infinit treasure of Pearle, Gold and Silver’. From this list it would seem to the reader that Best was presenting the lands he had explored as abundant in both precious metals and exotic foods. Yet at the same time, Best’s summary of his text also introduced a far more negative perception of the American environment and sources of food. In the listing of a section on the perils of attempting new discoveries, Best highlighted a number of dangers that would-be explorers should watch out for. They should be wary of ‘theeves and robbers’, the ‘dangerousness of Seas’, and the ‘feare

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71 Ibid., fol. 18.
of hidden rockes’. They should also expect to be confronted by ‘unaccustomed Elementes and ayres’ and ‘straunge and unsavery meats’. On the one hand, then, Best presented America as a land that was undoubtedly exotic and with impressive natural resources, while on the other claiming it to be a treacherous environment in which unaccustomed airs and unsavoury meats could do damage to explorers’ bodies. From a close reading of the rest of Best’s text, it becomes clear that the author is torn between the fantasy of the American environment and the disappointing reality of the desolate landscape and resources of Meta Incognita.

In his preface, Best introduced the topic of American food, describing it in glowing, fantastical terms. In the Americas there could be found ‘al kind of spices, and delectable fruites, both for delicacie, & health’ in ‘such aboundance, as hitherto they haue bene thought to haue bene bred no where else, but there’. Plants such as ‘Radishe, Lettuce, Colewortes, Borage, and suche like’ were ‘greater, more saverie and delectable in taste’ than those found in England. Aside from the plants of the New World being more delicious and plentiful than those in England, the harvests in America were also quicker and more numerous than those back home. In the New World, wheat would be ‘ripe the fourth Moneth after the séede is sowne’, while ‘Beanes, Pease, &c. are there ripe twice a yeare’. The apparent bounty of American crops, alongside the abundance of precious metals in the region, led Best to conclude that ‘no where else but vnder the Equinoctiall, or not farre from thence, is the earthlye Paradise, and the only place of perfection in this world’. Best recognised, however, that conditions in the Far North may prove less favourable, given the very different environment. Nonetheless, exploring the more ‘intemperate places’ of the world was framed

73 Ibid., sig. e3v.
74 Ibid., sig. e3r.
75 Ibid., sig. e3v.
by Best as a virtuous mission, for as he suggested, ‘the adventure the more hard the more honorable’. Despite this admission that the lands to the north might not offer the same environmental rewards that the Spanish had enjoyed close to the equator, Best still optimistically believed that as the classical geographers had been so wrong about the habitability of the torrid zone, they might have likewise over-exaggerated the harshness of the earth’s frigid zones and their inability to provide abundant crops. As chapter one has suggested, Best saw the idea of temperate climates as relative; a man born in Morocco, if brought to England in his normal hot weather attire, would ‘judge this Region presently not to be habitable’ as he was used to a warm climate. Likewise, Best hoped that as the English were used to cold climates, they would find the frozen lands of Meta Incognita more temperate and habitable than the classical writers of the Mediterranean had thought possible.

Throughout the rest of the text, however, Best’s picture of the American environment, in which the soil was always fruitful and the crops always plentiful, delectable, and healthy, was systematically eroded by the reality of the harsh, forbidding landscape of the Far North. Rather than finding abundance and plenty, Best and his fellow explorers found only want. They discovered, to their horror, that the native Inuit of the region were not in the least bit discerning when it came to what they ate. Unlike the English, who were advised to meticulously consider how food might affect their health, the Inuit would ‘eate rawe fleshe and fishe, and refuse no meate, howsoever it be stincking’. As medical handbooks of the time argued, consuming both raw and spoiled meat could be detrimental to a person’s health.

76 Ibid., sig. a3v.
77 Ibid., sigs. g2v-g3r.
78 Ibid., sig. N3v.
From antiquity onwards there was a strong connection between rotten and spoiled food, infected air, and evil diseases in the European imagination. These ‘miasmas’ or bad airs were believed to arise from processes of organic decomposition that would infect the air. Once inhaled, this infected air would inevitably lead to infected bodies. Because infected air was linked to stinking organic matter, it was rightly believed that consuming rotten food could lead to infection. The stinking meat of the Inuit would undoubtedly, therefore, have produced bad airs that could have infiltrated and infected English bodies.

The eating of raw food was also particularly perilous for early modern Europeans. As Thomas Elyot advised his readers, eating raw fruits and herbs for complexions other than extreme choleric engendered ‘thynne watry bloudde’ and ‘sondry diseases’. Andrew Boorde even equated the eating of raw foods with perverse appetites, explaining how an unnatural appetite could be defined by the ‘desyre to eate rawe & unlawfull thinges’. In fact, the eating of raw flesh was considered so abnormal by English standards that Best even suggested that, based on the dining habits that he had witnessed, the natives of Meta Incognita were ‘ravenous, bloudye, and Man eating people’. Best made no suggestion that he had actually witnessed or seen evidence of Inuit cannibalism, and yet, when discussing the fate of some Englishmen left behind on the previous voyage to the region, he concluded that due to the natives’ ‘blody disposition, in eating anye kinde of rawe fleshe or carr[.]e[.], howsoever stincking, it is to be thoughte, that they had s[l]aine and devoured oure men’.

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83 Ibid., sig. C4v.
This is an assertion also made by another member of the Frobisher voyage, Dionyse Settle. He likewise found the Inuit ‘rather Anthropophagi, or devourers of mans fleshe’, given that there was ‘no flesh or fishe, which they finde dead, (smell it never so filthily) but they will eate it, as they finde it’.84 David Quinn and William C. Sturtevant have also argued that there was a strong connection between eating raw and spoiled meat and cannibalistic tendencies in the early modern English imagination.85 They suggest that it is possible that this notion was derived from a passage from John Mandeville’s Travels, a copy of which was known to have been purchased for the Frobisher voyages. This edition of Mandeville described ‘a great yle’ off the coast of Asia in which the people ‘eat no bread but flesh raw, and they drink milke, & they have no houses, & they eat gladiyer fleshe of men then other’.86 Best also claimed that the Inuit fed their ‘sucking children’ with raw meat, the mothers, in an animal-like manner, chewing the raw flesh in their own mouths before feeding it to their babies.87 Settle also suggested that the Inuit were particularly animalistic in their feeding habits, neither using ‘table, stoole, or table cloth for comelinesse’. Instead, ‘when they are imbrued with bloud, knuckle deepe’, they ‘use their tongues as apt instruments’ to lick themselves clean, making sure ‘to loose none of their victuals’.88 This type of behaviour would have undoubtedly been considered uncivilised and savage by early modern European standards. Erasmus, the influential Renaissance humanist, explained in his handbook aimed at children how one should behave when eating. In an attempt to teach children how to become civilised and courteous adults, Erasmus explained that it was ‘an uncivill thing’ to lick one’s fingers or to

84 Settle, A True Reporte, sig. D1r.
85 Sturtevant and Quinn, “This New Prey,” 77-80.
86 Ibid., 115.
87 Best, A True Discourse, sig. O1r.
88 Settle, A True Reporte, sig. C5v.
‘wipe them upon’ one’s clothes while eating. Erasmus warned his readers that ‘to gnawe bones doth pertaine to dogges’, while ‘to licke the dishe with thy tong’ ‘doeth pertain to cattes, and not to men’. The Inuit, then, who would take care to devour every morsel of food using their mouths and fingers as tools, were perceived as beast-like, highlighting to English observers their inherent incivility and savagery.

According to both Best and Settle, though, this appalling beast-like diet was the product of necessity rather than choice. Despite his attempts at optimism in the prefatory material, Best concluded that the lands he and his fellow voyagers had explored were, in reality, barren, the earth yielding ‘no graine or fruite of sustenance for man’. Given the desolate nature of the landscape, it was unsurprising that the native inhabitants would eat almost anything. Settle also felt that the inappropriate diet of the indigenous population was born from desperation rather than gastronomical taste. He explained to his readers that when food became scarce in the region, the inhabitants would, ‘for lacke of other victuals’, slay their own work animals, in this case dogs, and use their flesh for sustenance. Making much the same observations as Best, Settle described how the people of the region ate ‘their meate all rawe, both fleshe, fishe, and foule’ and, ‘for necessities sake’, they ate ‘such grasse as the countrie yeeldeth’, ‘not deintily, or salletwise’, and ‘without either salt, oyles, or washing, like brutish beasts devoure the same’.

These descriptions of dietary desperation, of which the practice of cannibalism was the ultimate expression, differ markedly from other European accounts of American

90 Ibid., D2r.
91 Best, *A True Discourse*, sig. O1r.
93 Ibid., sig. C5v.
anthropophagi. Rather than representing the hopelessness of native populations to source appropriate food, cannibalism was seen by many European writers to reflect the innate savagery of American peoples; they did not devour man’s flesh because they had to, but because they wanted to. According to André Thevet, the canibales, whom Columbus had first come across, ate ‘humayne flesh, as we [Europeans] do biefe or mutton’, having ‘thereunto more appetite and delight’.\(^94\) This is an opinion shared by Sebastian Münster, who suggested that the canibales treated prisoners of war like livestock, feeding them ‘untyll they be very fat, as we [Europeans] are wont to doe with capons or hennes’ before killing them, pulling out their guts, and eating the flesh ‘freshe and newe’.\(^95\) Not only did the canibales prepare men to be eaten, they also, as Münster explained, preserved human flesh for consumption later, ‘poudering the residue with salte, or keping it in a certayne pickle as we [Europeans] do iegottes or sansages’.\(^96\) The canibales, therefore, chose to engage in cannibalism, treating human flesh in much the same way as any other kind of meat and utilising sophisticated methods to preserve it. The Inuit that the English came across, on the other hand, were forced to eat inappropriate food, from raw and spoiled meat, to work animals and human flesh, due to the harsh, barren environment in which they lived.

