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This study examines the early phases of Anglo-North American colonization from 1570 to 1640 by employing the lenses of imagination and failure. I argue that English colonial projectors envisioned a North America that existed primarily in their minds – a place filled with marketable and profitable commodities waiting to be extracted. I historicize the imagined profitability of commodities like fish and sassafras, and use the extreme example of the unicorn to highlight and contextualize the unlimited potential that America held in the minds of early-modern projectors. My research on colonial failure encompasses the failure of not just physical colonies, but also the failure to pursue profitable commodities, and the failure to develop successful theories of colonization. After roughly seventy years of experience in America, Anglo projectors reevaluated their modus operandi by studying and drawing lessons from past colonial failure. Projectors learned slowly and marginally, and in some cases, did not seem to learn anything at all. However, the lack of learning the right lessons did not diminish the importance of this early phase of colonization. By exploring the variety, impracticability, and failure of plans for early settlement, this study investigates the persistent search for usefulness of America by Anglo colonial projectors in the face of high rate of colonial failures, and how the autoptic evidence gained from failure shaped their evolving theories of colonization.

“WENT TO BUILD CASTLES IN THE AIRE:” COLONIAL FAILURE IN THE  
ANGLO-NORTH ATLANTIC WORLD,

1570 - 1640

by

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CHAPTER I  
“MY NEW-FOUND-LAND”

License my roving hands, and let them goe  
Behind, before, above, between, belowe.  
Only my Americka! my New-found-Land!  
The Kingdom's safest, when by one man man'd:  
My Mine of precious stones! My Emperie!  
How blest am I in this discovering thee.<sup>1</sup>

John Donne (1572-1631), “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” 1654.

This dissertation employs the lenses of imagination and failure to examine the early phases of Anglo-North American colonization, from 1570 to 1640. My research on colonial failure encompasses the failure of physical colonies, the failure to pursue profitable commodities, and the failure to develop successful theories of colonization. I argue that colonial projectors envisioned a North America that primarily existed in their minds – a place filled with marketable and profitable commodities waiting to be extracted. I historicize the imagined profitability of fish and sassafras, and use the extreme example of the unicorn to highlight the unlimited potential of America in the

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<sup>1</sup> R. C., *The Harmony of the Muses, Or, The Gentlemans and Ladies Choisest Recreation Full of Various, Pure and Transcendent Wit : Containing Severall Excellent Poems, Some Fancies of Love, Some of Disdain, and All the Subjects Incident to the Passionate Affections Either of Men or Women / Heretofore Written by Those Unimitable Masters of Learning and Invention, Dr. Joh. Donn, Dr. Hen. King, Dr. W. Strood [et Al].*, ed. Henry King (London : Printed by T.W. for William Gilbertson, 1654), 2-3.

minds early modern projectors. After seventy years of experience in America, Anglo projectors reevaluated their *modus operandi* by studying and drawing lessons from past colonial failure. Projectors learned slowly and marginally, and in some cases, did not seem learn anything at all. However, the lack of learning the right lessons did not diminish the importance of this early phase of colonization. By exploring the variety, and impracticality, and failure of plans for early colonial settlement, this study investigates the persistent search for “usefulness” in the face of the high rate of colonial failure, and what these endeavors reveal about the motivation and aspiration of colonial projectors and colonists during the early decades of English settlement in the New World.

The relationship between imagination and experience is integral to explain why early Anglo-American ventures failed. I treat geographic spaces touched by colonial activity as subjective locales molded by human desires. Using their imaginations and feeding their desires, colonial projectors created illusory and deceptive conceptions about the ease and possibility of colonization in North America through a process of promotional imagining.<sup>2</sup> I argue that there were two stages in the development of colonial theory put forth by colonial projectors. During the first stage, projectors imagined North America as a panacea to Britain’s trade woes, and I trace the links between the pursuit of gold, unicorns, and sassafras to early colonization efforts. The

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term “projector” in the same fashion as Joan Thirsk and Karen Ordahl Kupperman. Thirsk identified projects as “schemes to manufacture, or produce on the farm, goods for consumption at home” in *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 3. Kupperman built on Thirsk’s notion by developing the term projector, a “class of people...who constantly appealed to the court or wealthy backers for support for one or another pet scheme that would, ostensibly, enhance the nation’s economy or security or both while enriching the projector,” in *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 43-44. The term promotional imagining was created by John K. Wright, “Terra Incognita: The Place of the Imagination in Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37, no. 1 (Mar., 1947).

second stage was marked by roughly seventy decades of colonial failure, during which projectors reimagined North America to be filled with fewer eclectic and exotic products. However, colonial projectors' rationale behind both stages was flawed.

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This project fits within the traditional narrative of American history, but the topic of colonial failure has not yet been studied in depth as a standalone subject. The traditional narrative recounts how the British planted North American colonies in the hopes of replicating the Spanish experience of bringing back American gold and treasure, while in the meantime, using the colonies as bases for piracy to hunt and harass the Spanish treasure fleets. Neither of these aspirations came to pass, so all of these colonies failed in their purpose. Over time, British colonies became profitable and useful. Merchants and colonists made money from commodities like tobacco, naval stores, timber, and fur; and colonies became useful as a social safety valve for the likes of religious dissenters, criminals, and the landless poor. The period between the attempt to replicate the Spanish model and the establishment of profitable and useful colonies lasted roughly seventy years (1570-1640), and was marked by anxieties created when the imagination of colonial projectors was annealed by the lived colonial experience. This seventy year period marked by colonial failure is the subject of this study. If one imagines the colonial era as a cathedral, with the first efforts of exploration as the cathedral doors, and the main thrust of colonization taking place in the nave, transept, and choir, the time period and topics I examine reside in the narthex or the antechamber of

the cathedral: just inside the doors but before and separate from the nave. The time within the narthex was early modern in that it bridged the gap in time between the end of the medieval period and Age of Revolutions. This time period saw the intermingling of ideas from both the medieval and modern worlds, a time where superstition and tradition held as much sway as reason and logic; where cold capitalist logic resided side-by-side with unicorns and healing plants. My research does not cover the very beginnings of European exploration nor does it cover the central period of colonial activity. Instead, it addresses the time and place between exploration and the attempts at permanent settlement. The period was marked by a ‘search for usefulness.’ English projectors possessed an America that had unlimited uses within the imagination, but was found to have very limited use in experience.

### **Imagining America**

My study, in part, addresses the role of imagination during the early phases of Anglo-American colonization in the north Atlantic world. The imagination of colonial projectors was not based solely on fantasy, but also on eyewitness accounts. Firsthand testimony about America circulated throughout Britain in manuscript, print, and cartographic formats during the early phases of plantation.<sup>3</sup> One way to approach this

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<sup>3</sup> D.W. Meinig identifies eight geographic models or phases of interaction: exploration, gathering, barter, plunder, outpost, imperial imposition, implantation, and imperial colony. D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1 Atlantic America, 1492-1800 (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 65-66. Most failed colonies never survived past the outpost phase of interaction. Most of the primary sources I use in the project originate in the the early phases of plantation that is in Meinig’s phases of interaction from exploration to outpost.

process of imagination is through *geosophy*, a term coined by geographer John K. Wright.<sup>4</sup> Wright defined geosophy as “the study of geographical knowledge from any points of view...in that it deals with the nature and expression of geographical knowledge with ‘man’s sense of terrestrial space.’” Geosophy does not just include the work of professional geographers, but also the ideas held by all people related to geography, both real and unreal. Therefore, geosophy is about subjective conceptions and “must reckon with human desires, motives, and prejudices.”<sup>5</sup> Wright developed a shorter definition of geosophy two decades later, calling it “the story of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view,” and, “the study of the realities with which geographical knowledge has to do.”<sup>6</sup> The concept of geosophy stresses that all geographic ideas are subjective conceptions shaped by human desires and prejudices. It takes into account the geographic knowledge of a period as well as how people in that period understood their world.<sup>7</sup>

In developing the idea of geosophy, Wright identified three imaginative processes influenced by human subjectivity: promotional, intuitive, and aesthetic imagining. Of the

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<sup>4</sup> John K. Wright, “Terra Incognita: The Place of the Imagination in Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37, no. 1 (March, 1947): 1-15. Henry Wilson used the term geosophy in 1918 when he wrote “There is a geography of thought, a geography of spirit, geography or psychology, or racial influence, or superphysical geography - in fine a geosophy. We want maps of mind, showing the thought and culture currents, idea drifts, spiritual isobars, contours or artistic attitudes.” John K. Wright remarked that Wilson’s definition fits Wright’s concept of sophogeography which he dubbed the “geography of knowledge.” See John K. Wright, “Communication,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 39, no. 1 (March, 1949): 47.

<sup>5</sup> John K. Wright, “Terra Incognita,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* , 112.

<sup>6</sup> John Kirtland Wright, *Human Nature in Geography: Fourteen Papers, 1925-1965* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 7.

<sup>7</sup> For an account of how contemporaries understood the scientific world, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

three imaginative processes, the concept of promotional imagining lends itself best to understanding how British colonial projectors understood North America. Promotional imagining, according to Wright, is “controlled by a desire to promote or defend any personal interest or cause other than that of seeking the objective truth for its own sake.” This form of imagining is shaped by bias, prejudice, partiality, and greed “which may lead the imagination to produce illusory or deceptive conceptions conforming to what one would like rather necessarily the truth.”<sup>8</sup>

Since introduced in 1947, the concept of geosophy has been used, elaborated upon, adapted, changed, embraced, and dismissed. In some cases, other geographers built on and expanded the definition. Terence Young called geosophy the “the study of geographical knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> Clarence Mondale described it as “the study of the meanings people invest in geographical phenomena, especially when those phenomena are half-known and in some degree mysterious.”<sup>10</sup> Within the field of human geography, Anne Buttimer interpreted geosophy to be the “awareness of cultural relativism in the ways in which humans groups construe ‘nature,’ resources, society, space, and time.”<sup>11</sup> Through

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<sup>8</sup> John K. Wright, “Terra Incognita,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Terence Young, “Place Matters,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (Dec., 2001): 681.

<sup>10</sup> Clarence Mondale, Review, “Fleeting Moments: Nature and Culture in American History by Gunther Barth; The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region by Andrew R.L. Cayton; Peter S. Onuf, Views of American Landscapes by Mark Gidley; Robert Lawson-Peebles, River Towns of the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820-1870 by Timothy R. Mahoney,” *American Studies International* 29, no. 1 (Apr., 1991): 103.

<sup>11</sup> Anne Buttimer, “Geography, Humans, and Global Concern,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 1 (Mar., 1990): 24.

the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, humanistic geographers like J.B. Jackson, David Lowenthal, and Yi-Fu Tuan used geosophy as a tool in their research.<sup>12</sup> Terence Young described their efforts to maintain “the uniqueness and specificity of a place flows from the experiences that individuals and groups associate with it...” with sensitivity to the “role of the subject in the creation and meaning of...significance of place.” Proceeding the humanists, structuralist geographers like John Agnew and Edward Soja argued, according to Young, “for more dialectical, contextualist studies that recognize how social and economic forces shape places and are in turn shaped by them.”<sup>13</sup>

Geosophy helps to understand the imagination of sixteenth and seventeenth century colonial projectors, and lends itself in avoiding the trap of teleology and linearity that some historians sometimes fall into, which presumes two things: one path of

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<sup>12</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson and Eryin H. Zube, *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J.B. Jackson* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970); John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins, and other Topics* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1984); John Brinckerhoff Jackson and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1997); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); also see Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976); and David Edward Sopher, *Geography of Religions* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967); David Edward Sopher, *An Exploration of India: Geographical Perspectives on Society and Culture* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Terence Young, “Place Matters,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 681. John Agnew, *The City in Cultural Context* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984); John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987); Edward Soja, *The Political Organization of Space* (Washington: Association of American Geographers, 1971). See also Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, *The Space of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002); and Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

development and one metric of success.<sup>14</sup> Teleology at times is almost possible to avoid. For example, this study covers a time period known as the early modern era, and falls within the periodization used to divide western history in ancient, medieval, and modern eras. This periodization was created during the Renaissance when intellectuals wanted to signal a new and better age, and therefore implicitly treated history as progressive and moving toward a better and modern future.<sup>15</sup> The pitfalls of linearity and teleology push Americanists to focus on the successful colonies that “founded” their nation because they use the modern territorial boundaries of the United States to define their history, thereby reinforcing nationalist sentiments.<sup>16</sup> This is problematic because these boundaries did not exist in the past, and historical events were not confined exclusively by them.<sup>17</sup> This approach emphasizes the importance of colonies like Jamestown or Plymouth because of their significance and enduring presence on the geographic and mental landscape of the nation state. However, the United States was not inevitable or predetermined. The

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<sup>14</sup> Peter C. Perdue, “Empire and Nation in Comparative Perspective: Frontier Administration in Eighteenth-Century,” *Journal of Modern History* 5, no. 4: 285.

<sup>15</sup> Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 120-122.

<sup>16</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> For more on the limits of geography and historical interpretation, see the forum in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, “Beyond the Atlantic.” Alison Games, “Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections;” Philip J. Stern, “British Asia and British Atlantic: Comparisons and Connections;” Paul W. Mapp, “Atlantic History from Imperial, Continental, and Pacific Perspectives;” Peter A. Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World;” and Julie Sievers, “Drowned Pens and Shaking Hands: Sea Providence Narratives in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (Oct., 2006): 675-776.

failures, and not merely the successes were instrumental in shaping early Anglo-North America.