English distaste for the Inuit diet, as described by Best and Settle, eventually came to reflect English disappointment with the region more generally. Those who had set out alongside Frobisher had hoped not only to find a Northwest Passage to Asia but also to explore a region of the Americas that they believed rich in natural resources, especially gold. In reality, the English explorers found neither; the Northwest Passage remained elusive, the


\(^{95}\) Münster, *Treatys of the Newe India*, sig. G6v.

\(^{96}\) Ibid. It is possible that ‘iegottes or sansages’ refer to faggots and sausages.
gold of Meta Incognita stayed undiscovered, and the belief that the climate to the north would suit the hardy English was left in tatters. The English explorations of Meta Incognita, moreover, had proven to them just how detrimental the environment was in shaping bodies. Not only did the lands of Baffin Island fail to produce the types of food necessary to maintain a temperate complexion, the natives themselves illustrated how the body could be irrevocably changed by a consistently bad diet. When invited to partake in English food, food that the explorers considered more wholesome and healthy, the Inuit body reacted badly. According to Settle, the English had to source local food for their captives as they were unable to digest the meat that the explorers had brought with them from England.97 The fate of the Inuit who the explorers had captured and taken back to England also reflected how vulnerable their bodies were to changes in diet. Despite continuing to eat the raw meat and fish they were used to alongside the more common roasted and boiled meat of the English, the two Inuit captives, Kalicho and Arnaq, quickly succumbed to the unfamiliar environment of England, probably contracting one of the many Old World diseases to which they had no tolerance.98 They had arrived in England at the end of September 1577 and by mid-November they were both dead, with their physician Dr Dodding diagnosing ‘an Anglophobia’ as the possible cause of death.99

Not only was the environment and diet of the English inappropriate, and indeed dangerous, for the debased complexions of the Inuit, it was also clear that the English would not defile their own bodies by partaking of typical Inuit fare. The English ensured that they would not have to survive on the corrupted and uncivilised foods of the natives by embarking

97 Settle, A True Reporte, sig. C4r.
98 Sturtevant and Quinn, “This New Prey”, 80-84.
99 Ibid., 84.
on their voyage with plenty of healthy and appropriate victuals from England. As Best pointed out to his readers, the expedition of 1577 had enough victuals ‘for twelve monethes provision’. This dietary tactic for avoiding native food by bringing sufficient provisions from England did not always go to plan however. Despite the confirmation that the lands of Meta Incognita held little potential and that the hostile environment could have disastrous effects on English bodies, Frobisher and Best made one last voyage to the region in 1578. In Best’s account of this third and final voyage, an account that was published alongside his description of the second voyage, the importance of English provisions to the success of the venture was all too clear. As Best recorded, the voyage was hampered by appalling weather and by hostility from the natives who were no doubt still reeling from the confrontations of the previous summer. The expedition’s fleet had become separated and the bark Dennis had been sunk. After managing to eventually reconvene on Kodlunarn Island, then known to the English as the Countess of Warwick’s Island, the explorers assessed their situation and discovered that the fleet was in ‘want of drinke and fuel’. As Robert McGhee has argued, it was the loss of a substantial amount of the fleet’s provisions of beer that ultimately led to the abandonment of the project and the hasty retreat home. Beer was considered an essential form of nutrition for the early modern English. Three of the ships that had been lost during the torturous journey had carried eighty-four tonnes of beer meant for the group of men tasked with establishing a colony in the region. When it was discovered that the expedition had only twenty-four tonnes of beer remaining, Captain Edward Fenton, who was to lead the wintering party, declared that these depleted provisions were insufficient to sustain the proposed colony throughout the winter. Most probably to the relief of those men who had

100 Best, A True Discourse, sig. h3v.
101 Ibid., sigs. F1r-O2v.
102 Ibid., sig. K3r.
been assigned to remain in Meta Incognita, Frobisher decided to abandon the planned colony, with the last of the English fleet sailing away from the Countess of Warwick’s Island on 1 September 1578. The English experience in Meta Incognita had thus highlighted how important food was to colonial success. The inappropriate and scarce food of the region, coupled with the difficulty of retaining victuals during challenging and unpredictable voyages, had made settlement in the Far North a near impossibility. It had taught the English just how detrimental food and environment was to their bodies and had illustrated the difficulty of maintaining health and temperance during international travel to unknown regions of the world.

**Temperate Climes and the French Model for Success?**

After the disastrous decade of the 1570s, English explorers, commentators, and pro-colonists began to regroup and assess exactly what had gone wrong in the Meta Incognita voyages. A key text in this process of reassessment, and one that has been underutilised in the current historiography dealing with the development of English colonial ideology, came in the form of an English translation of an Italian version of a French text, documenting the expeditions of Jacques Cartier to New France, modern-day Canada, in the 1530s. Published in 1580, this book set out exactly how the English could learn from the French experience in Canada and how they could rectify the mistakes that had been made in the Frobisher voyages. Cartier’s expeditions were by no means a complete success, failing as they did to establish a permanent French colony in the region. They did, however, illustrate the importance of the native environment for explorative and colonial survival. Cartier’s

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104 Cartier, *Shorte and Briefe Narration*. 
experience, and apparent accidental stay in the region throughout the winter of 1535 to 1536, had highlighted that native food could sustain European bodies, decreasing the need for extensive provisions and allaying fears that Amerindian food would damage and alter European complexions. The lessons learned from the French experience in New France would significantly influence the English approach to the Virginian landscape and its peoples in subsequent years, encouraging explorers to engage with the native environment and diet, and brave staying in the region for an extended period of time.

In the preface to the edition, written by the translator, John Florio, the failure of the Frobisher voyages is tackled head on. Florio admitted that the English had ‘not had as yet suche successe as was wished’ in their exploration of the Americas. He argued, however, that the English should persist in these attempts and not become ‘slower in this enterprice’. He identified a number of factors that led to the failure of these voyages, citing insufficient victuals as a primary determinant; if Frobisher’s ‘store of victualles had been sufficient’, the English could ‘have stayed al the Winter in those colder Countries’. He also implied, however, that the English should look for more temperate regions to settle, arguing that Cartier was able to remain ‘a whole Winter contrary to hys determination when he set out of Fraunce’ in Canada due to the country’s ‘more temperate clime’. Florio was clear about why he chose to translate this particular text, explaining the ‘use’ of it to his readers. Cartier had shown that the ‘Northwest partes of America’ were ‘no lesse fruitful and pleasant in al respects than is England, Fraunce, or Germany’; the indigenous peoples, although ‘simple and rude in manners’, were by nature ‘gentle and tractable, and most apt to receive the Christian Religion’; and ‘the commodities of the Countrey’ were ‘not inferiour to the Marchandize of

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Moscovy, Danske, or many other frequented trade’. Florio hoped that this positive assessment of the region discovered by Cartier would encourage Englishmen to explore the northern parts of America for themselves, inducing them ‘not onley to fall to some traffique wyth the Inhabitants, but also to plant a Colonie in some convenient place’. For Florio, then, the Cartier voyages illustrated the success that could be had in temperate regions: food for explorers was plentiful, the soil was fruitful and ripe for cultivation, commodities and merchandise were abundant, and the indigenous peoples, like the environment, were temperate and tractable.

The rest of the text appeared to confirm Florio’s arguments, highlighting time and again the abundance of the environment and the ability of Europeans to survive in the region. In Canada, Cartier found ‘divers’ sorts of venison, a river with ‘the plentifullest of Fish that ever hath of any man bin seene or heard of’. It also seemed that much of the land was suitable for arable farming. Cartier found land that was ‘smooth, and leavel’ and ‘small Peason as thicke as if they had bin sown & plowed’. The land was obviously very fertile, with Cartier even claiming that Brion Island had ‘the best soyle that ever we saw’. Throughout his voyage, Cartier saw a diverse array of plants flourishing, from gooseberries, strawberries and blackberries, to wild corn, parsley, nuts and beans. There were also ‘many meadowes full of grasse’ and ‘Lakes wher gret plenty of Salmons be’. The fact that the native peoples had techniques for cooking and preserving food was also a positive sign. Unlike their uncouth

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106 Ibid., sig. B1r.
107 Ibid., sig. B1v.
108 Ibid., 63.
109 Ibid., 18.
110 Ibid., 10.
111 Ibid., 10-21.
112 Ibid., 18.
neighbours to the north in Baffin Island, the Iroquois ‘bake their Bread’ on ‘hote stone’. They also prepared ‘sundrye sortes of Pottage’ with corn, peas, musk, and great cucumbers, and preserved food, drying fish and damsons in the summer sun and placing them in ‘certayne Vessels’ to be kept for winter.

The native environment even provided a natural remedy for a cruel disease that swept through both the indigenous and European communities in the winter of 1535 to 1536. Plant physiologist Don Durzan, through a consideration of the symptoms described by Cartier, has identified this disease as scurvy. The outbreak started in December amongst the local Iroquois and quickly spread to the ships of the French explorers. By mid-February, eight Frenchmen were already dead, with another fifty gravely ill, thought to be ‘past al hope of recoverie’. In a desperate attempt to identify the disease and ‘save and preserve the reste of the company’, an autopsy was even performed on one Philip Rougemont. His body was ripped open; inside his lungs were ‘blacke and mortified’, ‘rotten bloud’ surrounded his heart, and his spleen had perished and was ‘rough as if it had bin rubbed against a stone’. Despite these gruesome discoveries, Cartier and his men were none the wiser, becoming so ‘greeved with that sicknesse’ that they ‘lost all hope ever to see France agayne’.

Just when all hope looked to be lost, God sent Cartier and his men ‘the knowledge and remedie’ of the disease that had stubbornly continued to afflict the French travellers. Having ventured ashore, Cartier came across an Iroquoian man who twelve days previously

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113 Ibid., 50.
114 Ibid., 20 and 50-51.
116 Cartier, Shorte and Briefe Narration, 94-95.
117 Ibid, 65.
118 Ibid., 66.
had been so sick that ‘all his sinowes shruncke together, hys teeth spoyled, his gummes rotten, and stinking’. Just twelve days later this man was now ‘whole and sound’, having somehow managed to heal himself. When asked how he had been cured the man responded by saying that he had taken the juice and sap of the leaves of a certain tree, claiming it to be ‘a singular remedie agaynst that disease’. After taking the sap for themselves the afflicted Frenchmen found themselves ‘delyvered of that sickenesse’. Not only did this natural medicine appear to cure scurvy, it also seemed to have a curative effect on other diseases, so much so that ‘there were some hadde beene diseased and troubled wyth the French Pockes foure or five yeares, and wyth thys drinke were cleane healed’. Cartier was so impressed with the results that he even stated that ‘if all the Phisitions of Mountpelier, and of Louaine, hadde beeene there wyth all the drugges of Alexandria, they woulde not have done so muche in one yeare, as that tree dydde in sixe dayes’.

Cartier’s voyage to the northern regions of America had thus illustrated a number of issues that would be central to the Virginia enterprise in the 1580s. They had shown that surviving on native foods was possible and that consuming them did not drastically alter European complexions. Cartier and his men had also shown this region of the Americas to be particularly temperate, abundant, and fertile, thus encouraging English explorers to focus their attention further south than they had done in the 1570s. Not only had the French voyages highlighted the European ability to survive prolonged periods of settlement in the Americas, they had also suggested that the region was home to a number of untapped, miraculous resources, such as the sap of the tree that appeared to cure scurvy and syphilis. Not only was the American environment safe for European bodies, it might even be good for

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119 Ibid., 67.
120 Ibid., 68.
them, a suggestion that was to be employed by English writers themselves in their descriptions of both the Virginian and New England landscapes. As the 1580s wore on, the English would become increasingly positive about their overseas exploits, with bodily discourse becoming central to the articulation of this new-found confidence.

**Bodily Discourse and Colonial Confidence**

In 1578 Sir Humphrey Gilbert, whose ruthless campaigns in Ireland had won him considerable favour at court, was awarded by Elizabeth I letters patent for the exploration and colonisation of the Americas.\(^{121}\) Gilbert was given the authority ‘to discover, finde, search out, and view such remote heathen and barbarous lands, countreys and territories not actually possessed of any Christian prince or people’ and to ‘inhabite or remaine there’.\(^{122}\) In effect, this restricted Gilbert’s exploration to the regions of North America that were outside the control of Spain to the south and outside the sporadic interest of the French to the north. After mustering enough investment Gilbert set sail for the Americas, taking possession of Newfoundland for the English in 1583. On this occasion, no attempt was made to establish a settlement in the region and after a few weeks Gilbert and his crew departed.\(^{123}\) As chapter two has established, this was to be Gilbert’s last adventure; on the journey home his fleet ran into bad weather with his ship eventually being ‘devoured and swallowed up of the Sea’.\(^{124}\) On Gilbert’s death, Sir Walter Ralegh, his half-brother, inherited the patent, directing his attention to a more southerly colonial site, Virginia.\(^{125}\)

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\(^{121}\) Rapple, “Humphrey Gilbert.”
\(^{123}\) Rapple, “Humphrey Gilbert.”
\(^{125}\) Miller, *Invested with Meaning*, 7.
Ralegh wished to capitalise on the patents as quickly as possible so he immediately began arranging an expedition to North America. In 1584 Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe set out with their crew to assess the lands of Virginia. Amadas was an official member of Ralegh’s household, and possibly learned navigational techniques from Thomas Harriot who would also become a central figure in English projects in America. Barlowe, while not a member of the household, had likely become a servant of Ralegh’s in as early as 1580 while both men were in Ireland.\textsuperscript{126} Barlowe’s account of the voyage was originally sent to Ralegh as a report and only published in 1589 in Hakluyt’s first edition of the \textit{Principal Navigations}.\textsuperscript{127} In stark contrast to the English assessment of Meta Incognita, Barlowe’s description of Virginia brimmed with praise for the region and optimism for future English colonial ventures. A large part of Barlowe’s commendation was focused on the abundance of the environment and on the temperate, tractable nature of the inhabitants. In many ways then this account of Virginia echoed the positive aspects of Cartier’s description of New France.

The expedition set sail on 27 April 1584, reaching the Americas in June of the same year. On sailing northwards from Florida to the intended destination of Virginia in July, Barlowe noted the sweetness of the air, stating that it was ‘so sweet, and so strong a smel, as if we had bene in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinde of odoriferous flowers’.\textsuperscript{128} This was a good start because as the physicians of the era taught, good air was central to good health.\textsuperscript{129} Following the sweet smells that filled their nostrils, Barlowe and the rest of the crew made their way to the coast, eventually finding a haven in which to drop

\textsuperscript{127} This text was first published in 1589 in Hakluyt’s first edition of the \textit{Principal Navigations} and then reprinted in a second edition in 1598-1600. Quotations and information for this text are taken from the second edition.
\textsuperscript{128} Barlowe, “The First Voyage,” 3:246.
\textsuperscript{129} Boorde, \textit{A Compendyous Regyment}, sigs. A2v-A3r.
anchor. After taking possession of the region for the queen, Barlowe began to survey the land.\textsuperscript{130} He was not disappointed. He found an abundance of grapes, growing both on the sand and on the ‘green soile on the hils’, the like of which, he claimed, could not be found anywhere else in the world. Moving further inland, abundance and plenty continued to define the Virginian landscape; Barlowe saw ‘goodly woodes fall of Deere, Conies, Hares, and Fowle, even in the middest of Summer in incredible abundance’. Unlike the ‘barren and fruitles’ woods of Bohemia and Moscovy, those of Virginia were home to ‘the highest and reddest Cedars of the world’, not to mention an array of ‘Pynes, Cypres, [and] Sassaphras’.\textsuperscript{131} Throughout his time in Virginia, Barlowe and the other English explorers were sent by the native king’s brother ‘bucks, conies, hares, fish the best of the world’, ‘divers kindes of fruites, melons, walnuts, cucumbers, gourdes, pease, and divers rootes, and fruites very excellent good’.\textsuperscript{132} In sharp contrast to Meta Incognita, the Virginian landscape provided the explorers with an abundance of delectable foods.

While Hortop and Phillips had found that native Mexican foods could have terrible effects on English bodies, causing weakness and severe sickness, this did not seem to be the case with the food of Virginia. At no point in his narrative did Barlowe mention sickness amongst his men or indeed the natives. In fact, he made a point to explain that this lack of ill health could be down to the bounty of the Virginian environment, describing how the natives had access to a variety of ‘wholesome, and medicinable hearbes and trees’\textsuperscript{133} In many ways Barlowe identified similarities between the English and the native Virginians. The abundant environment of Virginia included many components familiar to the English diet, from fowl

\textsuperscript{130} For more information on European ceremonies of possession see Patricia Seed, \textit{Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
\textsuperscript{131} Barlowe, “The First Voyage,” 3:246.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 3:248.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 3:249.
and game, to fruits and vegetables. In fact, Trudy Eden has argued that more than just providing some of the key elements of a typical English diet, the Virginian environment was home to an array of foods normally associated with an elite diet. As she suggests, melons and cucumbers ‘did not grace common gardens’, and nor did sturgeon, venison and domestic fowl find their way onto the plates of English commoners. By illustrating the luxury of the Virginian environment, then, Barlowe promised ‘self-improvement’ to people that did not consume these foods regularly.

Barlowe’s account also implied that native Virginian bodies were not all that different to English ones. While the Inuit had become sick from eating the rich foods of the English, the Algonquians appeared to have no such problem. When visiting the English ships, an Algonquian man was invited to dine with the foreign visitors. Being made to taste the wine and meat of the English, the local man declared he liked it ‘very wel’. Later in the voyage, after friendly relations had been established with the indigenous population, the native king’s brother, Granganimo, was also invited aboard the visitors’ ships to partake in English fare. He too ate English meat and bread and drank wine brought from Europe and ‘liked exceedingly thereof’. Not only was the Algonquian diet safe for English bodies, then, the English diet was also safe for native bodies.

As well as being physically analogous with the English, the native population, and particularly their approach to preparing food, was also described by Barlowe as being socially similar. In a lengthy passage Barlowe explained how he and the other English explorers were treated by Granganimo’s wife, recounting the many attributes that she shared with the ideal

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134 Ibid., 3:248.
135 Eden, “Food, Assimilation,” 34.
English woman; she ‘was very well favoured, of meane stature and very bashfull’, and ‘tooke great paines to see all things ordered in the best maner shee could, making great haste to dresse some meate for us [the English] to eate’. On the departure of the English, Granganimo’s wife even gave to them ‘supper halfe dressed, pottes and all’ to be taken back to the ships. This description of female deportment closely echoed what early modern conduct books had to say about the role of women in English society. Edmund Tilney, probably best known today as Master of the Revels to Elizabeth I, wrote a short treatise, published in 1568, explaining a woman’s duties in marriage. One character, Lady Julia, outlined the proper duties of a wife. She should be ‘shamefast’ as this ‘is the onely defence that nature hath given to women’ to ‘keepe their reputation’ and ‘preserve their chastity’. She ‘ought not to commaund the man, but to be always obedient’, be skilful ‘in dressing of meate’, and maintain ‘honestie of behaviour, and talke’. In appearing bashful and providing the English explorers with well-dressed meat, Granganimo’s wife was illustrating the Algonquians’ capability to live civilly. The expression of this civility came in the context of food, something that was to be an important theme in other English descriptions of Virginia.