I step away from the trappings of this periodization by using the notion of promotional imagining as my methodology. Projectors imagined an America that did not exist. They projected their desires onto the landscape of America to find the profitable commodities that they desired. Sometimes the commodities existed and were imagined to be profitable when in fact they were not, notably fish and sassafras. Other times, the commodities imagined never existed, like gold and unicorns. Employing promotional imagining within my analysis explains why early modern English colonial projectors promoted their colonial schemes by imagining an America that only existed in the mind and not in reality.

### **The Scope**

The bulk of this study covers the years 1570 to 1640. The first attempt by the English to colonize North America occurred in 1517 under the direction of John Rastell, and once set out to sea, the venture did not reach beyond Ireland before it collapsed. The failure of the voyage, coupled with the dynastic struggles of the Tudor family in Britain and on the European continent contributed to the English turning away from Atlantic settlement beyond Ireland. English projectors returned to the American colonial dream in the 1570s, and most English failed colonial projects were founded between 1580 and 1630, with the first successful and lasting colonies occurring in 1607 and 1620. The economic and political conditions that influenced Anglo-American colonization changed

around 1640 and that is why I conclude my study in that year. Those changing conditions included: the implementation of the Western Design, the growth of slavery during the second half of the seventeenth century, the centralization of colonial decisions, and the modernization of the English economy. All of these conditions developed on the cusp of the English Civil War. The war radically altered domestic politics as well as changed the direction of England's overseas possessions. Colonial expansion and governance shifted from a period of minimal government involvement before the Civil War, to a period of central government influence and control.<sup>18</sup> This radical shift to the English crown's participation in the governance and defense of the colonies altered the conditions in which colonies were founded and maintained. Consequently, I conclude my study in 1640.

I roughly follow the same time periods defined by the historian Alison Games. Games described the period between 1580 and 1620 as an "age of imagination" when English projectors imagined a global trade regime with commercial ambitions centered on colonization schemes. The 1620s and 1630s marked an "age of creation and elaboration," when the accumulation of experience began to temper the inflated aspirations of colonial projectors. The third stage of "integration" started in the 1640s and saw the cultural homogenization and economic congruence of the Atlantic World.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999, 2001), 4-6.

The time period for this study largely lies within the boundaries of the ages of imagination, and creation and elaboration defined by Games.

### **Defining Colony**

The definition of colony is not standardized or accepted by any one discipline. Words unavoidably carry semantic clusters; therefore once a settlement is described as a colony, the word cluster associated with colony and colonialism is attached to the settlement.<sup>20</sup> I argue that the word ‘colony’ for early Americanists is similar to the concept of the “premature ultimate,” a word whose meaning is assumed as soon as the word is invoked.<sup>21</sup> Francis James West examined how the words “colony” and “empire” were used by scholars over the course of 150 years within the historiography of the Norman Conquest. Historians used differing definitions of colony rooted in either legal, political, sociological, or economic characteristics to discuss whether or not the Normans colonized England. West argued that when using politically charged terms like empire and colony, the politics and value judgments associated with nineteenth century imperialism are anachronistically smuggled into the past. The vocabulary of empire is unavoidably transposed; including words like brutal, aggression, exploitation, and

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<sup>20</sup> M.I. Finley, “Colonies -- An Attempt at a Typology,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (Dec. 1976): 174.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Brookfield, *The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching* (New York: Open University Press, 2005), 61.

oppression.<sup>22</sup> The same issues that West described for medieval history also arise in the discussion of early Tudor-Stuart colonization in America.

Finley attempted to develop a typology of colonies by examining what the types of settlement historians traditionally have labeled colonies from the ancient world through the era of decolonization. He proposed a three-stage model of colonization based on the variables of dependency, expropriation and settlement of land, ideologies of justification, the economic and social political structure of the imperial country; and roughly divided them between ancient, early-modern, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the early modern period, Finley concluded that colonizers followed one of three paths: they worked the land by themselves with or without hired labor; they worked the land with indigenous slave labor; or they worked the land with imported slave labor.<sup>23</sup> Most of the failed colonies in this study followed the first pathway, but if the colonies had survived and matured, they would have most likely adopted the second and third pathways as many of their successful contemporaries did. For example, the colonies of Virginia and Carolina followed all three pathways in less than a century.<sup>24</sup>

The approach I use to define colony for the Tudor-Stuart/early modern/colonial America period is to use the language contemporaries employed. According to Finley, from the sixteenth into the nineteenth century, people were the objects of “planting” and

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<sup>22</sup> Francis James West, “The Colonial History of the Norman Conquest?” *History* 274 (1999): 227-228.

<sup>23</sup> Finley, “Colonies -- An Attempt at a Typology,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 185.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, Norton, 1975), and Allan Galloway, *The Indians Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

“transplanting.”<sup>25</sup> Between 1500 and 1800, it was an acknowledged fact that a colony was a plantation of men, a locale to which people emigrated and settled. Furthermore, there was complete agreement that a colony was dependent on the country from whence the emigration originated.<sup>26</sup> This notion was reflected in the writing of the Puritan John White, when in 1630 he published *The Planter’s Plea* and began the work, “CHAP. I. By a Colony we meane a societie of men drawne out of one state or people, and transplanted into another Countrey.”<sup>27</sup>

Working within the contemporary notions of colony and plantation, Karen Ordahl Kupperman identified two phases in Anglo-American colonization which she labeled as the classical and the successful models. The classical model was made up of young men with no stake in private land ownership and under military authority. The successful model was composed of families with a stake in private land ownership and under the authority of civil government.<sup>28</sup> The classical model was viewed as a forerunner to the successful model: a group of men were to plant ahead of an incoming larger colony that typically was to follow the coming year.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> M.I. Finley, “Colonies -- An Attempt at a Typology,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 170.

<sup>26</sup> M.I. Findley, “Colonies - An Attempt at a Typology,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 171.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, “The Planter’s Plea,” Myra Jehlen and Michael Warners eds., *The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800* (New York and London, 1997), 100. The University of Michigan Ann Arbor’s card catalog identifies the author of *The Planter’s Plea* as John White, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A15097.0001.001> (Accessed July 22, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Karen Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>29</sup> The link between successful colonization and families described by Kupperman in the twenty-first century was also described in the sixteenth century by Richard Hakluyt. According to David Armitage, Hakluyt’s seldom read *Analysis*, a Latin synopsis of Aristotle’s *Politics*, should be read as a preface to *The*

English colonies in America began to differ from English possessions in other parts of the world with the eventual triumph of the “successful” model. Projectors envisioned settlement in North America to be permanent. They saw North American possessions as places of settlement and not just far-flung trading centers designed to facilitate trade like the outposts European powers established in Asia and Africa during the same period.<sup>30</sup> Even if some of the earliest English colonies contained only men, the plan was for them to eventually include women. It is important to stress that the lack of women present in English failed settlements does not automatically disqualify these early outposts as colonies. A portion of the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of a colony included a community “consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors.”<sup>31</sup> Settlements of men should be viewed with the understanding that women would eventually join them to help build the community, and therefore these settlements are considered colonies.

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*Discourse on Western Planting*. In conjunction, the two works place English overseas colonization within the framework of classical civil philosophy. Hakluyt saw the polis as “the perfect society, whose end is a sufficiency of all necessities and the blessed life.” In examining the building blocks of the polis, Hakluyt found “the village is a colony of some households and families, therefore, the village is also the product of nature.” He continued by analyzing the civitas and found it as “as a mass of citizens, self-sufficient in the necessities of life.” Armitage concluded, “if England were to be a civitas perfecta, and its citizens capable of living the vita beata, they, like the citizens of the Aristotelian polis, would need to be supplied with virtue, a physical sufficiency and an abundance of fortune. One way to supply that, and to found a new commonwealth, would be through the ‘natural’ activity of founding villages or coloniae, composed of families.” David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 72-74. For the original, see Richard Hakluyt, “*Analysis, seu resolution perpetua in octo libros Politicorum Aristotelis*,” BL MS Royal 12. G. XIII.

<sup>30</sup> James Horn, “English Society in the Chesapeake,” in Nicholas Canny and Alaine Low eds., *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 173.

<sup>31</sup> “colony, n.”. OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/36547?rskey=DZa3uV&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed November 10, 2014).

While there is no one definition of “failed colony” that universally describes all types of colonial misfortune or collapse. I deem a colonial venture as a failure when its settlers disappeared from the physical landscape, and/or the financial backing behind the scheme dried up.<sup>32</sup> The Roanoke colony was a failure because its inhabitants disappeared from the landscape never to be heard from again. Even though most colonists survived, I claim the Sagadahoc colony a failure because its inhabitants left and abandoned the colony. A colony is also considered a failure if the financial backing behind the scheme collapsed, like the Dorchester Company’s Cape Ann colony. By including failed colonies in my study, I reveal that the early Anglo-American colonial experience was more than just Jamestown and Plymouth. Colonies stretched from Nunavut to North Carolina, and had diverse aims in making money ranging including gold mining, fishing, and sassafras bioprospecting.

### **Relation to Existing Scholarship**

This dissertation adds to the scholarship of Atlantic history which is the prevailing approach to the historical interpretation of the encounters and interactions of people, goods, and ideas that occurred between Europe, the Americas, and Africa from the fifteenth century through the Age of Revolutions in the nineteenth century (1400-1830). These interactions took a variety of forms ranging from, but not limited to, the African slave trade, European migration, endemic disease amongst Native Americans, religious

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<sup>32</sup> I concede that this definition is not perfect and fraught with complications. Some colonies may have failed, but were successful in other ways such as being an outlet for England’s undesirable peoples. Other times, the financial backing of a colony collapsed thus leading to failure, but the colonists remained on the landscape and continued their private economic pursuits.

transformations, trade and commodities, the exchange of ideas, and the development and decline of empire. Atlantic history moves past the concept of the nation state and brings the New World and Africa out of a teleologically driven “colonial period” and into a trans-Atlantic early-modern world. The interactions between Europe, Africa, and the Americas constitute a regional system of economic and cultural exchange that is analyzed as one geographic system or, as a major part in a larger world-system.<sup>33</sup>

My work strongly influenced by and expands upon the work of two important colonial historians, Jack P. Greene and Karen Ordahl Kupperman. In *Pursuits of Happiness*, Greene attacked the declension model of colonial societal development because it overemphasized the importance and influence of Puritan New England and the Middle Colonies. The declension model, according to Greene, witnessed historians of colonial New England understanding the past as a “pervasive and steady turning away from the original goals of the founders by their descendants.”<sup>34</sup> When the declension model was applied to colonies outside of New England and even to the post-revolutionary United States, it “posits a largely linear process of change from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, from community to individualism, from traditional to

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<sup>33</sup> For more on Atlantic History, see David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and M. J. Braddick (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2002); Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). For criticism about Atlantic history, see Peter A. Coclanis, “Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006): 725-742.

<sup>34</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 55.

modern.”<sup>35</sup> However, Greene argued that the declension model was inappropriate for the other major regions of English and, after 1707, British colonization, notably Ireland, the Chesapeake, New England, the Atlantic island colonies of Bermuda and the Bahamas, the West Indian colonies, the Middle colonies, and the Lower South. Instead, Greene argued for a developmental model made up of three sequential stages: social simplification, social elaboration, and social replication, and each stage was influenced by the tension caused by experience and inheritance.<sup>36</sup> Greene argued that the “simplified and inchoate social structures that were so evident in the first two generations of settlement in the Chesapeake slowly gave way through a process of social elaboration during the century after 1660 to a more complex society that more closely resembled that of the metropolitan society of Great Britain.”<sup>37</sup> In this light, when English and British colonies in the Atlantic are looked at as a whole, New England’s experience is the aberration and the Chesapeake experience is the norm. The developmental model became applicable to the Chesapeake, the Atlantic island colonies, Ireland, and the West Indian colonies after 1660, and to the Lower South and Middle colonies after 1715.

The study furthers Greene’s approach by questioning the assumptions created by historians who only see one single path of development while using one metric of success in their studies of early American and the origins of the United States. This pathway

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<sup>35</sup> Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 55. The concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) were coined by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1912. See Ferdinand Tönnies and Charles Price Loomis, *Community & Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* (East Lansing MI: Michigan State University Press, 1957).

<sup>36</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 166-169.

<sup>37</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 81.

pushes colonial American historians to start at the beginning of the development of the United States (Jamestown) because of the metric of success (it was the first successful English colony in the United States). In doing so, they fail to see that the English colonial involvement in North America began 90 years prior to the establishment of Virginia.<sup>38</sup> When one looks at all English colonies on mainland North America, including the successes and the failures, a different view of Anglo-North American development emerges - one where success was the aberration and failure was the norm.