Alongside this abundance of wholesome local produce and similar etiquette towards food preparation, Barlowe also explained to his readers that the Virginian landscape had the potential to provide plentiful supplies of English crops through the establishment of arable farming. Just as Jacques Cartier had found the soil of Canada very fertile, Barlowe too discovered a land where the ‘soil is the most plentifull, sweete, frutifull and wholesome of all the worlde’. Michael G. Moran has suggested that Barlowe’s focus on the fertile

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137 Ibid., 3:247 and 249.
138 Ibid., 3:249.
139 Edmund Tilney, A Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Mariage (London, 1568), sig. D7v.
140 Ibid., sigs. E2r-E4v.
environment reflected a conscious effort to connect Virginia with the Garden of Eden, illustrating that English needs could be met without work. Through portraying Virginia as a ‘new Eden’, so Moran argues, Barlowe made the colonisation of the region appear too easy, resulting in the under-equipping of future colonists, in terms of resources and knowledge. However, this analysis is an over-simplification of the English colonial process. As Michael Zuckerman argues, the exaggeration of effortlessness was both enticing and unsettling; emigrants worried that due to the apparent ease of living in the region they might ‘lapse into self-indulgence’. For this reason, colonists ‘careened from one extremity to the other’, in one breath claiming ‘effortless indolence’, in another priding themselves on their ‘exemplary industry’. It is clear that Barlowe wished to achieve a balance between illustrating Virginia’s natural advantages and its colonial potential. Although he identified a number of products that grew naturally in the Virginian environment, he also emphasised the fact that indigenous Algonquians farmed their land. As George Best had suggested in his discussion of the equatorial region of America, the lands were so fertile that crops could be harvested multiple times a year. Barlowe claimed that this was also possible in Virginia. He recounted the process by which the natives grew corn, stating that it ‘groweth three times in five moneths’. While some varieties of peas grew naturally in the wilderness, others were cultivated in Algonquian gardens. The native peoples did practice a type of farming but Barlowe made it inescapably clear that compared to English processes, Indian agriculture was much easier.

143 Ibid., 58.
145 Ibid., 127.
146 Best, A True Discourse, sig. c3r.
While the English struggled with adverse weather conditions and failed harvests at home, the Algonquians merely had to ‘cast the corne into the ground, breaking a little of the soft [t]urfe with a wodden mattock, or pick eare’ to produce excellent results. According to Barlowe, it was not just native corn that fared well in the fertile soil of Virginia. Crops that were familiar to the English also seemed to thrive in the North American environment. The natives already grew ‘both wheat and oates’ and the English explorers ‘prooved the soile’ themselves, sowing ‘some of oure [English] Pease in the ground’. Within ten days the English crop had apparently grown ‘fourteene ynches high’, proving the fertility of the soil and the ease of cultivation. The Virginian landscape thus offered English explorers and settlers two advantages: it naturally provided suitable food for the English in abundance, and it afforded colonists the opportunity to cultivate their own produce, thus ensuring the survival of the English in America.

These themes of abundance, fertility, physical similarity, and bodily health were also employed by other authors writing about their experiences in Virginia. Even before the return of Barlowe and Amadas, plans were already being made in England for a second voyage to the region in which the establishment of a permanent settlement was a key objective. On his return to England, Barlowe’s account of his time in Virginia was circulated in manuscript, most likely in an attempt to secure further investment for the second expedition. Shortly after Barlowe’s successful return home Ralegh was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I on 6 January 1585, inscribing on his seal the inscription ‘Lord and Governor of Virginia’. He managed to secure the queen’s support for the second voyage, being supplied with a ship and possibly

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148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Moran, Inventing Virginia, 34-61.
money from the Crown.\textsuperscript{151} In April 1585 a second fleet set sail from Plymouth for Virginia, this time under the command of Ralegh’s distant relative Sir Richard Grenville. Accompanying Grenville was Colonel Ralph Lane, who was to serve as the colony’s governor, and Thomas Harriot, a member of Ralegh’s household.\textsuperscript{152}

The failure of this attempt at settling Virginia is well known. Food shortages and the non-arrival of supplies from England led to the desertion of the colony and the return home of the English settlers with Francis Drake’s West Indian fleet in June 1586.\textsuperscript{153} On first glance, then, it would seem that this English attempt at settling in Virginia had gone much the same way as the attempts of the 1570s in Meta Incognita; the lack of appropriate food and a scarcity of English supplies had once again led to the abandonment of an English attempt at colonisation. A close analysis of the texts relating to this second voyage, however, paints a more complex picture. Harriot in particular retained in his narrative of the voyage that was published in 1588 the same sense of optimism and confidence in the project that had exuded from Barlowe’s account of the 1584 reconnaissance voyage. Once again, specific foodstuffs, dietary habits, and dining practices were at the centre of this colonial confidence.

Having matriculated at Oxford in 1577, Harriot quickly became known for being a skilled maker of mathematical and navigational instruments. Undoubtedly compelled by his interest in establishing English colonies in the Americas, Walter Ralegh employed the gifted Harriot to teach him and his circle of sea captains the science of navigation.\textsuperscript{154} Harriot, by all accounts, was an enthusiastic supporter of Ralegh’s attempts to plant the English in America.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{151} Quinn, \textit{Raleigh and the British Empire}, 63-64.
\item\textsuperscript{152} Moran, \textit{Inventing Virginia}, 61-97.
\item\textsuperscript{153} Quinn, \textit{England and the Discovery of America}, 283.
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Before his departure with the 1585 voyage, he studied the native language from the two Algonquian Indians who Barlowe and Amadas had brought to England in 1584, producing a phonetic language to represent Carolina Algonquian. After his return home to England, Harriot composed a ‘report’ of the voyage which was first published in 1588 and gave a glowing account of his time in Virginia.

From the preface to this work it is clear that Harriot’s positive interpretation of the voyage was not shared by all of his fellow explorers. According to Harriot, one of the principal reasons for publishing his account was to set the record straight and refute the ‘divers and variable reportes’ of the voyage that were both ‘slaughterous and shamefull’. Having been an important member of the voyage, Harriot had ‘seene and knowne more then the ordinarie’, giving him the authority to prove to his readers ‘howe injuriously’ the voyage had been ‘slaughtered’ by those of the company who had ‘maliciously not onelie spoken ill of their Governours; but for their sakes slandered the countrie it selfe’. It is therefore clear what Harriot hoped to achieve through this text; he wished to reassert confidence in the Virginia project and provide evidence that English colonisation in the region was sustainable. Through the consistent representation of the Virginian environment as abundant, fertile, and possessing the ability to produce temperate, healthy bodies, Harriot was, in many ways, able to achieve these aims. Food and diet thus became key rhetorical tools for bolstering and reinforcing confidence in a colonial project that seemed to be stalling.

155 Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Roanoke’s Achievement,” in European Visions, 5.
156 Another edition of Harriot’s text was published in 1590, with a third edition being included in Hakluyt’s Principal Navigations. To avoid confusion, citations for the text refer to the 1590 edition unless expressly stated.
157 Harriot, A Briefe and True Report, 5.
158 Ibid., 5-6.
Harriot began his report by listing the various ‘Marchantable Commodities’ that the Virginian environment could offer the colonists, from flax, hemp, pitch and tar, to copper, iron and pearls.\textsuperscript{159} It was not just, however, the profitable commodities of the region that interested Harriot; he also wished to highlight how the country could sustain English bodies, making permanent settlement in Virginia entirely feasible. In a large section of the text dedicated to this very argument, Harriot set out the various ‘commodities as Virginia is knowne to yeelde for victuall and sustenance of mans life’.\textsuperscript{160} Just as Barlowe had found Virginia to be home to foods that were comparable to those of an English diet, so too did Harriot. Using the Carolina Algonquian word, Harriot identified a number of foodstuffs that, despite being undoubtedly different and unique to the region, would still be familiar to his English readers. There were ‘okindgier’ which were ‘like to the Beanes in England’. There were ‘wickonzowr’, called by the English ‘peaze’, which were ‘in goodnesse of tast […] far better than our English peaze’.\textsuperscript{161} There were familiar sources of meat, such as deer and conies, and ‘good bread’ could be made from native roots such as ‘cocushaw’ and maize, while the region’s ‘hops’ and ‘mault’ could be used to brew those staples of the English diet, ‘good ale’ and ‘good Beere’.\textsuperscript{162}

Despite this air of familiarity, Harriot also stressed the differences of the native environment, describing a range of exotic foods and commodities that were relatively unknown in 1580s England. While travellers such as Hortop and Phillips had found some of the New World’s exotic foods highly dangerous, Harriot discovered that the unfamiliar produce of Virginia was easy to cultivate, harmless, and even invigorating. In particular, he

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 7-11.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid. 14-19.
reserved his praise for two commodities that would become central to English colonialism in the Americas: maize and tobacco. As the staple food of many native American communities, maize was not only integral to native survival but also became increasingly indispensable to English settlers. Michael LaCombe has argued that as English settlement became more permanent in North America, colonisers were forced out of necessity to try the native corn, despite their apparent concerns that it would not provide sufficient nourishment for their northerly European bodies.\(^{163}\) Harriot, on the other hand, espoused what he perceived to be the many virtues of maize, from its taste to its easy cultivation. As has already been suggested, Miles Phillips had found during his imprisonment in New Spain that maize was often only good enough for pigs. Harriot, in contrast, found that the Algonquians used maize to ‘maketh a very good bread’, a crucial constituent of the English diet.\(^ {164}\) Harriot also found that maize was extremely versatile, being used in ‘manifold waies’ for victuals.\(^ {165}\) Not only could it taste good and be used to produce an array of dishes, its cultivation was also effortless.

In much the same way as Barlowe had done, Harriot explained in great detail the processes needed to raise an abundant crop of maize. Compared to the cultivation of English ‘corn’, such as rye and wheat, that of the Virginians required ‘small labour and paines’ from farmers.\(^ {166}\) Unlike in England, the Algonquians never enriched the ground ‘with mucke, dounge or any other thing’ and nor did the ground require ploughing or digging as was the case in England. Instead, using wooden instruments that were comparable to hoes and

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\(^{163}\) LaCombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 60.


\(^{165}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{166}\) In the early modern period ‘corn’ was a generic term used to denote any type of cereal. In an English context, the word ‘corn’ most likely referred to wheat. When Harriot used the word ‘corn’ he differentiated between ‘our’ corn (presumably wheat) and the corn of ‘that countrey’, referring to the maize of Virginia. For more information on the word ‘corn’ see Duccio Bonavia, *Maize: Origin, Domestication, and its Role in the Development of Culture*, trans. Javier Flores Espinoza (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 18; For an example of Harriot’s use of the word ‘corn’ and for quotation see Harriot, *Briefe and True Report*, 15.
mattocks, the natives prepared their land for sowing by merely breaking ‘the upper part of the ground to rayse up the weedes, grasse, & old stubbes of corne stalkes with their rootes’. Alongside requiring little preparation, the cultivation of maize in Virginia also led to bumper crops. Harriot, however, did not just suggest that maize could be produced in abundance with ease; instead, he attempted to prove just how fertile the Virginian soil was by conducting his own scientific trials. In these experiments Harriot illustrated how an English acre in Virginia yielded a crop of American corn, beans, and peas, of two hundred London bushels, while in England only forty bushels of wheat would be yielded from the same acreage. According to this rate that Harriot had ‘made profe of’, he concluded that with ‘lesse then foure and twentie houres labour’ the Virginian soil could yield ‘victuall in a large proportion for a twelve moneth’. By proving that an abundance of food could be produced with very little effort, Harriot was showing his readers, a large number of whom were probably potential investors, that English settlement in Virginia was viable. The land was home to a variety of foods, both familiar and exotic, and the soil was fertile enough to easily sustain an English colonial population.

Harriot did more than just portray the Virginian land as abundant and fertile, however. He also attempted to allay many of the fears that English men and women back home might have regarding the native diet and its effects on English bodies which would in turn bolster the appeal of English emigration to Virginia. While Barlowe had indicated that in the short-term at least, Virginian food did not appear to have a detrimental effect on the English complexion, Harriot, having spent an extended period of time in the region, was better placed to highlight the long-term effects of these foods on settlers’ bodies. As Harriot explained, save

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167 Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 14.  
168 Ibid., 15.
for twenty days of the expedition, which represented a fraction of the ten-month stay, the English explorers ‘lived only by drinking water and by the victual of the countrey’. Harriot went on to say that due to much of the native food being ‘very strange’ to the English, it ‘might have been thought to have altered our [English] temperatures in such sort as to have brought us into some grievous and dangerous diseases’. And yet, as Harriot informed his readers, only four of the whole company, being one hundred and eight in total, died all that year, three of whom were already feeble, weak, and sickly persons. In fact, the men that knew these sickly members of the crew well ‘marveyled that they lived so long’. For these three infirm adventurers who had travelled alongside Harriot, their exposure to native food had prolonged their lives rather than hastening their deaths.

There was, however, another native product that may have contributed to preserving the health of the English colonisers, one which even seemed to have some miraculous properties. Just as Cartier had found a tree in Canada that could apparently cure the specific ills of his men, Harriot also came across a native plant that appeared to cure some of the most common illnesses of early modern England. This miraculous herb was tobacco. Called in Carolina Algonquian Uppowóc, tobacco had probably first come to the attention of English readers with Richard Eden’s translation of Peter Martyr’s Decades. In the early decades of the sixteenth century the European attitude towards tobacco was ambivalent. On the one hand, European commentators were quick to emphasise tobacco’s use in diabolical

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169 This expedition to Virginia, according to the account of the colony’s governor, Ralph Lane, lasted from 17 August 1585 until 18 June 1586. Information taken from Ralph Lane, “An Account of the Particularities of the Imployments of the English Men Left in Virginia by Sir Richard Greenevill,” in Principal Navigations, 3:255; Quotation taken from Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 31.

170 Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 31.

171 Ibid., 32.

172 Ibid., 32.

Amerindian rituals, but on the other balanced this negative opinion with the belief that the native herb had significant medicinal potential. Peter Mancall has identified a key European text that attempted to perpetuate a positive interpretation of tobacco’s use, praising its virtues and spreading this message as widely as possible: Nicholas Monardes’s medical history of the Western Hemisphere. Translated into English in 1577, Monardes’s text set out a dizzying array of tobacco’s ‘greate vertues’, from curing ‘griefes’ of the head, stomach, and breast, to alleviating tooth ache, rheumatism, kidney stones, bad breath, and chilblains.

It is clear that Harriot was influenced by Monardes’s text, citing it in his own work in relation to sassafras and cassia bark. Aside from these two explicit references, Harriot’s description of tobacco also echoed that of Monardes. According to Harriot, tobacco could ‘purgeth superfluous fleame & other grosse humors’, opening ‘all the pores & passages of the body’, thus preserving ‘the body from obstructions’. For the cold, wet, phlegmatic complexion of the northerly English, smoking tobacco seemed to represent one way of achieving a more temperate, balanced body. Indeed, through the continual use of tobacco, so Harriot suggested, English bodies were ‘notably preserved in health’, and free from the ‘greevous diseases wherewithall wee in England are oftentimes afflicted’. Not only would tobacco become an important cash crop, sustaining the English colonies and boosting the economy back home, it increasingly became seen as a panacea throughout much of Europe.

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174 Ibid., 651.
175 Ibid., 656.
176 Nicholas Monardes, Joyfull Nevves out of the Newe Founde Worlde (London, 1577), fols. 35-37.
178 Harriot, Briefe and True Report, 16.
179 Ibid., 16.
commodity, but also one that would lead the English on a path to temperance and bodily health. Tobacco had thus been transformed from a plant which provoked fear and revulsion amongst Europeans due to its connection with Native American rituals, to one that was considered a cure-all for early modern European ills.

In a concerted effort to build confidence and optimism in the project back home, Harriot also considered how native attitudes towards food could help validate the English colonial project. In the 1590 edition of the report, which included de Bry’s engravings of the local people, the Algonquians’ capacity for civility is portrayed through the lens of their eating habits. As Janet Whatley has argued in her study of Jean de Léry’s account of his time living amongst the Tupi in Brazil, ‘civility itself is structured in alimentary terms’. This, it would appear, was no different for Harriot. But unlike Léry, who found his own notions of civility stretched to breaking point due to famine, quarrels over the Eucharist, and the fact that the natives practised cannibalism, Harriot saw Algonquian alimentary processes as an indication of their potential to achieve English civility.

Native techniques of food preparation, in particular, allowed for a degree of comparison between the English and the Virginians. While the Inuit ate their food raw, the Algonquians used cooking techniques that would have been recognisable to Harriot’s readers. The natives broiled, roasted, and boiled their fish, taking, as the caption that accompanied the picture claimed, ‘great heede that they bee not burnt’.


183 Harriot, Briefe and True Report, pl. XLIx.
galliemaufrye’, meaning a medley or hodgepodge, similar to the pottages that the physician Andrew Boorde claimed were used more by the English than the rest of Christendom.\textsuperscript{184} These images and descriptions were, however, not merely an attempt by Harriot and de Bry to appropriate the natives into a framework of European civility. In much the same way that the natives’ nakedness was used to point to a type of primitivism that could easily be replaced with civility, these images of Algonquian food preparation also reflected a social structure that, while undoubtedly primitive by European standards, seemed to offer promising foundations for the building of English civility. Although they cooked their food, they did so outside, contrasting sharply with how cooking took place in England. Whether in the well-equipped and large kitchens of royalty and the nobility, or over the fire in the main room of the humble houses of those at the lower end of the social spectrum, cooking in civilised England took place indoors.\textsuperscript{185} The image of the broiling fish therefore reflects a curious, and potentially purposeful, mix of the primitive and the civilised, a mix that was indicative of the English understanding of native Americans in the early decades of English contact and colonisation (Fig. 11). This perception is also reflected in the image of the native pottage. In their earthen pots the natives stewed unfamiliar local produce such as maize, once again building an outdoor fire for the cooking (Fig. 12). Men and women also seemed to share some aspects of the food preparation process, contrasting with how cooking took place in most English homes.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., pl. XV; Boorde, A Compendyous Regyment, sig. E1r.
\textsuperscript{185} Alison Sim, Food & Feast in Tudor England (Stroud: The History Press, 2005), 16.
Figure 11. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving “The Browyllinge of their Fishe over the Flame” (c. 1590).\(^{186}\)

Figure 12. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “Their Seetheynge of their Meate in Earthen Pottes” (c. 1590).\(^{187}\)

\(^{186}\) De Bry, “The Browyllinge of their Fishe over the Flame,” in *Brieve and True Report*, pl. XIII.

\(^{187}\) De Bry, “Their Seetheynge of their Meate in Earthen Pottes,” in *Brieve and True Report*, pl. XV.
The prolific writer Gervase Markham suggested in his popular book, *Countrey Contentments, or The English Huswife*, that the most important aspect of being an English housewife was the acquisition of ‘a perfect skill and knowledge in Cookery’. This skill was so important that without it, a woman would only be fulfilling half her marriage vows as ‘she may love and obey, but shee cannot serve and keepe him with that true dutie which is ever expected’. These clear gender divisions in food preparation appear to be somewhat blurred in the de Bry engravings, once again highlighting the current incivility of the Algonquians. It was the men who broiled the fish, and while the women tended to the stew, the men stoked and maintained the fire (Figs. 11-12).