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<sup>38</sup> The 90 year date is linked to the 1517 failed colonization attempt of John Rastell. However, recent scholarship hints to the suspicion of an English colony planted in Newfoundland as early as 1498. For more on the suspected 1498 colony, see Evan T. Jones, "Bristol, Cabot and the New Found Land, 1496-1500," *Exploring Atlantic Transitions: Archaeologists of Transience and Permanence in New Found Lands*, Peter E. Pope and Shannon Lewis-Simpson eds., (Rochester NY: Boydell Press, 2013), 25-34. Historians of Jamestown often acknowledge the failed colony of Roanoke as the start of English colonial endeavors. See William Kelso and Beverly A. Straube, *Jamestown Rediscovery 1994-2004* (Richmond: The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Atiquities, 2004), 9; Kieran Doherty, *Sea Venture: Shipwreck, Survival, and the Salvation of Jamestown* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007), 5; and James Horn, *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 26-33.

Table 1. List of Failed Colonies on North American Mainland, 1517-1640

Region	Name	Date Start	Date End
Newfoundland	Rastell's Venture	1517	1517
	St. John's	1583	1583
	Magdalen Islands	1597	1597
	Cuper's Cove	1610	1621
	Renews	1615	1619
	New Cambriol	1617	1637
	Bristol's Hope	1618	1631
	Avalon	1620	1629
	South Falkland	1623	1630
	Nunavut	Meta Incognita	1578
Nova Scotia	New Scotland	1629	1632
Southeast	Roanoke	1584	1587
Northeast	Elizabeth's Isle	1602	1602
	Sagadahoc	1607	1608
	Wessagusset	1622	1623
	York	1623	1624
	Cape Ann	1624	1625
	New Albion	1634	1649

Table 2. List of Successful Colonies on North American Mainland, 1517-1640

Region	Name	Date Start
Newfoundland	Newfoundland	1637
South East	Jamestown	1607
North East	Plymouth <sup>39</sup>	1620
	New Hampshire	1623
	Massachusetts Bay	1628
	Saybrook <sup>40</sup>	1635
	Rhode Island	1636
	New Haven <sup>41</sup>	1637

<sup>39</sup> Merged with Massachusetts Bay in 1690.

<sup>40</sup> Merged with Connecticut in 1644.

<sup>41</sup> Merged with Connecticut in 1662-1664.

In addition to Greene, this project was influenced by and expands upon the work of Karen Kupperman. In *The Jamestown Project*, Kupperman argued Jamestown was the first to develop the model for successful colonies in America, and the experience that helped shape the successful model grew out of prior failed colonization schemes.<sup>42</sup> The successful model had four characteristics: land ownership, a representative assembly with the power to tax and pay for public obligations, the inclusion of women, and a profitable product to sustain the economy. These four characteristics emerged at Jamestown between 1607 and 1618, and were firmly in place by 1620. Kupperman contended that the Pilgrims studied Jamestown and were able to derive the proper lessons which they then implemented when they established the second successful English colony in North America, Plymouth.<sup>43</sup>

My study builds on Kupperman's scholarship and her description of Jamestown inventing the model of English colonization. She pointed to the example of Plymouth to prove that colonial projectors learned the "ingredients of success" for creating a successful colony. However, I contend that even beyond 1618, projectors and colonial organizers and participants did not learn and adapt from the Jamestown model. Colonies continued to fail after the establishment of Plymouth in 1620. Nine colonies in Newfoundland and Massachusetts America failed in the time period between the founding of Plymouth and the English Civil War: Cuper's Cove (1621), Wessagusset (1623), York (1624), Cape Ann (1625), Avalon (1629), South Falkland (1630), Bristol's

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<sup>42</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*, 2-3.

Hope (1631), and New Cambriol (1637). In part, this was due to many of these colonies being dependent on the Atlantic fisheries that were not able to sustain a colonial economy until after the English Civil War. Furthermore, I suggest the recipe for successful colonization was partly developed by writers not actively engaged in the colonizing efforts at Jamestown and Plymouth. The same year Plymouth was established; Richard Whitbourne published his plan for colonizing Newfoundland that called for families, land ownership, civil government, and a product able to sustain the economy. Whitbourne claimed he developed his ideas independently based upon his experiences in Newfoundland, and did not credit the experiences of the Jamestown settlers in influencing his position. By building on Kupperman's work, I introduce the theory of multiple discovery for the successful colonial model, and complicate the conclusion that colonial success was inevitable after 1620.

The dissertation also builds on the work of historians, archaeologists, and historical contemporaries who addressed individual failed colonies. The literature spanning 400 years about one failed colony, Sagadahoc, illustrates the difficulty in explaining failure. Modern scholars Alfred Cave, Barry Coward, Karen Kupperman, and Jeffery Bain addressed Sagadahoc's failure. Cave concluded the colony failed due to passive resistance by the Abenaki Indians who refused who trade with or become middle men trading partners.<sup>44</sup> Coward concluded Sagadahoc failed in part due to a lack of

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<sup>44</sup> Alfred A. Cave, "Why was the Sagadahoc Colony Abandoned? An Evaluation of the Evidence," *The New England Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (Dec., 1995): 640. For more on accommodation between whites and Indians and mixed systems of exchange, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

credit and distance from the London financial market.<sup>45</sup> Kupperman stressed the role of the environment in the colony's failure, emphasizing the exceptionally cold winter of 1607-1608.<sup>46</sup> Archaeologist Jeffery Brain claimed Sagadahoc failed due to lack of access to natural resources.<sup>47</sup>

Contemporaries of failed colonies also attempted to explain Sagadahoc's failure. Ferdinando Gorges, one of the investors in Sagadahoc and the eventual founder of Maine, claimed the combination of cold weather and the decision by the Admiral of the colony, Raleigh Gilbert, to return to England and claim an inheritance propelled the remainder of the colonists to "quit the place, and with one consent to away, by which all our former hopes were frozen to death."<sup>48</sup> Gorges described the environment of the Sagadahoc colony "as being over cold, and in respect of that, not habitable by our Nation."<sup>49</sup> John Smith also attributed Sagadahoc's failure to the climate. He claimed the colonists found "nothing but extremities," and "the Country esteemed as cold, barren, mountainous,

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<sup>45</sup> Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603-1714* (Harlow UK: Longman, 2003), 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period, *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 5 (Dec., 1982): 1272-1273.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey P. Brain, *Fort St. George: Archeological Investigation of the 1607-1608 Popham Colony on the Kennebec River in Maine* (Augusta ME: Maine State Museum, 2007), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ferdinando Gorges, "A Briefe Narration of the Originall Undertaking of the Advancement of Plantation into the Parts of America, Especially, Shewing the Beginning Progress, and Cotinuance of that of New England," James Baxter Phinney, *Sir Ferdinando Gorges and His Province of Maine Including the Brief Relation, the Brief Narration, His Defense, the Charter Granted to Him, His Will, and His Letters*, vol. 2 (Boston: Prince Society, 1890), 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ferdinando Gorges, "My resolution not to abandon the prosecution of businesse in my opinion so well grounded," in Phinney, *Sir Ferdinando Gorges and His Province of Maine*, 17.

rocky Dessert.”<sup>50</sup> Smith’s view on the landscape was shaped by his exploration of the region, when six years after Sagadahoc’s failure, he passed within miles of the abandoned colony. Father Pierre Biard, a French Jesuit priest writing at Port Royal in 1612, claimed the Sagadahoc colony was driven away by the Indians. According to Biard, the Abenaki told him that the English’s first leader, George Popham, was murdered by the Armouchiquois by magic. The new English leader, Raleigh Gilbert, ushered in a fierce English policy toward the Indians, and “they repelled the natives most dishonorably, they beat and committed excesses of every kind, without much restraint.” Therefore, the “poor, ill treated” Indians resolved to “kill the whelp before he should have more power claws and teeth.” The Indians tracked an English fishing party and drew near “with many signs of friendship (for thus they always are most friendly when they are nearest to treachery), each chose his man and killed him with his big knife. Thus perished eleven Englishmen.” According to Biard, the Abenaki believed this violence intimidated the English to abandon the colony within the year.<sup>51</sup> William Strachey attributed Sagadahoc’s failure not to the environment or to the Abenaki, but to the death of its principal financier, Sir John Popham.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> John Smith, “John Smith on the Sagadahoc Colony,” in Andrew J. Wahll, ed., *Sabino: Popham Colony Reader 1602-2003* (Bowie MD: Heritage Books, 2003), 103.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Biard, “Extracts from a letter written by Father Pierre Biard to the Right Rev. Provincial at Paris, containing some gossip of the voyage that was omitted from the good Father’s later and more formal history,” Charles Herbert Levermore ed., *Forerunners and Competitors of the Pilgrims and Puritans or Narratives of Voyages Made by Persons other than the Pilgrims and Puritans of the Baby Colony to the Shores of New England during the First Quarter of the Seventeenth Century, 1601-1625 with Especial Reference to the Labors of Captain John Smith in Behalf of the Settlement of New England* vol. 2 (New York: New England Society of Brooklyn, 1912), 474-475.

<sup>52</sup> William Strachey, *The historie of travaile into Virginia Britannia* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1849). 27.

Taking into consideration that colonies like Sagadahoc may have failed for a multitude of overlapping reasons, my research indicates that colonial projectors also had mistaken ideas about the potential profit of various commodities, particularly sassafras and fish. Londa Schiebinger described the European desire to bioprospect profitable medicinal flora in the Americas.<sup>53</sup> While she addressed the peacock flower, I borrow her approach to bioprospecting by examining the heretofore overlooked link between sassafras and colonization. Sassafras was a lure for colonization of the eastern seaboard during an immense boom in sassafras prices, and projectors sought out information about the location of sassafras during the early phases of discovery, trade, and plantation, particularly for the Roanoke, Cuttyhunk, and Jamestown colonies.<sup>54</sup>

The quest for profits from fishing also lured colonial projectors to America, particularly to the “North,” the wide swath of land and sea ranging from northern Europe to northern North America. Various trading companies planted fishing colonies along the eastern seaboard, particularly in Massachusetts and Newfoundland. Many of these

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<sup>53</sup> Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> There has been some, but not extensive, work down on the links between sassafras and colonization. See David L. Cowen, “Boom and Bust: Sassafras,” *Apothecary’s Cabinet* 8 (Fall 2004): 9; and Charles Manning and Merrill Moore, “Sassafras and Syphilis,” *The New England Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (Fall, 1936): 473-475. Philip McMullan claimed that the Roanoke colony moved inland to set up a secret colony centered around the smuggling of sassafras from North Carolina to mainland Europe, thereby bypassing English taxes, Philip S. McMullan Jr, “Beechland and the Lost Colony” (master’s thesis, North Carolina State University, 2010).

colonies failed because fishing did not produce the profits or the conditions to sustain an early colonial economy.<sup>55</sup>

Over time, colonial projectors had to accept new realities brought about through the combination of imagination and experience. Geographer John Logan Allen saw a similar process in the European exploration of North America. In his study of the search of the Northwest Passage, he begins in ancient Greece with the ideas of Strabo, whose theories about geography contributed to the belief in the sixteenth century of the existence of the Northwest Passage.<sup>56</sup> Allen argued that theory and reality merge to shape the objectives of exploration, and modify the consequences of new geographical knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Eventually eyewitness testimonies began to supersede second-hand accounts and geographical lore, whether it was in the existence of the indrawing sea

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<sup>55</sup> Peter E. Pope claimed the Newfoundland fishery was in decline in the 1620s and was only one-third of what it had been the 10 years prior, Peter E. Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 124. He also attributed the abandonment of the Avalon colony in 1632 to the decline of the fishing industry, 132. As late as 1669, a member of the Council of Trade claimed “Our fishing trade in Newfoundland very small,” “Notes of the Lords’ Committee on the Decay of Rents and Trade, 1669,” in *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents* eds. Joan Thirsk and J.P Cooper (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), 70. Gillian T. Cell described how the Newfoundland Company was unable to make a profit, “What profits the company made from its fishing voyages, the colony must have more than swallowed in its constant need for provisions, equipment, livestock, and wages,” Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 70. In the 1630s, the fishing industry in New England was nothing more than a supplementary food supply and not a might industry able of sustaining an economy; see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 99. It was not until the 1640s that the New England fishery was able to was able to earn the credit needed to meet its debt to British exporters, Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 21.

<sup>56</sup> John. L. Allen, “The Indrawing Sea: Imagination and Experience for the Northwest Passage, 1497-1632, *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega* eds. Emerson W. Baker, Edwin A. Churchill, Richard D’Abate, Kristine L. Jones, Victor A. Konrad, and Harald E.L. Prins (Lincoln NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>57</sup> John L. Allen, “From Cabot to Cartier: The Early Exploration of Eastern North America, 1497-1543,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3, (Sep., 1992): 501.

confirming the existence of the Northwest Passage, or the Seven Cities of Gold.<sup>58</sup> Allen's work demonstrated how the vision of America was first shaped by ancient authorities and then changed over time through first-hand accounts. This echoes the theories of colonization put forth by colonial projectors. The vision of the makeup and purpose of colonies that projectors imagined planting in America changed through experience. Eye-witness testimony ranging from observations of the environment to personnel selection (i.e. send more farmers and fewer goldsmiths) brought about a shift in the theory of colonization that rested more in the hands of experience and less in the lap of imagination.

My work is also influenced by David Beers Quinn. Quinn was one of the founders of Atlantic history,<sup>59</sup> and a highly respected scholar in the field with his life and work being subject to three *festschriften*.<sup>60</sup> Quinn claimed his objective was "to make sense of obscure happenings on both sides of the Atlantic"<sup>61</sup> by focusing on English colonization efforts in Ireland and North America during the Tudor and Stuart period.

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<sup>58</sup> John L. Allen, "Lands of Myth, Waters of Wonder: The Place of the Imagination in the History of Geographical Exploration," *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy in Honor of John Kirkland Wright* eds. David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 41-61.

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas Canny and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "The Scholarship and Legacy of David Beers Quinn, 1909-2002," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (Oct., 2003): 843.

<sup>60</sup> K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny, and P.E.H. Hair eds, *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979); H.G. Jones ed., *Raleigh and Quinn: The Explorer and His Boswell*, North Caroliniana Society Imprints no. 14 (Chapel Hill, NC: North Caroliniana Society and the North Carolina Collection, 1987); Cecil H. Clough and P.E.H. Hair, *The European Outthrust and Encounter: The First Phase c.1400 – c.1700: Essays in Tribute to David Beers Quinn on his 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Glyndwr Williams, "David Beers Quinn and the Hakluyt Society," *The Hakluyt Society*, n.d., <http://www.hakluyt.com/hak-soc-tributes-williams.htm> (accessed 11 November 2014).

His work, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* linked the English colonization of Ireland to developments in the wider Atlantic world.<sup>62</sup> He wrote about a number of English colonial projectors connected to schemes in both Ireland and America including Richard Hakluyt, Humphrey Gilbert, Walter Raleigh, Thomas Hariot, and Martin Frobisher. In *Set Fair for Roanoke*, Quinn argued that the colonists of Roanoke left North Carolina and attempted to move into the Chesapeake Bay region.<sup>63</sup> In *England and the Discovery of America*, Quinn argued that English fishermen were in America before 1492, and Columbus was inspired to journey westward from information he may have learned from these English fishermen.<sup>64</sup> Forty years later, Quinn's conclusions still stand, in part, because they were speculative and therefore beyond disproof. Quinn influenced my work by being one of the first and one of the best to research people and aspects affiliated with colonial failure.

Very few historians in the Anglophone world have made colonial failure a focus of their study. David Childs, a historian who traditionally focused on Tudor sea power interpreted colonial failure through the lens of military history. He viewed the long sixteenth century from 1497 to 1630 as the English military invasion of America, where English colonists “concerned themselves...with establishing secure beachheads along the

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<sup>62</sup> David B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC: Cornell University, 1966).

<sup>63</sup> David B. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> David B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620, from the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: The Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English* (New York: Knopf, 1974).

lengthy American littoral.”<sup>65</sup> In interpreting the early phases of Anglo-American colonization as an armed invasion, Childs identified problems in the fields of reinforcement and supply, evacuation and abandonment, and defense and leadership.<sup>66</sup> Childs concluded that failure was exacerbated by the expectations of colonial projectors based on mythical views of botany, geology, and geography; the motive of financial greed behind investment; and the lack of a centralized power to coordinate colonization efforts.<sup>67</sup> I concur with Childs on these points, however, I disagree with his assertion that successful colonization ultimately lay in the fecundity of the English. According to Childs, the English defeated Native Americans over the long sixteenth century by outbreeding and not outfighting them.<sup>68</sup> This Malthusian conclusion is inadequate and does not consider the political and institutional changes post 1640 that I suspect may be contributing factors. However, Child’s description of the deficiencies in reinforcement and supply, lack of centralization, and the expectations of colonial projectors is accurate.

Instead of birthrates, Nicholas Canny attributed colonial failure to colonial projectors being slaves to precedent. He remarked on how colonial projectors followed a rigid adherence to inherited beliefs which led them to total failure.<sup>69</sup> Canny’s explanation works well with my suggestions that the imagination of projectors often supplanted the

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<sup>65</sup> David Childs, *Invading America: The English Assault on the New World, 1497-1630* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2012), ix.

<sup>66</sup> Childs, *Invading America*, ix.

<sup>67</sup> Childs, *Invading America*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> Childs, *Invading America*, x.

<sup>69</sup> Nicholas Canny, “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in *The Origins of Empire*, 6.

realities they found on the ground. Alison Games came to a similar conclusion when she looked at two colonization attempts on Madagascar that were conceived in the 1630s and enacted in the 1640s. Games found that the colonial projectors for Madagascar emulated colonial success in the Americas instead of modeling themselves off the success of the Dutch in Batavia and the Portuguese in Goa.<sup>70</sup> The accumulated colonial knowledge collected in America served as a terrible precedent for England's ventures in Madagascar. The English had a tendency to follow precedent, whether or not the precedent was sound advice.

The work of all of these scholars underpins any effort to assess English colonial ventures. Each took a different approach, but Jack P. Greene's work is helpful in challenging the linear path and teleology created when only focusing on successful colonies. Karen Kupperman uncovered the four characteristics of successful colonies.<sup>71</sup> Londa Shiebinger's work linked the connections between colonization and bioprospecting. John Logan examined the eventual marriage of experience with imagination and theory. David Beers Quinn helped situate failed colonies into a wider and older Atlantic world context. David Childs' military history approach revealed the organizational deficiencies of early settlements, and Nicolas Canny and Alison Games explored the dangers of precedent created by prior colonial experience. By employing a

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<sup>70</sup> Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> Kupperman also wrote about the failed colony of Providence Island located off the shores of Nicaragua, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

wide variety of approaches, we get a more complex and fuller understanding of early Anglo-North America.

My work brings a new perspective to the existing scholarship by exploring colonial failure, including the failure of physical colonies, the failure to pursue profitable commodities, and the failure to develop successful theories of colonization. I investigate how imagination and fantasy did not just exist in the minds of colonial projectors, but had real power and presence in the material world. Colonial failure was an outgrowth of the power of ideas. Projectors imagined a North America that did not exist, and oftentimes, this led to failure when colonies were planted. I also explore imagination using hard history. The imagining of America has been handled by other historians by examining the early-modern mind through literature and art, but, not enough attention has been paid to understanding how people responded to imagination on the ground. I examine written accounts and compare what people believed to their real experiences. This work is also interdisciplinary in that it combines elements of economic, cultural, environmental, and medical history. My work is also one of the most in depth studies on sassafras and unicorns in colonial North America.

### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter I defines terms, and places the project within the larger historiography. Chapter II explores the connection between print culture and colonization, as well as the ways in which the vision of trade imagined by English colonial projectors was not profitable. Projectors developed a theory of colonization believing that North America

would provide the same commodities found in Europe, Asia, and Africa; and that permanent North American colonies would generate more profits than seasonal trade voyages. However, I argue that profits did not materialize for two primary reasons: the products merchants sought did not exist in North America; and, the products could be acquired more cheaply from mainland Europe. Chapter III takes the notion of the imaginations of colonial projectors to an extreme by introducing the unicorn as a paradigmatic vehicle to explore the assumption of the inevitability of profitable North American commodities that in reality were as illusory as the unicorn. Chapter IV discusses how harvesting sassafras was an impulse behind colonial settlements and failures from Florida to Newfoundland between 1580 and 1630. The overharvesting of sassafras quickly flooded British markets leading to a boom and bust cycle. An analysis of the overlooked and short-lived sassafras boom at the turn of the seventeenth century reveals the generally unnoticed link between sassafras and early Anglo-American colonization. Chapter V examines the advice colonial projectors gave based upon autoptic evidence including three monographs written by colonial projectors, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland* (1620) by Richard Whitbourne, *The Golden Fleece* (1626) by William Vaughan, and *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters or New England, or Anywhere* (1631) by John Smith. After seventy years of experience in America, Anglo projectors reevaluated their *modus operandi* by studying and drawing lessons from past colonial failure. Projectors learned slowly and marginally, and in some cases, did not learn anything at all. Chapter VI is a conclusion that summarizes my claims, explain their importance, and suggests further research based upon my findings.

## Sources

This project was completed using a variety of archival and published sources. I visited the National Archives (UK), the British Library (UK), the Wellcome Library (UK) the Folger-Shakespeare (DC), the Peabody-Essex (MA), and the Newberry Library (IL). I incorporated source material from these archives into the dissertation from medical receipt books, probate court records, drafts of charters, chancery court records, estate records, letters, printed books, art prints, and maps. I also used archival material from online sources including the LUNA portals of the John Carter Brown (RI) and the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester (UK); as well as databases including Early English Books Online, British History Online, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, and Early Encounters in North America. I used published primary sources with the chief collection being the five volume *New American World* compiled by David Beers Quinn. I also used a number of primary sources published by the Hakluyt Society in addition to reprints of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas. The most common types of documents I used from the printed sources were voyage narratives, charters, and letters patent. I visited the sites of failed colonies including Roanoke (NC), Cape Ann (MA), and Sagadahoc (ME). On my way to Sagadahoc, I met with Dr. Jeffery Brain, the chief archaeologist in charge of the Sagadahoc excavations, and we discussed our theories on why the Sagadahoc/Popham colony failed. I also visited Jamestown (VA) and met with archaeologists Dr. William Kelso and Dr. Beverly

Straube, who gave me a private tour of the vault containing all the treasures they unearthed.

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I assumed going into this project that by looking at all failed colonies (much like a structural anthropologist would look at all funeral rites across all cultures) that I would discover why colonies failed. I expected to find evidence of how English colonial projectors learned from the past and applied that knowledge to the future to establish successful colonies. Projectors certainly studied their history and attempted to draw lessons from the past to develop a better theory of colonization for the future. They failed to do so.

The eventual success of North American English colonies had less to do with developing the best colonial model or the right kind of economy. Outside of the aberrations of Jamestown and Plymouth, I suspect English colonies only became successful long-term once they were able to tap into the Caribbean slave system and its ancillary markets to sell their products and engage in the carrying trade; and after the change in English domestic politics linked to the Civil War. The political changes included the development of centralized government decision making and abolishment of merchant trade monopolies, but those changes, taking place during the 1640s and after, are beyond the scope of this study.

Colonial projectors imagined an America that did not exist between 1570 and 1640. Their vision led to the unsuccessful pursuit of profits from commodities like gold,

unicorns, sassafras, and fish. Consequently, colonial failure was the norm and success was the aberration. But colonial projectors, like Edward Hayes and Christopher Carleill, kept envisioning North America as a potential commonwealth flourishing in “A temperat & wholesome land: well peopled: replenished with comodities albeit gross, yet needfull for mans use: Aptly scytuated for concourse & recourse of Nations to the mayntenaunce of trade.”<sup>72</sup> It would take centuries of experience, and unforeseen institutional and political changes for this dream to become a reality. But projectors kept the powerful vision alive through their continued efforts to colonize North America. North America was a geographic space where projectors envisaged their desires, and turned America into an alluring and uncatchable lover, reflected by the poet John Donne who called his lover’s body a new-found-land, and asserted “How blest am I in this discovering thee.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Edward Hayes and Christopher Carleill, *A discourse Concerning a voyage intended for the planting of Chrystyan religion and people in the North west regions of America in places most apt for the Constitution of our boddies, and the spedy advanuncement of a state*, 1591 and 1602, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 163.

<sup>73</sup> R. C., *The Harmony of the Muses*, (London : Printed by T.W. for William Gilbertson, 1654), 2-3.

## CHAPTER II

### “SUPPLY THE WANTES OF ALL OUR DECAYED TRADES”

That this westerne voyadge will yelde unto us all the commodities of Europe, Affrica, and Asia, as far as wee were wonte to travell, and supply the wantes of all our decayed trades.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616), *Discourse of Western Planting*, 1584.

In 1583, on the heels of turning down the opportunity to be a member of Humphrey Gilbert’s failed colonization attempt in Newfoundland, Richard Hakluyt the younger was sent to France under the orders of Queen Elizabeth I and her spy master Francis Walsingham for the purpose of gathering intelligence on the New World. While in Paris, Hakluyt collected human intelligence from sailors, furriers, merchants, and French colonial projectors. He also gathered open source intelligence about Canada and Norumbega from publications written in French, Italian, Portuguese, and Latin. He summarized what he learned in a 1584 secret communiqué written to Elizabeth and her closest advisors that today is known as the *Discourse on Western Planting*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hakluyt, “Discourse of Western Planting by Richard Hakluyt, 1584,” *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts* vol. 2, E.G.R. Taylor ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), 211.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Mancall, *Hakluyt’s Promise: An Elizabethan’s Obsession for an English America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 129. Mancall called the “Discourse” a “secret communiqué.”

The secret communiqué was in many ways a policy paper. Hakluyt envisioned a New World that would solve the wants and needs of Britain. One subheading of the policy paper was entitled “That this westernne voyage will yelde unto us all the commodities of Europe, Africa, and Asia, as far as wee were wonte to travel, and supply the wants of all our decayed trades.”<sup>3</sup> He imagined the Americas, particularly North America, as a substitute for Europe, Africa and Asia – one continent that would replace three. Hakluyt and later colonial projectors argued that permanent North American colonies would generate immense profits and benefit the nation’s economy and security. However, the profits did not materialize for two primary reasons: first, some of the products merchants sought did not exist in North America; and second, other products could be acquired from mainland Europe more cheaply.