This blending of current primitivism with potential future civility is also illustrated in the descriptions and depictions of native eating habits and table manners. Once again, elements of appropriate English manners are displayed alongside more crude and underdeveloped native habits. In early modern England, table manners were of the utmost importance, principally amongst the elite and socially aspirational. In particular, handbooks for children taught the necessity of good table manners. Children, in order to grow into civil adults, were encouraged to respect their elders at table and eat with grace, modesty, and cleanliness. One aspect of this inclination towards cleanliness was the use of tablecloths that would be made from coarse to very fine linen depending on the household. One author of a handbook aimed at children, Francis Segar, highlighted the importance of the tablecloth, warning children that ‘Disshes with measure thou oughtest to fyll / Els mayste thou happen

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188 Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments, or The English Huswife* (London, 1623), 57. The popularity of the book is attested to by the fact that it went through nine printings between 1615 and 1683. This information is derived from a search of the English Short Title Catalogue, last accessed 27 November, 2016, [http://estc.bl.uk/F/RMUULVCU3VFBJEG7BKH287KUB735H6CD5AHJCGY3851DGR511-15264?func=short-sub](http://estc.bl.uk/F/RMUULVCU3VFBJEG7BKH287KUB735H6CD5AHJCGY3851DGR511-15264?func=short-sub).


190 Sim, *Food & Feast*, 106.
thy service to spyll / On theyr [the children’s parents] apparel Or els on the cloth / whiche for
to does wolde move them [parents] to wroth’.\textsuperscript{191}

![Image](image.jpg)

\textit{Figure 13. Theodore de Bry, copper engraving, “Their Sitting at Meate” (c. 1590).}\textsuperscript{192}

Like the English, the Algonquians also seemed to appreciate the necessity of dining upon a
cloth. The natives would ‘lay a matt made of bents on the grownde and sett their meate on
the mids therof’.\textsuperscript{193} Despite this, they lacked the most important element of the English, and
indeed European, dining experience: the table. Sitting outside on the ground, their legs
splayed open, would have undoubtedly been considered uncouth by English standards (Fig.
13).

In one important respect, however, Harriot presented the eating habits of the native
Virginians as superior to those of the English. In the caption that accompanied the image of
the natives eating, Harriot was keen to emphasise the Virginian propensity for moderation.
According to Harriot, the Algonquians were ‘verye sober in their eatinge, and trinkinge, and

\textsuperscript{191} Segar, \textit{Schoole of Vertue}, sig. B2r.
\textsuperscript{192} De Bry, “Their Sitting at Meate,” in \textit{Briefe and True Report}, pl. XVI.
\textsuperscript{193} Harriot, \textit{Briefe and True Report}, pl. XVI.
consequentlye verye longe lived because they doe not oppress nature’. In the humoralist thinking of early modern Europe, moderation in food and drink was seen to be key to maintaining good health and humoral balance. The physician William Bullein provided his readers with a medical explanation for why eating excessive amounts was likely to cause sickness. Eating too much, especially of varied types of food, inhibited digestion bringing ‘much paine to the stomack’ and engendering ‘many diseases’. Another physician, the previously mentioned Thomas Elyot, went as far as to suggest that ‘sondry meates, beynge dyvers in substance and qualitie, eaten at one meale, is the greatest ennemy to helth’. Not only was eating various types of food detrimental to a person’s health due to the different lengths of time it took each food to be digested, Elyot considered it a particular vice and abuse of the English who engaged in ‘the contynuall gourmandyse & dayely fedynge on sondry meates’, proving that ‘the spirite of gluttony’ was ‘triumphynge’ in the realm. The Algonquians, by moderating what they ate, preserved their health, living longer and more in accordance with nature. Over-eating, however, was more than just a cause of ill-health, it was also an expression of incivility and, in extreme cases, outright debauchery. According to Erasmus, children must avoid putting ‘so muche in their mouthes that theyr chekes be blowne up and swell on every side like beastes’ as this was a sure sign of gluttony and, indeed, incivility.

The pamphleteer Philip Stubbes, however, went much further in his diatribe against what he perceived to be the various vices of the English. Avoiding greediness was not just a question of courtesy but one of piety. In his popular and often reprinted pamphlet of 1583,  

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194 Ibid.  
196 Elyot, Castel of Helth, fol. 45.  
197 Erasmus, Civilitie of Childehode, sig. D2v.
The Anatomie of Abuses, Stubbes lists the sin of gluttony alongside those of ‘drunkennesse, thiefte, murther, swearing’ and ‘whoredom’. As he suggested, ‘the rich glutton in the Gospel, for his riotous feastings & proposterous living was condemned to the fire of hel’. Stubbes was a fervent Protestant and instrumental in reformist debates surrounding the incomplete nature of the English Reformation. Just as debates surrounding decadent clothing were used to argue for greater religious reform, so too were arguments that stated an English propensity for excess and the deadly sin of gluttony. Not only were the native Virginians illustrating dietary restraint for the purposes of maintaining good health, then, they were also highlighting their purity and innocence. Within this context, these debates surrounding religious reform were being played out in early English accounts of America. By portraying the natives as moderate eaters, entirely disengaged from the sin of gluttony, writers such as Harriot helped shape debates back home about the form that religious settlement should take. English religion should be void of excess, decadence, and luxury, with the savage, yet simple, native Algonquians illustrating the possibilities and advantages of living a pure, natural, and innocent life.

Harriot had thus established a clear picture of the Virginian environment and its local inhabitants. It was a land of abundance and fertility, where familiar and exotic crops could be found in equal measure. It was a region of the world that would suit the temperaments of the early modern English body, providing ample appropriate nutrition and miracle herbs such as tobacco that could cure stubborn English ailments. Harriot had shown that English bodies in Virginia could survive and even thrive, encouragement indeed for readers back home who

198 Stubbes, Anatomie of Abuses, sig. M7r.
199 Ibid., sig. I2r.
were thinking about making the voyage to the new lands. The native Algonquians, through their cooking and eating habits, had also proven themselves capable of receiving English civility. They cooked their food, sat together to dine, and exhibited alimentary moderation—encouraging signs that raising them to civility would be a straightforward, even effortless, task. This colonial narrative of abundance, health, and ease was summed up by Harriot in his concluding passage; in Virginia the air was ‘temperate and holsome, the soyle so fertile’ and for future settlers the land promised ‘victuals that is excellent good and plentie enough’.\(^{201}\)

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In 1602 John Brereton published his account of his voyage to the north part of Virginia, a region that is known today as New England. In this text, the success of Harriot’s rhetoric, articulated for the first time over a decade earlier, is obvious. Like Harriot, Brereton found the New England environment full of fare, from ‘Cranes, Hernshawes, Bitters, Geese, Mallards, Teales and other Fowles’, to ‘great store of Pease’ and ‘an abundance of Strawberries & other berries’.\(^{202}\) Like Harriot, Brereton and his fellow explorers undertook agricultural trials that produced stunning results, sowing ‘Wheat, Barley, Oats, and Pease, which in fourteene daies were sprung up nine inches and more’.\(^{203}\) Like Harriot, Brereton found a climate of extraordinary ‘holsomnesse and temperature’ in which he found his English body ‘much fatter and in better health’ than when he left England, with no hint of any disease nor sickness.\(^{204}\) Like Harriot, Brereton found the native inhabitants ‘exceeding courteous, gentle of disposition, and well conditioned, excelling all others’.\(^{205}\) It is extraordinary that a text running

\(^{201}\) Harriot, *Briefe and True Report*, 32.

\(^{202}\) Brereton, *Briefe and True Relation*, 5-6.

\(^{203}\) Ibid., 6.

\(^{204}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{205}\) Ibid., 10.
to just fourteen pages in quarto format could include so many of the rhetorical elements that had first been seen in Barlowe’s and Harriot’s work.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, and despite the clear failings of the early Roanoke colony, the idea of Virginia as the perfect region for English settlement was entrenched, being articulated through a bodily discourse that had food, diet, and dining at its core. This type of discourse had first been utilised in the 1560s as a way of explaining colonial and explorative failure. This negative attitude towards the American environment, and its effects on both English and native bodies, continued into the 1570s with the exploration of Meta Incognita, with the lack of appropriate food and the supposedly bestial dining practices of the Inuit contributing significantly to the abandonment of the project. Whether employed positively or negatively, then, food, dining, and bodily health became barometers through which sixteenth-century English explorers and colonists measured the success of their projects. In Meta Incognita bodily discourse confirmed English suspicions that settlement was impossible, while in Virginia it became a rhetorical device used to instil optimism and colonial confidence at home. By the end of the sixteenth century, with the abandonment of colonial projects in the Far North and a new focus on building English settlements in the more temperate region of Virginia, Harriot’s positive understanding of the body and the American environment triumphed, leaving behind the negativity of the 1560s and 1570s.

The victory of Harriot’s rhetoric of abundance, temperance, and health, alongside an apparent English amnesia on the failure of the Roanoke colony, would, however, have a detrimental effect on English colonialism well into the seventeenth century. In the early years of the Jamestown colony, a settlement that had arguably been built on the rhetoric of the Roanoke years, food, and the colonisers’ ability to source it, played a critical role. In the winter
of 1609, following an uncharacteristically dry spell, the colonists found themselves facing famine. During this period, now known as ‘The Starving Time’, the majority of the settlers succumbed to starvation, being forced to eat unsavoury foods, even boiling and eating their shoes and other leather goods. The experiences of the Jamestown colonists during the winter of 1609–1610 illustrates how fragile the positive rhetoric of bodily discourse was, but it also highlights how food and its centrality to health remained at the heart of the English colonial experience in America.