During the Tudor-Stuart era, a small but important contingent of European intellectuals were colonial projectors. Projectors were the men who made careers from “spinning projects” or promoting trade and later colonial ventures in America. Karen Kupperman described projectors constantly appealing to wealthy backers for support for colonial schemes to enrich both the backers and the projector, as well as enhance Britain’s economy and security.<sup>4</sup> The earliest English colonial projectors had little to no firsthand experience with the New World and instead knew America only through the writings of others. Initially, they turned to the experiences of the French, Spanish, and

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Hakluyt and E.G.R. Taylor, “Discourse of Western Planting,” in *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts* vol. II (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), 211

<sup>4</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 44.

Portuguese for their starting reference points, but, with each passing decade, English activity in America increased, and as a result, more material about America written in English emerged. Both foreign and domestic accounts of America were collected by a small group of men, including Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas, who used their publications to generate interest for American projects.

Colonial projectors envisioned America to be a profitable place, and they advocated for the colonization of the area and the development of the same type of commodities found in Europe, Africa, and Asia. They tracked down and translated texts on the region to learn as much as they could about New World resources. They made exploratory voyages, and eventually planted colonies. They embraced the vision that America was filled with profitable trade commodities. They were wrong.

### **Creating the Anglo-American Narrative**

Authors, translators, publishers, and patrons of the printed book imparted the idea, and necessary books on geography and trade onto the English people required to create an empire.<sup>5</sup> Two men within this category are Richard Hakluyt the Younger (1553-1616) and Samuel Purchas (1577-1626). Hakluyt and Purchas were among a small group of men who collected and published the writings of explorers and other colonial projectors; however, men like Hakluyt and Purchas were more than compilers of travel literature, they were editors who made decisions on what to collect, what to print, and what to

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<sup>5</sup> John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965), 1.

exclude from their published works. The act of printing was an engagement with the public; Hakluyt and Purchas wanted the public to read their work, otherwise the information that the works contained would not have circulated.<sup>6</sup> Through their editorial preferences, Hakluyt and Purchas created the authoritative tomes of the early colonial English experience, and in the process, generated the dominant narrative of the early Anglo-American colonial world that survives today. Hakluyt, Purchas, and others like them were part of the wider print culture that spread through Europe with the advent of Guttenberg's printing press in 1440.<sup>7</sup>

The writing, publishing, and reading of voyage narratives were linked to colonization and in a symbiotic relationship. Both industries depended on each. Writing and publishing advertised the findings of voyagers and colonizers, were used as fundraising and tools to lure investors, and provided the information investors needed to feel secure about their ventures. While travel narratives prospectuses in an anachronism, they served a similar purpose by giving the speculating public information they needed to make informed financial investments. Printers made money from selling travel narratives to the curious, adventurous, and the greedy.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 306-307.

<sup>7</sup> Print culture is an alternative way of describing book history which emphasizes the production, distribution, reception, and social relationships that printing created, David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 139-140. For more on print culture see Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 2005); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* trans. L.G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

Consequently, the writing of voyage narratives was an integral and required part of many ventures. Exploration, trade, and colonialism combined with print culture resulting in printed maps and voyage narratives. Projectors selected individual participants involved in a voyage to record the narrative. For example, James Rosier was hired by Thomas Arundell, 1st Baron of Wardour “to take due notice, and make true report of the discovery” of the voyage headed by George Waymouth to the coast of Maine in 1605.<sup>8</sup>

In the Anglo world, the leaders in the production and distribution of travel narratives were Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas.<sup>9</sup> Hakluyt’s chief work was *The principall navigations, voiages, and discoveries of the English nation* (1589), which he expanded into three volumes between 1598 and 1600. It was a collection of travel narratives documenting the involvement of English merchants and traders with the outside world, particularly Asia and America. Purchas acquired Hakluyt’s remaining manuscripts in 1620 and put them to press in 1621. It took almost four years, 4,000

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<sup>8</sup> James Rosier, *A True Relation of the most prosperous voyage made this present yeere 1605, by Captaine George Waymouth, in the Discovery of the Land of Virginia: Where he discovered 60 miles up a most excellent River; together with a most fertile land. Written by James Rosier, a Gentleman employed in the voyage. Londoni, Impensis Geor. Bishop, 1605* in Andrew J. Wahll, ed. *Sabino: Popham Colony Reader, 1602-2003* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2003), 31. For more on voyage narratives and the rhetoric authors used to explain failure, see Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> There were two Richard Hakluyts, often designated as the Elder and the Younger. The Richard Hakluyt I refer to is the Younger. For more on both Richard Hakluyts, see Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt’s Promise: An Elizabethan’s Obsession for an English America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); D.B. Quinn ed., *The Hakluyt Handbook* 2 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1974); E.G.R. Taylor ed., *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts* 2 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1935). For more on Samuel Purchas, see L.E. Pennington ed., *The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, 2 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997). For an overview of the bibliographic history of English overseas interests see John Parker, *Books to Build and Empire* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965); and Mary Fuller, *Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narratives in the Age of European Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

pages, and four volumes to complete *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625).<sup>10</sup> Purchas' material was similar to Hakluyt's, but Purchas was a more active editor by condensing or eliminating various narratives.

Richard Hakluyt understood that England and Britain were at a disadvantage in the colonizing game compared to the other great European empires, and he therefore set out to identify, copy, and translate foreign travel literature for a British audience. At the time, current events (or at the very least, recent history) were not studied within institutions. The study of history and cosmography (geography) traditionally rested in the realm of the nobles and gentlemen who studied the classical world and the chronicles of England. History lessons were about virtue and resolve – matters typically not applicable to the theory of colonization. Hakluyt believed studying recent history, current events, and cosmography was necessary to establish an overseas empire. As early as 1582, Hakluyt agitated for the creation of a chair of geography at the university level. Hakluyt knew that his published works on the subjects were necessary reference and study material for aspiring colonial projectors and theorists.<sup>11</sup>

Hakluyt not only found and copied travel literature, he also translated it into English at least on fourteen separate instances; he hoped his readers would learn something from past colonial mistakes and failures.<sup>12</sup> Tracking down this material had

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<sup>10</sup> Pamela Neville-Sington, "The Primary Purchas Bibliography: Printing History," *The Purchas Handbook* vol. 2, 519.

<sup>11</sup> John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographic History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam: N. Isarel, 1965), 95-96.

<sup>12</sup> F.M. Rogers, "Hakluyt as Translator," *The Hakluyt Handbook* vol. 1, D.B. Quinn ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1974), 37-38.

not been easy. In the preface to *The Principal Navigations* (1589), Hakluyt lamented “what restlesse nights, what painefull dayes, what heat, what cold I haue indured; how many long & chargeable iourneys I haue traueiled; how many famous libraries I haue searched into; what varietie of ancient and moderne write I haue perused; what a number of old records, patents, priuileges, letters, &c. I haue redeemed from obscuritie.”<sup>13</sup>

While probably a combination of fact, hyperbole, and the topos of the overworked and underappreciated scholar, Hakluyt presented himself as braving lack of sleep, the elements, and the tedium of archival research to bring recent history and cosmography to light in early-modern Britain.

Hakluyt looked to the colonial literature of the past in order to imagine the future of Anglo-American colonization. In *Divers Voyages* (1582), he linked the often used trope of bees to human expansion and empire: As bees grow too numerous in numbers for their hive, they must swarm and find a new dwelling place. He connected the bee metaphor to the Greeks and the Carthaginians who planted colonies around the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt concluded that the lessons learned from nature and history justified English expansion in America. He also studied the exploratory and colonial experience of other Europeans in America including the difficulties the Spanish faced in Florida, the Portuguese search for the Northwest Passage and their sugar production in Brazil, and the French in Florida and Canada. Hakluyt imagined and conceived “gret

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Hakluyt, “Preface to the Reader as touching the principall Voyages and discourses in the first part,” *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation made by sea or ouer-land* (London, 1599-1600), no page number.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Hakluyt, “Preface to *Divers Voyages*, 1582” in *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, E.G.R. Taylor ed. vol. 1, 176.

hope, that the time approacheth and nowe is, that we of England may share and part stakes (if we will ourselves) both with the Spaniarde and the Portingale in part of America, and other regions as yet undiscovered.”<sup>15</sup> Hakluyt did not rely exclusively on foreign literature; he gathered evidence from far and wide. He described the process in the private brief to Elizabeth I and her advisors now known as *Discourse on Western Planting* (1584). He uses open sources written in a variety of languages including Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and English. The Latin writings included letters written by the Hungarian Stephen Parmenius during his time in Newfoundland. Hakluyt’s French sources included Jacques Cartier’s writing about the interior of Canada, and Stephen Bellinger’s account of Nova Scotia. Gonzalo Fernández de Ovideo y Valdés and Giovanni Ramusio were published in Italian and from these works Hakluyt learned about the region ranging from 40 to 47 degrees latitude, or roughly from New Jersey to Cape Breton, and from Jasper Corterealis about Newfoundland. In English, Hakluyt read the accounts of George Best and George Peckham who visited areas of Nunavut, Labrador, and Newfoundland. Hakluyt also gathered human intelligence from people involved in overseas trade, including a Parisian skinner who acquired furs from Canada, and a Portuguese trader with experience in Syria and Guinea. He also mentioned plans to speak with a trader from Savoy recently returned from Japan.

Hakluyt continued his efforts to publish accounts of North America in 1587 by translating Rene Laudonniere’s work about the failed French attempt to colonize modern South Carolina and Georgia in the 1560s - the same colonization effort where Native

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Hakluyt, “Preface to Divers Voyages, 1582,” E.G.R. Taylor ed., vol. 1, 175.

Americans introduced sassafras to Europeans (see chapter 4). In the work's dedication to Walter Raleigh, Hakluyt outlined the book's contents including "manie speciall pointes concerning the commodities of these parts, the accidentes of the French-mens gouernment therin," and most importantly, "the causes of their good or bad successe."<sup>16</sup> Hakluyt wanted his English readers, including Walter Raleigh, to learn from the experiences and mistakes of previous French colonization efforts. In addition to the French, Hakluyt argued English colonial projectors, like Raleigh, needed to study the Spanish and the Portuguese because "if your men follow their steps, by your wise direction I doubt but in due time they hall reape no lesse commoditie and benefit."<sup>17</sup>

Hakluyt was a selective editor and only published accounts he thought beneficial to English imperialist aims. He published George Best's and Dionysus Settle's accounts of Martin Frobisher's failed colony in Nunavut, but he chose not to print Thomas Ellis' account entitled *A true reporte of the third and last voyage into Meta Incognita* (1578) and Michael Lok's unpublished manuscript about the voyage. It is impossible to say with certainty that Hakluyt knew about Ellis' and Lok's accounts, but Hakluyt was a man who took pride in hunting down accounts, digging in libraries, and interviewing important people. He did get his hands on Settle's and Best's accounts that were published as independent monographs in the same year as Ellis' book, so it is safe to assume that Hakluyt had access to Ellis's *A true report*. Best and Settle wrote positive descriptions of

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<sup>16</sup> René Goulaine de Laudonnière and Richard Hakluyt, "To the Right Worthie and Honorable Gentleman, Sir Water Raleigh knight," *A notable historie containing foure voyages made by certayne French captaynes vnto Florida* (London, 1587), no page number.

<sup>17</sup> Laudonniere and Hakluyt, "Dedication," *Voyages made vnto Florida*.

the freezing region while Ellis' account described icebergs and storms in a bleak and inhospitable land.<sup>18</sup> Ellis included four illustrations of icebergs he encountered in *Meta Incognita*, and he described an environment of "cruell nipping stormes of the raging winter."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps Hakluyt did not reprint Ellis to avoid bad press that might prevent future colonization schemes.

Like Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas shaped the Anglo-American narrative. Purchas bought the material that Hakluyt already had published as well as other writings Hakluyt was waiting to publish. Purchas came under attack as early as 1717 for his editorial decisions on these voyage narratives.<sup>20</sup> Despite the criticism, Purchas' editorial decisions helped to create the narrative arc of the American story. An example of Purchas' editorializing power is his decision to not print most of the material related to the Sagadahoc colony. The traditional narrative of the founding of the United States begins with a brief discussion of Elizabethan England and the failed colony of Roanoke founded under the direction of Walter Raleigh. The narrative continues with the emergence of the Virginia Company and the founding of Jamestown in Virginia. This narrative was shaped by a number of influences, including the storyline constructed by Samuel Purchas. Publishing within two decades of the events, Samuel Purchas chose to print works associated with the Virginia Company's activity centered on Jamestown, but chose to not

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 54-60.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Ellis, *A true report of the third and last voyage into Meta incognita: acheiued vy the worthie Capteine, M. Martine Frobisher Esquire. Anno. 1578. Written by Thomas Ellis sailer and one of the companie* (London, 1578), no page number given, image 18 of 25 on Early English Books Online.