LaCombe, Political Gastronomy, 52-53.
Conclusion

In 1612 the Virginia Company, in a bid to drum up financial support for the struggling Jamestown colony that had been blighted since its establishment by failed harvests and hostile natives, launched a lottery. In order to illustrate the benefits of playing the lottery Robert Johnson, a principal member of the Virginia Company, wrote a brief history of the colony.¹ Despite the earlier setbacks, Johnson argued that in terms of useful commodities and profitable trade ‘no Countrie under heaven’ could go beyond Virginia. Johnson bolstered this assertion, which seemed to fly in the face of English experience in the region, by referring to the ‘sundrie discourses’ that proved Virginia was a land of abundance and rich commodities.² Johnson, then, relied on the rhetoric of the earliest English voyagers to Virginia, such as Arthur Barlowe and Thomas Harriot, to construct a positive image of the region and colony that would convince English men and women to play the newly established lottery.

Indeed, many Englishmen writing about Virginia from 1607 onwards continued to employ the colonial rhetoric that had been developed, adapted, adjusted, and eventually synthesised during the sixteenth century. Just as men such as Barlowe, Harriot, Hakluyt, and Brereton had done in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, writers commenting on Virginia after the establishment of Jamestown defined their project as one that combined worldly gain with spiritual glory. Following the suggestions of the explorers and colonisers of the late sixteenth century, those involved in the Jamestown project, despite apparent evidence to the contrary, also continued to characterise the Virginian environment as one of

plenty and abundance, its people as simple and innocent with the capacity and desire to receive English civility and culture.³

This English colonial discourse, however, was not produced in isolation, nor was it created in direct response to the particular needs and concerns of the Virginia enterprise of the 1580s. In fact, and as this thesis has shown, it was the result of decades of translating and transforming images of America that first came from continental Europe, of utilising and adapting intellectual and cultural frameworks of understanding to explain the existence of this new and shockingly different world, of experiencing and responding to both English colonial failure and success, and of incorporating the peoples and environments of America into the mental world of early modern England in an attempt to persuade English men and women to make the difficult decision to cross the Atlantic in search of a new life. It was in the sixteenth century that the English first grappled with what the discovery of 1492 meant for them, both in terms of how they came to understand and define the new lands across the Atlantic and how they came to craft their own colonial approach that would challenge their rivals and restore the English realm to economic and political health. The sixteenth-century English involvement with America, although at times sporadic and limited to a small group of interested parties, was foundational, establishing and defining the ways in which English colonialism would proceed in the New World.

This thesis is essentially located in debates surrounding the reception of America into English thought and how this reaction to the New World shaped English colonial practice.

³ One of the most well-known accounts of the early Jamestown colony that conforms to this narrative style of combining the disaster of reality with the positivity of the sixteenth-century rhetoric is that of John Smith. While reiterating many of the rhetorical strategies of earlier English texts on Virginia, Smith nonetheless details the struggles, both personal and general, of the first permanent English colony; John Smith, The Generall Historie of Virginia (London, 1624).
Unlike earlier scholarship in this area, this thesis has shown that the sixteenth century was critical to the formation of English colonial discourse in an American context. It was in the sixteenth century that important debates surrounding colonial legitimacy, the function of English colonies, and the practicalities of settlement in the new and exotic lands of the New World first came to the fore. As chapter one illustrated, theories on Amerindian origins that were first developed in the sixteenth century became crucial tools of colonial legitimisation, proving Elizabeth I’s lawful title to the lands of North America through her genealogical connection with the Welsh Prince Madoc and being used as evidence for the existence of a Northwest Passage to Asia that could be secured by the English. As chapter three highlighted, the appearance of native Americans, particularly in the regions of Newfoundland and Virginia, also validated the English colonial enterprise. By proving, in their own minds at least, that the natives had the potential, and indeed desire, to receive English civility and religion, commentators and pro-colonialists attempted to convince their readers that English settlement in America was both necessary for the spiritual health of the indigenous population and desirable for those back home that wished to recreate English society in the lands of North America.

It was also in the sixteenth century that ideas about what exactly English colonies in the New World should look like were first articulated. The development of a colonial ideology in which godliness and material gain became intertwined objectives was the result of a decades-long process of exploration followed by assessment and adaptation. As chapter two has shown, in the 1560s and 1570s English aspiration in America was centred on economic gain, firstly at the expense of their Spanish rivals through acts of piracy, secondly through the English search for a Northwest Passage to the riches of Asia, and thirdly through English attempts to exploit the natural resources of the lands they explored. As each of these
attempts at securing New World wealth were frustrated, English pro-colonists began to adapt their methods, championing instead a colonial approach that had godliness at its centre, with commercial gain now being interpreted as a beneficial consequence of the glorification of God. This colonial mixture of godly settlement and material exploitation, as many scholars have shown, would become intrinsic aspects of the early English colonies in North America, whether in Virginia, Plymouth, or Massachusetts Bay, shaping both the economic and cultural life of these early settlements.⁴

The practicalities of English settlement in the New World also drew much comment from those writing about America in the sixteenth century. English interest in the American environment and American peoples was by no means purely academic. These early observations of the American landscape helped construct rhetorical strategies that would have far-reaching consequences, confirming that English settlement was not possible in the far north of Meta Incognita and establishing the belief that the more southerly regions of North America were home to an abundant and fertile environment that would easily support English colonies. As chapter four has illustrated, a crucial aspect of this strategy was establishing whether or not English bodies could survive in the foreign lands of America. In the explorations of Meta Incognita in the 1570s, the dietary practices of the Inuit had illustrated just how difficult English settlement in this region would be: the Inuit ate raw and spoiled meat, foods that sixteenth-century English men and women considered deeply unhealthy and corporeally corrupting, while the local environment provided little sustenance for visiting explorers, and provisions from England were difficult to maintain in the face of

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⁴ Scholars who have analysed the competing and complementary aspects of this discourse in the context of the seventeenth-century English colonies include Greene, Pursuits of Happiness; Kupperman, Settling with the Indians; Wright, Religion and Empire.
hostile seas and even more hostile local inhabitants. With the growing acceptance that successful English settlement in the Far North was unlikely, those Englishmen wishing to establish colonies in the New World largely abandoned their plans of finding a Northwest Passage to Asia, instead turning their focus to the more southerly regions of North America where they hoped prosperous trading links with the indigenous peoples could be created. With this new focus came a newly found optimism towards the American environment. Instead of finding dearth and want, as had been the case in Meta Incognita, explorers involved in the early Virginia project found a land that they believed to be abundant and filled with suitable foods that would complement the natural English constitution. This discourse of abundance became highly pervasive and undoubtedly contributed to the continuing English efforts to plant a colony in Virginia after the disastrous failure at Roanoke. The English belief in American abundance would go on to have a detrimental impact on the early English colonies of North America where food was often scarce and difficult to source. The colonists of Jamestown had been convinced by the writers of the 1580s that sourcing appropriate food in Virginia was simple and required little effort, a belief that would lead the colony to the brink of starvation in 1609 and to a re-evaluation of their understanding of abundance.5

Sixteenth-century English portrayals of the American environment and its perceived effects on both English and indigenous bodies, thus played a significant role in dictating which regions of the New World were suitable for English settlement, advocating the abandonment of colonial plans in the Far North and the concentration of colonial effort further south, thus cementing English patterns of colonisation in the Americas for decades to come.

As well as establishing the centrality of the sixteenth century in the development of English colonial discourse, this thesis has also examined the complex process by which this discourse was created. By challenging the often stated assertion that English understandings of America were in some way static, or even non-existent, during the majority of the sixteenth century, this thesis has illustrated how English beliefs about America, and indeed the English approach to exploration and settlement in the region, were highly volatile and changeable, being determined by an ever-fluctuating set of factors. As this thesis has shown, early English representations of America were a complex composite of various cultural influences, both consciously and unconsciously employed. English understandings of bodily health, the dispersal of mankind, the history of the British Isles, correct religious observation, and contemporary worries about moral decay, the rise of luxury, and economic decline were all assembled and redeployed in the context of English colonial activity in the Americas. Through this process of cultural bricolage, those men attempting to make sense of the new and unknown American environment employed a diverse set of cultural tools and materials that were available to them in the sixteenth century. These cultural instruments allowed English commentators to variously explain the existence of the Amerindians in a way that was beneficial to their colonial objectives, to confirm that the lands of North America would not have a detrimental effect on English bodies, both in terms of climate and diet, and to make claims about the potential civility of native peoples based on their behaviour and appearance. Early English understandings of the New World were, therefore, very much a product of

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6 Joyce Chaplin has suggested that the period 1500 to 1585 represented a distinct phase of English colonisation, allowing for little discussion of change across the sixteenth century. Chaplin, Subject Matter, 16-21. Mary Fuller has argued that between 1576-1624 English accounts of America were characterised by a rhetorical strategy that attempted to recuperate failure. This analysis therefore fails to examine the many differences between accounts written about Meta Incognita and Virginia. Fuller, Voyages in Print. Other scholars have neglected the sixteenth century English approach to America or begun their analysis in the 1580s with the Roanoke voyages. For this scholarship see the introduction, 21-23.
sixteenth-century English culture. The portrayals of America and Americans found in English print, and their subsequent use in the formation of English colonial discourse, not only reflected the ways in which English commentators understood exotic others but also how they understood themselves and their own society.