<sup>20</sup> Carol Urness, "Purchas as Editor," *The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times, and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, vol. 1, L.E. Pennington ed. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997), 121-144.

print works about the Virginia Company's activity in Sagadahoc, now located in present-day Maine. Jamestown and Sagadahoc were sister colonies, each one-half of the two-pronged colonization scheme of North America developed by the Virginia Company. Purchas explained his purposeful omission of the Sagadahoc material by writing "our voluminousness makes me afraid of offending nicer and queasier stomackes: for which cause I have omitted them, even after I had with great labour fitted them to the Presse."<sup>21</sup> This omission, shaped by the perceived length of the text and the supposed sensitivity for the readers' queasy stomachs, erased one half of the events that would later be deemed as the eventual establishment of the United States. First-hand accounts of Sagadahoc including the journals of Thomas Hanham, Raleigh Gilbert, James Davies, and John Elliot were relegated to the proverbial cutting room floor, and in the process Purchas directly shaped how people in the future would understand early Anglo-American colonization by forgetting the other half of the Virginia. This editorial decision is all the more significant because the writings of Hanham, Gilbert, Davies, and Elliot have never been recovered.

### **Trading Background**

Hakluyt and Purchas' publications traced the discovery of America and its link to western European expansion and the growth of the consumption of luxury goods.

Expansion and trade were rooted in the medieval era when European merchants

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus, or Pvrchas his Pilgrimes, The Fourth Part* (London: William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, and are to be sold at shop in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the Rose, 1625), 1837.

dominated the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The Crusades and the establishment of Crusader states interjected Christian traders into the Asian pipeline where luxury goods from China and India were transported to the Levant via the overland and sea routes of the Silk Road. The English were actively engaged in the Mediterranean and Baltic Sea trade during the medieval era; however by the 1550s, this involvement had dwindled.

By the mid-sixteenth century, most English overseas trade was concentrated on the entrepôt of Antwerp in present day Belgium. Antwerp was a busy port, welcoming both ships from other European ports, and transoceanic vessels from the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific rims. The trade in luxury items, including sugar and spice, was dominated by the Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch. The English were minor players.

Antwerp was the center of the European economy during the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>22</sup> This was in due in part to the city being the dominant European sugar market, containing nineteen sugar refineries by 1550.<sup>23</sup> It was also due to a banking solution developed in during the high Middle Ages called the *cédule obligatoire* or the bill of exchange, which allowed bank operations to operate with ease and efficiency.<sup>24</sup> The bill of exchange permitted a first party to pay a second party an agreed

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<sup>22</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, trans. Sian Reynolds, vol. 2, 3 vols., Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 393-394.

<sup>23</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 193.

<sup>24</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, trans. Sian Reynolds, vol. 3, 3 vols., Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 155-157. Variation of bills of exchange existed in the Roman Empire and also the medieval Islamic world. For more on the commercial developments of the Middle Ages, including the bill of exchange, see Robert S. Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University press, 1976).

amount of money on a set date in the future, and the debt could be transferred to a third party. The extension of credit and the ease of transferring and paying debts helped to make commerce easier for merchants. Antwerp, as a European leader of commerce and finance, might be described as the New York City of its day during the early phases of English overseas expansion.

English overseas trade centered on the cloth industry in Antwerp. where the Merchant Adventurers, a collective of English cloth wholesalers, positioned the center of their operations.<sup>25</sup> The English traded primarily with the Hanseatic League, with the majority of traffic going through Antwerp. The trade was profitable until 1550-51 when the cloth market collapsed. The slump shocked English merchants into ending their reliance on one trade, one export commodity, and one trade route.<sup>26</sup> English overseas trade could no longer rely on the London to Antwerp route, the trade with the Hansards of North Germany, and cloth as the chief export commodity.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 448.

<sup>26</sup> Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: 1603-1714* 3rd ed. (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2003), 24. Coward's book is a good base to understand British history from 1603-1714 and has sections that serve as historiographic essays. Phil Withington, while reviewing another book edited by Barry Coward described the *The Stuart Age* with the claim "School children of a certain generation...will have learnt their political history of seventeenth-century England from the first edition of Barry Coward's *The Stuart Age*...[it is] an admirable textbook." The first edition Withington referred to came out in 1980. Two more editions were published in 1994 and 2003 with updates reflecting changes and additions to the historiography. The first edition was part of the Longman History series on British History, edited by W.N. Medlicott. See Phil Withington, review of *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, ed. Barry Coward, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 12, no. 4 (Spring 2006): 625.

<sup>27</sup> For more on changes in the English economy at the end of the sixteen and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, see Barry Emanuel Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England, 1600-1642, A Study in the Instability of a Mercantile Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 1-33.

The efforts to create new trading companies, new trade routes, new products, and new markets eventually led to English overseas trade with Asia, Africa, and the Americas, and ultimately to colonization. Finding these new companies, routes, products, and markets influenced The Merchant Adventurers to pull out of Antwerp and focus their efforts in Hamburg, Emdem, and Stade. By the end of the sixteenth century, the English protected both their domestic and foreign carrying trade by expelling the Hansards from London. English merchants reappeared in the waters and ports their medieval counterparts frequented in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. In 1555, the Muscovy Company was formed to trade in Russia, and in 1579 the Eastland Company was founded to trade in Poland. Baltic ports supplied England with naval stores and were markets for English cloth exports. The founding of the Levant Company in 1581, the Venice Company in 1583, and the Barbary Company in 1585 brought the return of the English to the Mediterranean. Furthermore, English merchants maneuvered themselves into capturing a lucrative portion of the intra-Mediterranean trade during the 1590s.<sup>28</sup> It was in the Mediterranean that the English developed their skills in long distance trade in foreign lands - and learned the skills necessary to trade throughout the world and establish empires in Asia and North America.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12, 47.

## Trans-Continental Trade Linked to Colonization

During the century after 1550 England began to seriously enter the overseas trade with Asia and the Americas. While it is tempting to recount and romanticize the voyages of Francis Drake, John Hawkins, Thomas Cavendish, and other “Sea Dogs,” the majority of trade was conducted in a more mundane and less idealized fashion. The East India Company, founded in 1601, entered into an Asian trade dominated by the Portuguese and the Dutch. Despite coming late to the region, the English company was able to make significant gains in India and the Spice Islands (Indonesia) and outperformed the Dutch by 1650.<sup>30</sup> The Virginia (1606), Newfoundland (1610), Dorchester (1624), and Massachusetts Bay Companies (1629) were just a few that entered into the North American trade. Over the course of the seventeenth century, three areas of trade emerged in North America: the Chesapeake and Bermuda; the Lesser Antilles; and New England.<sup>31</sup> Hand-in-hand, zones of trade were also zones of settlement as trading efforts and colonization were interconnected.

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<sup>30</sup> Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 26. For more on the English side of the British East India Company see K.N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600-1640* (London: F. Class, 1965), and, Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2011). For more on India in relation to the Dutch and the Portuguese see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Jack P. Greene states there were “five substantial areas of overseas settlements - the Irish plantations of Ulster and Munster; the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland; Bermuda; the New England colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Haven; and the West Indian colonies of Barbados and the Leeward Islands” in Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 8. This paper excludes Ireland from the North

Planning, developing, and executing a trading and colonization venture took time, money, and luck, and often times these ventures failed. For instance, the Newfoundland project headed by Humphrey Gilbert and George Peckham hit several snags during its short life. In 1583, Sir Francis Walsingham, the principal secretary and spymaster for Elizabeth I, approached the trading guild called The Merchant Adventurers of Exeter, to invest money in Humphrey Gilbert's Newfoundland venture.<sup>32</sup> Humphrey Gilbert died on the return home from the unsuccessful attempt to colonize St. John's Newfoundland. George Peckham, one of Gilbert's financiers, tried to organize another colonization attempt of Newfoundland. Again, Francis Walsingham campaigned on behalf of the colonial attempt. Walsingham's servant, Oliver Manwayringe, spoke to the Merchants Adventurers of Exeter in person on January 11, 1584. The Merchant Adventurers reported that Manwayringe approached them and "declared the pretence and order of a voyage pretended to the western partes of America and the greate benefeicte and commoditie thay maye ensue thereof aswell to the whole realme as to the adventurers that waye."

Manwayringe provided evidence of the seriousness and validity of the attempt by showing "certen lettres patent for the assurance of the benefeicte of the saide adventurers,

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American model, and links Bermuda to Virginia since they were owned/started by the Virginia Company and then the closely affiliated Somers Isle Company.

<sup>32</sup> This is explained by Kenneth Andrews as an example of "patronage," a term that signifies "a variable interplay of state control and individual initiative in which great men at Court and in the councils of the realm performed an indispensable rôle as intermediaries. Elizabeth's Principal Secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, was the most active of these...Walsingham had a hand in most of the ventures of expansion that occurred during his period of office from 1573 to 1590," in Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 15.

and a booke towching the discription and order of the said pretended voyage.”<sup>33</sup> The "booke towching the discription and order of the said voyage" may have been Peckham's own *True report, of the late discoveries...by that valiant and worthy gentleman, Sir Humfrey Gilbert*, freshly published two months prior and probably not coincidentally, dedicated to Francis Walsingham. The book promised that the colonization venture would be profitable to all levels of Elizabethan society.

George Peckham argued that in the past, adventurers fell into two sorts, the first being noblemen and gentlemen, and the second being merchants. Peckham proposed joining the two, “that there shalbe one societie” comprised of nobles, gentlemen, and merchants, and “that each society may freely and fanckly trade and traficke one with the other.”<sup>34</sup> Manwayringe, in his presentation to the society of merchants may have emphasized the roughly seventy products and commodities listed by Peckham in the *True report* including the hide of “a kinde of Beaste, much bigger then an Oxe, whose hyde is more then 18. foote long.” that sold for 40 shillings.<sup>35</sup> Peckham envisioned turning a profit on Newfoundland’s flora like sassafras, pepper, almonds, and oranges; and the island’s metals like gold, silver, copper, and tin; and precious stones like rubies, pearls,

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<sup>33</sup> Sir George Peckham appeals for support at Exeter, December, 1583 to January, 1584 in David Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, *English Plans for North America. The Roanoke Voyages, New England Ventures*. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 261-262.

<sup>34</sup> Peckham, *A true reporte, of the late discoveries, and possession, taken in the right of the Crowne of Englande, of the new-found landes* (London, 1583), E.iii verso.

<sup>35</sup> George Peckham, *A True reporte of the late discoveries...by that valiaunt and worthy gentleman, Sir Humfrey Gilbert* (London: 1583), E. iv recto. For more on Peckham’s *True reporte of the late discoveries*, see John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965), 112-114.

and crystals. The promise of lucrative trade compelled the Merchant Adventurers of Exeter to raise 100 pounds for the Peckham venture.

Despite the backing of Francis Walsingham and the investment of groups like the Merchant Adventurers of Exeter, the Peckham venture failed to materialize. This was in part due to the venture being financially tied to Sir Philip Sidney, the son-in-law of Francis Walsingham. On paper, Sidney had acquired 3,000,000 acres of Newfoundland from Humphrey Gilbert, and had then granted a portion of the land to Peckham. Peckham tried to sell this grant of land owned by Sidney as the site of a future colony, one where Catholics could live freely.<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth I forbade Sidney from traveling to the intended colony, and Peckham was imprisoned in 1584 for his overt Catholic activities.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the colony failed twice: first, physically, in the hands of Gilbert; and secondly, in the planning stage, in the hands of Peckham and Sidney.

The Gilbert/Peckham failed colony in Newfoundland did not intend to rely solely on the trade in exotic items like sassafras, gold, and rubies, but also in items one would expect to find in both the Baltic and Mediterranean trades. Richard Hakluyt the Elder wrote a note to Gilbert recommending the colony purchase and trade in a variety of commodities similar to the Baltic trade including: pitch, tar, flax, hemp, masts, boards, fish, tallow, and hides. Furthermore, he recommended items similar to the Mediterranean

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<sup>36</sup> “Sidney, Sir Philip (1554–1586),” H. R. Woudhuysen in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eee ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2005, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25522> (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> “Peckham, Sir George (*d.* 1608),” James McDermott in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eee ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21743> (accessed September 10, 2013).

trade like oil, wine, salt, and fruit. Peckham echoed Hakluyt's Mediterranean advice when he emphasized that Newfoundland had the fertility of soil "& euery other commoditie or marchaundize for which, with no smal perril we doo trauaill in Barbery, Spayne, Portingall, Fraunce, Italie, Muscouie & Dansike."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Hakluyt also recommended finding and exploiting luxury metals gold, silver, and copper.<sup>39</sup> Newfoundland was envisioned to be a new source of trade goods found in Europe, Asia, and Africa, just like Richard Hakluyt predicted in his *Discourse on Western Planting*.

Colonial projectors hoped that both exotic and mundane commodities from American colonies would increase and diversify English trade that was nearly wiped out when the cloth market crashed in 1550. Walter Raleigh attempted to emphasize this point in 1584 when he proposed a bill to Parliament to confirm his charter for Virginia. It was passed in the House of Commons but it was rejected by the House of Lords. The bill read that the land Raleigh would discover and take into possession for Elizabeth I and her realm would contain "Infynite Comodities of the same mighte yelde unto this her Realme of Englande the benefittes before remembred and manye others." The "benefittes before remembred" included the opportunity to increase traffic and trade for the benefit of Elizabeth's loving subjects and "save them from idleness by being training the virtues of

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<sup>38</sup> Peckham, *A true reporte of the late discoveries*, E. iv verso.

<sup>39</sup> 1578. Notes prepared by Richard Hakluyt the elder for Sir Humphrey Gilbert in Quinn *New American World* vol. 3, 25.

commodious labor, as well as spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to combat ignorance, error, and superstition.”<sup>40</sup>

The first published account of the 1584 voyage to Virginia also echoed the sentiment that American colonies would increase trade. The account was published by Raphael Holinshed in 1587 and compiled by Abraham Fleming from material supplied by William Camden. The account tells how Raleigh sent Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe to discover land between Norumbega and Florida, and they did so and brought forth information that assured Raleigh of the “great commodities that would arise to the realme of England by traffique, if that the English had anie habitation, and were planted to live there.”<sup>41</sup> Once there was "anie habitation" in the area, trade would increase. However, everything did not go as planned. Ralph Lane, writing Francis Walsingham from Roanoke Island in 1585 exclaimed that there was no kingdom or state in Christendom that yielded more commodities that he described as good, plentiful, and pleasing for delight. He proclaimed to not “yeate founde on all our serche one stynckinge weede growynge in thys lande.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the excitement and promise generated by the possibility of Anglo-American colonization, and expanded trade into the Atlantic, Baltic, Mediterranean, and Indian worlds, there was no increase in volume of English foreign trade from 1600 to

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<sup>40</sup> Parliamentary bill to confirm Raleigh’s patent, December, 1584 in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 270.

<sup>41</sup> The Holinshed *Chronicle* account of the 1584 voyage, 1584, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 282,

<sup>42</sup> Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham, August 12, 1585 in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 289-290.

1650.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the majority of English exports continued to be woolen cloth shipped from London to mainland Europe, and not American imports brought into England, and then exported to Europe. However it is impossible to determine the value and quantity of English overseas trade prior to the turn of the eighteenth century. During most of the seventeenth century, English customs duties were collected by people dubbed “customs farmers.” They paid a fee to the crown for the privilege of collecting and recording customs on a private enterprise basis. It was not until the creation of the office of Inspector-General of Imports and Exports in 1696 that continuous custom accounts were generated.<sup>44</sup>

Trade with Africa, America, Russia, and Asia did not substantially contribute to the total volume of England’s foreign trade. However, the trade represented a significant change in the English approach to commerce, and signified England’s growing connection to exploration and acquiring overseas territory.<sup>45</sup> While trade with North America was statistically insignificant, it did usher in a new period where imagination fueled the search for new trade routes, the creation of new trade companies, and the construction of new markets.

It is easy to overstate the scale of English overseas trade from the Elizabethan era to the founding of Massachusetts Bay (1558-1630). After all, trade companies and

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<sup>43</sup> Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England, 1603-1714* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2003), 25-26.

<sup>44</sup> Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 26. Records started to be kept in 1696 by the Board of Customs and Excise, Office of the Inspector General of Imports and Exports, 1696-1871 whose records can be found at TNA CUST 2.

<sup>45</sup> T.S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company 1553-1603* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1956), 274.

merchants were scattered across the globe in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, trading in valuable luxury goods, and generating wealth. This trade was important because it established the ground work for the later British Empire both materially and mentally. However, while a tradition of maritime enterprise and achievement was established, that enterprise did not significantly change England's balance of foreign trade until the mid-seventeenth century.

### **Gold**

From the outset, the desire to find gold was one of the central aims of English colonization in America. Karen Kupperman describes how English entrepreneurs of empire asked the question 'what a colony was for,' and answered by concluding it was to obtain gold.<sup>46</sup> Europeans believed they needed American products, particularly gold and silver.<sup>47</sup> The European thirst for gold was not met by the increase of mining in Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Africa, and Scotland.<sup>48</sup>

Christopher Columbus was the first to establish the link between gold and America. Upon finding gold in 1492, Columbus named Hispaniola Ophir after the place

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<sup>46</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>47</sup> J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 108.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 4. Andrews did not mention Scotland.

where the biblical King Solomon received shipments of gold as tribute.<sup>49</sup> English Colonial projectors imagined that North America would provide gold in the same quantities as the Spanish found in the Caribbean and South America. As early as March 1501, letters patent issued by Henry VII to a group of English and Azorean Portuguese merchants stated they “shall have power and permission to bring and transport and cause to be brought or transported merchandise and wares, gold and silver in bar, precious stones, and other goods whatsoever grown in the countries, islands, and places...”<sup>50</sup> In December 1502, Henry VII issued letters patent to another syndication of Portuguese and English merchants known as the Company of Adventurers into the New Found Lands. The syndicate was permitted to transport “gold and silver in bar [and] precious stones...thus to be recovered and found.”<sup>51</sup> The Letters Patent issued to Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1578 by Elizabeth I stated that the crown would collect “the fift part of all the oare of gold and silver.”<sup>52</sup> The 1584 charter issued by Elizabeth I to Sir Walter Raleigh for Virginia called for the crown to possess “the fift part of all the oare of gold and siluer”

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<sup>49</sup> Samuel Purchas, *Pvrchas his Pilgrimage. Or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in all Ages and Places Discovered, from the Creation vnto this Present. In Fovre Parts. This First Containeth a Theologicall and Geographical Historie of Asia, Africa, and America, with the Ilands Adjacent* (London: William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1614), 718.

<sup>50</sup> Letters patent for Richarde Warde, Thomas Assshehurst, John Thomas, João Fernandes, Francisco Fernandes, and João Gonsalves, March 19, 1501 in Quinn, *New American World* vol 1, 105.

<sup>51</sup> Letters Patent to Hugh Elyot, Thomas Assshehurst, João Gonsalves, and Francisco Fernandes, December 9, 1502, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 1, 112.

<sup>52</sup> "Letters Patent to Sir Humfrey Gylberte June 11, 1578," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/16th\\_century/humfrey.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/16th_century/humfrey.asp), accessed 9/10/13.

acquired by Raleigh.<sup>53</sup> The 1606 Charter of Virginia issued by James I granted the right to “dig, mine, and search for all Manner of Mines of Gold, Silver, and Copper” to both the “first colony” planted at Jamestown Virginia, and the “second colony” at Sagadahoc, Maine. Colonial sites were envisioned in part to be sites of mineral extractions because the existence of precious metals was a guarantee for royal support. The crown had a history of financing and participating in voyages to Guinea, the Caribbean, and to Labrador in the quest of obtaining gold and silver.

Colonial projectors envisioned gold to be easily attainable in America. This belief originated from the Spanish experiences. The English heard and read accounts about the gold acquired by Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortes, and Francisco Pizarro. Richard Eden’s published *Decades of the Newe Worlde* (1555), a translation of the Spanish historian Pietro Martire d’Anghiera aka Peter Martyr, reported immense amounts of gold found in Spanish America. Eden and Martyr claimed the Indians did not value gold and the Spanish were able to obtain it easily, as the Indians “were wel wyllynge to departe with, and accoumpted as superfluities, as golde, perles, precious stones and such other.”<sup>54</sup> Gold was a superfluity to the Indians that the Spanish could easily acquire through trade. Martyr, through Eden’s “Englishing” of the text, described how at the islands of Antilia, Indians would “cast them selues by heapes into the sea, and came swimminge to the shyppes, bryngyng golde with them, which they chaunged with owre

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<sup>53</sup> “Charter to Sir Walter Raleigh: 1584,” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/16th\\_century/raleigh.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/16th_century/raleigh.asp), accessed 9/10/13.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Eden and Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, “Preface to the Reader,” *The decades of the newe worlde* (London, 1555), a.ii, recto.

men for erthen pottes, drinking glase, poyntes, pynnes, hawkes belles, lokinge glases, and other such trifles.”<sup>55</sup> Walter Raleigh also wrote about the immense amounts of gold waiting for Englishmen. He described a “great and Golden Cities, which the spanyards call El Dorado” in Guiana, a “countrey [that] hath more quantity of Gold by manifolde, then the best partes of the Indies, or Peru.”<sup>56</sup> Twenty years later, Raleigh would return to Guiana in search of more gold but would not find any. He found only Spanish soldiers, disease, the death of his son, and the suicide of his aide.

Decades later, Richard Whitbourne, writing in 1620 to promote the colonization of Newfoundland, discussed some of the myths Englishmen believed about American gold. Whitbourne mentioned “diuers worthy Gentlemen that haue aduetured to the Seas; partly through their own conceit, seeming to know that which they did not.” These men, pretending to know things they actually did not, created the image that on the shores of Guinea and the West Indies gold washed ashore in great abundance and they could “draw it aboard their ships with Wheele-barrowes, and then share it by the pound.”<sup>57</sup>

Whitbourne was probably referring to Michael Lok’s voyages to Guinea, and Walter Raleigh’s two disastrous expeditions to Guiana. While Whitbourne knew that gathering up gold like driftwood on the shores of Africa and finding wheelbarrows of gold in the Caribbean were fantasies and dreams, he indicated that others believed these fantasies to

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<sup>55</sup> Eden, “First Decade,” *The decades of the newe worlde*, A. ii verso.

<sup>56</sup> Walter Raleigh, *The discoverie of the large, rich, and bevvtiful empire of Guiana* (London, 1596), A2 verso, and A3 recto.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Whitbourne, *A Disovrese and Discovery of Nevv-Found-Land*, (London: Felix Kingston, 1620), 34.

be an attainable reality. It was an era where projectors indulged in fantasies of effortless and infinite wealth from American gold, rather than exploring the notion of the slow accumulation of capital from farming and trading in the New World.<sup>58</sup>

Despite of the lack of production and evidence, gold extraction and the dreams of Spanish wealth lingered in the imagination of the English for decades. In 1629, Robert Heath was granted the Province of Carolina by Charles I by letters patent that read he had the right to “all veines, mines or pits either upon or conceald of Gold, Silver Jewells & precious stones.” Furthermore, Heath, like his predecessors, owed “the fifth & part of all the metall of Gold & Silver” to the crown.<sup>59</sup> In 1578, Richard Hakluyt the Elder wrote to Humphrey Gilbert offering advice on where to plant a future colony. Along with being situated by the sea and with a temperate climate, the ideal colony should also allow “for the possessing of mines of golde, of silver, copper, [and] quicksilver.”<sup>60</sup>

Englishmen kept their eyes open for evidence of precious metals and jewels and reported their findings back to an eager audience at home. In 1584, Arthur Barlowe explored coastal North Carolina under the direction of Walter Raleigh in anticipation of planting the future colony of Roanoke Island. He encountered the wife of the Indian Chief Wingina and Barlowe described her wearing “in her eares...bracelets of pearles, hanging downe to her middle...and those were of the bignes of good pease.” Barlowe

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<sup>58</sup> William N. West, “Gold on Credit: Martin Frobisher’s and Walter Raleigh’s Economies of Evidence,” *Criticism* 39, no. 3 (Summer, 1997), 315.

<sup>59</sup> “Sir Robert Heath's Patent 5 Charles 1st; October, 30 1629,” The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/heath.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/heath.asp), accessed 9/10/13.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Hakluyt the Elder, “1578. Notes prepared by Richard Hakluyt the elder for Sir Humphrey Gilbert,” in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 23.

also met the king's brother who had a broad metal plate on his head, but, the English could not determine if it was gold or copper. The same brother tried to trade "a great boxe of pearl" for a sword, but, the English would not do it until they could figure out where the pearls were coming from.<sup>61</sup> Barlowe finally received information on the source of the pearls. He believed them to come from the Cipo river, "in where there is found great store of the Muscels, in which there are pearles."<sup>62</sup> The Cipo River is now called the Roanoke River.<sup>63</sup>

The North American colony that best exemplified the English fanciful vision for gold was Martin Frobisher's failed colony on Baffin Island, Nunavut, Canada. The failed colony arose out of three ventures to Nunavut between 1576 and 1578. All three ventures were failures and demonstrate how even well-organized and well-funded expeditions could be distracted and corrupt by the possibility of quick profit.<sup>64</sup> While gold was the central aim of Frobisher colony, his initial voyage and discovery of gold originated in the search for the Northwest Passage.

The desires for gold and for discovering the Northwest Passage were interrelated. The English aspiration to locate the Northwest Passage emerged in 1527 when Robert

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<sup>61</sup> Arthur Barlowe on the first Virginia voyage, Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 278-279.

<sup>62</sup> Barlowe on the first Virginia voyage, Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 280.

<sup>63</sup> W.J. Peele and the North Carolina Historical Commission / North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, *Literary and Historical Activities in North Carolina: 1900-1905* vol. 1 (Raleigh, NC: E.M. Uzzell & Co., 1907), 274.

<sup>64</sup> John C. Appleby, "War, Politics, and Colonization, 1558-1625" in *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Empire to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* Nicholas Canny ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

Thorne put forward a plan to sail over the North Pole to reach Asia.<sup>65</sup> The passage was supposed to be discovered at the Straits of Anian. These straits had yet to be found, but they were envisioned to exist. English colonial projectors like Sebastian Cabot, Humphrey Gilbert, John Davis, Henry Hudson, William Baffin, and Martin Frobisher searched throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the Straits of Anian so they could sail to Asia without having to round the tips of Spanish South America or Portuguese Africa.<sup>66</sup>

### **Martin Frobisher, Gold, and Colonization**

The life and exploits of Martin Frobisher were emblematic of the life of an adventurer during the Elizabethan era. Frobisher's ventures demonstrate the connections of merchants and commodities with Europe, the Mediterranean, West Africa, North America, and Asia in the first phases of the English colonization of America.<sup>67</sup> During his search for the Northwest Passage, Martin Frobisher succumbed to the popular vision that North America was filled with gold.