By framing the early English approach to America as one of cultural *bricolage*, moreover, this thesis has effectively traced the myriad changes taking place in English representations of the New World across the sixteenth century, illustrating the dynamism and flexibility of early English portrayals of America. As the cultural apparatus of the sixteenth-century English changed, so too did their understanding of America. This changing cultural equipment was shaped by events taking place in both England and the regions of America that the English set out to explore. As chapter two has shown, the development of a distinctly English colonial discourse reflected these reciprocal influences. The English move towards Protestantism and the establishment of the Church of England unsurprisingly affected the English view of America. In the early 1550s, when the Protestant Edward VI sat on the throne, Richard Eden advocated a godly approach to colonialism in the Americas that looked towards Spain for ideas on how this could be implemented but without suggesting direct emulation and alliance with their Catholic rival. On the accession of Mary I, this attitude shifted. With the return of Catholicism to the realm and with the marriage of the queen to the Spanish Phillip, Eden began to suggest instead that the English should seek to emulate and work alongside the Spanish in America, focusing their attention on the regions of the new continent that were not of interest to the increasingly powerful Imperial Spain. In the 1560s and 1570s, when English involvement in the Americas was largely characterised by failure and disappointment, English writers began to rethink their approach, worrying that God had deserted them. This providential understanding of English colonialism encouraged those men who were
interested in establishing permanent English overseas settlements to put godliness at the heart of their programme, arguing that great riches would undoubtedly follow thanks to God’s good favour. Changing domestic religious concerns thus collided with English experience in America, being incorporated into English understandings of the New World and early English plans for colonisation.

Domestic economic concerns also infiltrated English accounts of America. As chapter three highlighted, the idea that the naked Indians of America would become consumers of English cloth, a trade that had been dwindling from the 1560s onwards, became particularly potent. By identifying what they perceived to be a native desire for English civility, English colonisers connected their observations of indigenous peoples with the economic distress taking hold back home. The idea that English colonialism could stem poverty in England was also identified in chapter four. The belief that the Virginian environment could sustain a large English population was used to convince people to make the journey across the Atlantic, promising a better life than the one endured back in England where failed harvests and scarce food supplies were a common occurrence.

The realities of English exploration in the New World also directly narrated the English colonial experience throughout the sixteenth century. As chapter four argued, English cultural understandings of the body, both in terms of corporeal expressions of morality and bodily health, were used to explain failure and validate projects in particular regions. The use of this bodily discourse fluctuated throughout the sixteenth century, being adapted to meet the demands of different explorative and colonial contexts. In the early years of English exploration in the Americas, years that were characterised by hostile environments, deteriorating relations with the Spanish in the Caribbean, and food that was perceived to be
both inappropriate and insufficient to sustain English settlers, native bodies, diets, and natural resources reflected the disappointment and failures of early projects, justifying their abandonment. This attitude began to change markedly in the mid-1580s as the new-found confidence of English explorers and colonisers encouraged them to view Indian bodies as healthy and productive and the local environment as fertile and abundant. Sixteenth-century English representations of America and Americans were thus the product of a set of ever-changing cultural influences, incorporating fluctuating political, economic, and religious realities and vacillating English assessments of American lands.

Early English portrayals of the New World were also indebted to ideas and images of America from continental European texts and to influences from British history, medieval ethnography, and classical geography. Accounts of the New World that appeared in English print, therefore, were highly inter-textual and attuned to a wider European context of exploration and colonisation. By selectively appropriating and manipulating continental European images of America, alongside classical and medieval theories that attempted to explain the existence of exotic and foreign peoples and environments, English writers transformed these images in order to meet the demands of their own projects.

As chapter one highlights, ideas relating to human diversity, monstrosity, and climate that were first articulated in an American context by Spanish and French explorers in the early decades of the sixteenth century, were appropriated and remodelled by the English to help validate their burgeoning colonial programme. Just as continental European writers had found these ideas useful for framing their colonial projects, so too did the English. The theory that America was Atlantis, while used by the Spanish as a means of bolstering their American conversion project, was employed by English writers to validate their beliefs in the existence
of a Northwest Passage to Asia. While the unravelling of classical climate theory by early explorers in America could be used to comment on the incomplete nature of early modern European knowledge and the errors of classical geographers, English explorers used this change in understanding to manipulate ideas about climate in an attempt to prove the habitability of the Far North. Continuing the French and Spanish trend of portraying indigenous Americans as wild and savage, an idea that was undoubtedly influenced by classical and medieval ethnography, those writing about English exploits in America moulded this image into a range of useful, multi-functional forms, both positive and negative. While continental European images of America undoubtedly circulated in sixteenth-century England, then, they were often transformed and adapted to meet the specific needs and objectives of an emerging English colonial discourse.

The influence of other competing colonial nations on English ideas about America could also be far more divisive, leading to complete divergences rather than selective appropriations. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in the deteriorating relationship between England and Spain in the late sixteenth century. As Anglo-Spanish hostility grew with the accession of Elizabeth I, Spanish colonialism increasingly became a target of English jealousy and outright criticism. The English began to define their colonial programme in opposition to that of the Spanish model, both implicitly and explicitly, highlighting how they, unlike the Spanish, could conquer through kindness, maintain control of native populations, and bring about their true conversion to Christianity. English writers, in texts both directly and indirectly related to European overseas projects, critiqued the Spanish approach to colonisation, claiming that the Spanish conquistadors’ only motive for conquest was the gaining of Indian treasure. While the Spanish, in the minds of the sixteenth-century English at least, tortured and murdered huge numbers of Amerindians in pursuit of this impious and
avaricious goal, English pro-colonists put forward their own vision of colonialism in the New World in which securing control of native peoples would be achieved through kindness rather than cruelty. While the Spanish undertook conquest and colonisation in a bid to enrich themselves monetarily, the English increasingly claimed that spiritual enrichment was their only colonial objective. The development of a distinct English colonial discourse, which reached maturity at the end of the sixteenth century, was therefore, in part, a result of English imperial aspiration, born from the rivalry between England and Spain.

The story of early English colonialism in America is thus undoubtedly one that must be read within an international framework. The history of the British Empire is not one of exceptionalism and national independence, but one of heated rivalry and, at times, cultural interdependence. English colonial discourse was the product of a century’s long engagement with the colonialism of other nations, the transference and adaptation of ideas and theories first proposed in continental Europe, and the concerted English effort to carve out a colonialism that was substantially different to that of their European rivals. This resulted in a set of English images of America that both converged with and diverged from those created by other colonising European nations. English explorers and colonisers appropriated images of America that they found helpful for achieving their own colonial ambitions, while simultaneously creating their own images that allowed for the condemnation of the Spanish approach and the celebration of their own.

This thesis has, in many ways, also affirmed the New Historicist notion that texts are, in fact, culture. Following this principle, this research has uncovered what Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher have referred to as the ‘cultural matrix’ out of which these sixteenth-century English texts on America emerged. This nexus consisted of a number of important
influences that were both consciously and unconsciously alluded to. The English writers of the sixteenth century were variously influenced by their own political, economic, and religious concerns and loyalties, by what they read and knew of the Spanish conquest and French explorations of America, by what they had learned from their fellow countrymen about the New World, and by their own entrenched beliefs about medicine, geography, morality, and piety. English travel narratives, colonial histories, and promotional texts thus provide a profound insight into the workings of early modern English culture and its textual imprint. These texts offer a unique insight into the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and religious change converged in sixteenth-century colonial encounters, helping to define colonial thought and shape responses to native peoples and environments. In contrast to some of the current scholarship that has defined these texts as largely rhetorical and propagandistic, this thesis has shown that while these elements are undoubtedly critical to our understanding of these texts, they also unconsciously reflect the anxieties, priorities, and disappointments of sixteenth-century English colonialists. As this thesis has shown, then, these texts represent compelling cultural sites where rhetorical strategies, inter-textual connections, and cultural and social priorities intersect. By analysing these English-penned texts alongside translations of key continental European works, this thesis has complicated this cultural matrix still further, illustrating how English authors and colonisers engaged with the colonial tactics of other European nations, choosing to reinforce some of their ideas on America while rejecting others. This thesis, then, has illustrated the fresh insights that can be derived from well-studied historical texts when approached in an innovative way. By utilising both English and translated European texts, and by identifying the multiple cultural influences involved in their creation, this research has established a more complex and nuanced picture of English experiences in America during the sixteenth century.
This thesis, although uncovering the rich variety of cultural forces that impacted upon the early English approach to America, has not assessed how this process continued into the later period of English colonialism in North America, nor how it developed in other colonial contexts such as Ireland, the Caribbean, India, Africa, and Australasia. With many historical debates now focused on an extra-European world, and on the multitude of cultural encounters between varied historical actors, there remain numerous avenues of research in which to explore the issues that have been raised in this thesis. From examining the cultural connections between English portrayals of the East and the West, to analysing the interplay between New World reality and Old World rhetoric during the period of sustained English colonialism in America from 1607 onwards, a number of important areas for future research have emerged from this project that will continue to enrich our understanding of the often complex, diverse, and fluctuating ways that the English, and later British, responded to cultural encounters with foreign peoples and foreign environments, and constructed theories of colonialism and imperialism.

In summary, by analysing this earlier era of English contact with the New World, this thesis has illuminated the ways in which America was incorporated into sixteenth-century English thought, modifying and enhancing our understanding of the development, dissemination and justification of English colonial ideology in an American context. It has illustrated the centrality of the sixteenth century in the development of English colonial thought, showing how this earlier period of English exploration and settlement was in fact foundational, shaping the way in which English colonialism would proceed in the Americas for decades to come. Alongside these important insights, this thesis has also transformed our understanding of the origins of the British Empire, placing it within an international framework of competition, rivalry, and shared cultural heritage, and a domestic context of
substantial cultural, religious, economic, and political change. Early English colonial discourse, which was first articulated in the sixteenth century, was the result of a complex process of cultural appropriation, assimilation, and manipulation. It was only in 1607, after almost a century of refining, adapting, and promoting their New World projects, that the pro-colonists, explorers, and writers of the sixteenth century finally achieved their goal of establishing a permanent English colony in North America.
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