Frobisher was born sometime around 1535 in Yorkshire. His mother died when he was just 14, so he moved to London to learn a trade under his uncle, Sir John Yorke.

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<sup>65</sup> Robert Thorne's "Book presented to Dr. [Edward] Lee," 1527, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 1, 181-189.

<sup>66</sup> For more on the Strait of Anian see Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters, 1570-1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> An adventurer was a person who undertook or invested in commercial enterprise, especially in matters of trade and settlement. Ventures and adventures were economic endeavors with a chance of danger or loss with the possibility of gain. Venture and adventure were both used as nouns and verbs.

Yorke was a merchant adventurer and officer at the Southwark and Tower mints. He would later become a close friend of Edward Seymour, the Lord Protector of England during the minority of Edward VI, and of John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, who was executed for treason for advancing the claim of his daughter-in-law Lady Jane Grey to the throne of England.

John Yorke was connected to the sinews of power as a member of a syndicate of London merchants. He ventured in the first English voyages to Africa. Martin Frobisher was sent on two of these voyages. The first, in 1552, was the vanguard of English voyages to the Bight of Benin near present-day Nigeria, Benin, and Ghana. The voyage represents the immense risk and reward of trade in the Atlantic world. The venture was a success with profit made from trading for spice and gold; the risk incurred a 5% survival rate of the crew.<sup>68</sup> Frobisher returned to Africa in 1554 to trade in Guinea. Frobisher volunteered to be a hostage to expedite trade between the English merchants and their Guinean counterparts. However, Portuguese ships arrived spurring the English to flee the area leaving their hostages behind. Frobisher was captured by the Portuguese and held captive first at the legendary Elmina slave fort in present-day Ghana. Elmina is the oldest European building south of the Sahara desert and by the time Frobisher was held there, the Portuguese had occupied it for 72 years. Afterward, Frobisher was held in Lisbon. He finally returned to England sometime in 1556 or 1557.

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<sup>68</sup> Frobisher, Sir Martin (1535?-1594), James McDermott in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10191> (accessed September 12, 2013). The entry reads, "There were to be two of only 40 men, from a total complement of more than 140, to survive a fever-struck passage."

Frobisher entered into the Mediterranean trade along the north African coast and then became a privateer with his brother John Frobisher. The Frobisher brothers both were imprisoned by the English government in the 1560s for piracy against a Spanish vessel. William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Secretary of State for Elizabeth I, petitioned for Frobisher's release. Frobisher then entered into the shady world of espionage, acting as a double agent on behalf of the Privy Council to break up plots to remove the Earl of Desmond, prevent the Spanish invasion of Cornwall, and arrest Catholic rebels.

Following his time as a double agent, Frobisher reacquainted himself with Michael Lok, the backer of the African voyage that resulted in Frobisher being imprisoned by the Portuguese. Lok had become an agent of the Muscovy Company and wanted to locate the Strait of Anian. Lok convinced the Muscovy Company to fund Frobisher on a venture to discover the Northwest Passage and the northerly sea route to Asia. Lok covered his bases and acknowledged that the Northwest Passage might not be accessible however, he argued that the nearby lands of "Baccaleaw, Canada, and the new fownd lands thereto adioning," were full of people, commodities and merchandize that are found in "the cuntries of Lappia, Russia, Moscovia, Permia, Pechora, Smoietza." The commodities and merchandize included furs, hides, wax, tallow, oil, "and other." Even if Frobisher never reached Asia, he was bound to make money by trading on behalf of the Muscovy Company in America.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Michael Lok, East India by the Northwestward, in Richard Collinson ed., *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (Hakluyt Society, *Works*, 1st ser. 38 [London, 1867], 79.

Frobisher set out in 1576 with three vessels and thirty four men. He arrived at Baffin Island and while there, five of his sailors were abducted by the Inuit. In retaliation, the English captured an Inuit. Frobisher decided to turn back home in August with only thirteen of the original men and his Inuit captive, leaving many of his men behind. When Frobisher arrived home, he dazzled people with the Inuit, and a description of a passage that might be the Strait of Anian.

The sighting of the Northwest Passage spurred new investment in Frobisher to lead a second voyage. He brought home quantities of an ore he claimed was gold. Considering the amounts of gold found by the Spanish in the Caribbean and South America, expectations were high that similar amounts could be found in North America. The Calendar of State Papers recorded the return of Frobisher's second voyage: "Capt. Frobisher has returned safely, having only lost two men, and richly laden with ore valued at 80,000 l or 100,000 l. He has got great honour and the Queen will knight him and reward him liberally."<sup>70</sup> The promise of £100,000 fueled the desires and lust of the monarchy and the merchant class.

The "richly laden ore" still had to be proved and smelted and that took time. It was during this period that "gold fever" overcame merchants, courtiers, and even Elizabeth I herself. However, before gold could be extracted from the American ore, eleven ships were equipped and sent back to America in 1578 to establish a mining colony and extract gold laden ore. Elizabeth I named the territory *Meta Incognita*, or "the

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<sup>70</sup> September 19, 1577, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Of the Reign of Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566-1579*, Public Record Office (London: Longman & Co. and Trubner & Co., 1871), 518.

unknown limits” in Latin.<sup>71</sup> Gold fever gripped England, and the limits of wealth were believed to be limitless.

Frobisher’s colony was staffed by personnel believed necessary to properly operate a mining colony. The Cathay Company, a venture spun out of the Muscovy Company for the purpose of funding Frobisher, ordered Frobisher to bring 90 mariners, 130 pioneers, and 50 soldiers with him to *Meta Incognita*. From these men, 100 were to be left behind to establish a colony centered on gold mining. The 100 men were to be comprised of 40 mariners, shipwrights, and carpenters, 30 soldiers, and 30 pioneers. Immediately upon arrival, Frobisher and his men were to “repair the mines and minerals where you wrought last year.” Furthermore, if they found “richer mines,” they should “remove and work them if convenient.” In the meantime, a fort should be built for the colony and to fortify “against the people and all other extremities.” In addition, Frobisher should “fortify for defence of the mines” as well as take notes on and make maps of the territory. The planners of the colony knew that gold mining was to be hard and laborious work. Eighteen months of food amounting to 6,000 daily calories per man were sent.<sup>72</sup>

Gold trumped all, but if time permitted, Frobisher was to search for the Englishmen that had been left behind during his second voyage, and to find the South Sea. If the South Sea was found, Frobisher was ordered to only explore for 100 leagues before turning back. This order about the South Sea indicated that the mining colony was

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<sup>71</sup> Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 4, 180-181.

<sup>72</sup> David Childs, *Invading America: The English Assault on the New World, 1497-1630* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth, 2012), 130.

of more importance than discovering the Northwest Passage and journeying to Asia. The orders concluded with the instruction that Frobisher return with 800 tons of ore.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the diligent planning and preparation, the mining colony was never established. The ship carrying most of the mining equipment wrecked and the material was lost. A contemporary report stated “the hulk which carried their winter house miscarried with the ice.”<sup>74</sup> While the third voyage was still in progress, tests performed on the ore returned during the second voyage revealed that there was no gold or silver in the rocks. This caused the newly founded Company of Cathay, the backers of the voyage, to go bankrupt and left many investors with an aversion to future North American investment.<sup>75</sup> Frobisher fell into disgrace and unemployment for several years, a state which was made worse by allegations of misappropriation of state funds. Rumors circulated that he tried to join the Gilbert and Peckham venture in Newfoundland but those hopes were dashed with Gilbert’s death. Frobisher reestablished his name and credibility during the Spanish Armada campaign of 1588, and was appointed an Admiral by Elizabeth around 1590. Frobisher died in 1594 as a result of a wound he suffered in hand-to-hand combat while attacking the Spanish fortress, El León, located in Brittany, France.

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<sup>73</sup> March 1578, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Of the Reign of Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566-1579*, 536-538.

<sup>74</sup> October 10, 1578, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Of the Reign of Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566-1579*, 549.

<sup>75</sup> Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 4, 181,

The experience of Frobisher and his failed colony did not temper the imagination of future colonial projectors. The men behind colonial projects like Newfoundland, Roanoke, Jamestown, and Sagadahoc all continued to look for gold, and despite never finding any, their imaginations told them it had to be there. They never stopped looking.

### **Fish**

If gold could not be pulled from the ground, maybe it could be pulled from the sea. Europe needed fish, and traditional fishing grounds were located in the Baltic and North Sea. The need was fueled in part by the Catholic religious abstention from meat on Fridays and holy days. Even in non-Catholic England, it was a matter of law. Starting in 1563, Parliament promoted the fishing industry by requiring that no meat be eaten on Wednesdays or Saturdays. By 1597, although the English calendar called for 153 fish only days per year, only about 52 were really observed.<sup>76</sup> War also increased the need for fish as many armies were fed by “Poor John,” which was either wet-salted or dried cod. During Elizabeth I’s war with Spain, victuallers of her navy stood guard in West Country ports to procure fish needed to feed the navy, and to prevent fish from being exported to Spain.<sup>77</sup> Dried and salted fish was also a cheap and portable protein for armies on the move. Both Catholic and Protestant armies needed to eat while engaged in the Wars of Religion raging across Europe.

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<sup>76</sup> Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 26.

<sup>77</sup> Gillian T. Cell ed., *Newfoundland Discovered: English Attempts at Colonization, 1610-1630* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1982), 2-3.

The Newfoundland fisheries were part of a growing triangular flow of commodities. Mediterranean and Iberian ports imported Newfoundland cod, and exported wine and fruit to English and Dutch ports. England exported labor and supplies to Newfoundland. Only a tiny portion of wealth created from fishing was redirected to Newfoundland, most of it went to England in the form of specie or Mediterranean commodities like wine, fruit, and oil.<sup>78</sup>

Merchants believed that North America was a panacea to cure England's economic woes, and just as North America could serve as a substitute source for South American gold, it could also serve as a substitute source for European fish. However, there was one major difference: while Frobisher and Raleigh never pulled gold out of the ground, seasonal fishermen were pulling real and valuable codfish out of the waters across North America, especially from the Grand Banks off Newfoundland and later New England.

As early as 1548, Parliament passed the first law dealing with America and the Newfoundland fisheries, making it illegal to extract fees from Englishmen fishing the Newfoundland banks. In 1593, while a burgess for Mitchell, Cornwall in Parliament, Sir Walter Raleigh proclaimed the Newfoundland fishery the "stay and support" of the western English economy. By 1600, it is estimated that 200 ships employing 10,000 Englishmen were fishing the Newfoundland banks.<sup>79</sup> The growth and maintenance of the

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<sup>78</sup> Peter E. Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 91-94.

<sup>79</sup> Henry S. Burrage, *The Beginnings of Colonial Maine, 1602-1658* (Portland, ME: Marks Printing House, 1914), 9-16.

Newfoundland fishery was important to the English crown. The letters patent issued by Queen Elizabeth I to Walter Raleigh for Virginia reflected this notion. The letters stated that Raleigh had an economic monopoly on the area he explored and claimed. This meant if Raleigh found another ship in his sphere of influence, he had the right to take the interloping vessel as a prize. The only people exempted from this were the participants in the seasonal Newfoundland fishery.<sup>80</sup>

England's interest in fishing went beyond Newfoundland's waters, however. When Arthur Barlowe encountered Indians for the first time on the Virginian voyage in 1584, he described an Indian who 'fell to fishing, and in lesse then halfe an howre, hee had laden his boate as deepe, as it could swimme.'" The Indian brought the fish to the English and divided into two piles, one each for two English ships.<sup>81</sup> Barlowe declared the fish, "the goodliest and best fishe in the world, and in greatest abundance."<sup>82</sup> In 1609, the colonists in Jamestown pursued sturgeon fishing and caviar harvesting in roughly the same area. Investors in England continued to invest in Virginia's fisheries into the 1620s.<sup>83</sup>

Fishing was believed to be profitable as far south as Florida. The convoy of five ships carrying 600 colonists to Roanoke Island in 1588 traveled from England, to the Caribbean, and then northwards toward North Carolina. While off the coast of Florida,

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<sup>80</sup> Letters Patent to Sir Walter Raleigh, March 25, 1584, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 268.

<sup>81</sup> Arthur Barlowe on the first Virginia voyage, 1584, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 277.

<sup>82</sup> Barlowe on the first Virginia Voyage, 1584, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 281.

<sup>83</sup> John C. Pearson, "The Fish and Fisheries of Colonial Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Jan., 1943): 1-7.

an unnamed author remarked, “we came to anker in a harbor where we caught in one tyde so much fishe as woulde have yelded us xx. pounds in London.”<sup>84</sup> Twenty pounds for six hours of work was a tidy sum of money in 1588.<sup>85</sup>

Travel accounts about northern Virginia promoted the abundance and size of the region’s codfish.<sup>86</sup> John Brereton reported in 1602 that cod could be caught in only seven fathoms (forty-two feet) off the northern Virginian coast. This was important in Brereton’s eyes because by his estimations, to catch comparable size cod in Newfoundland, one had to fish in fifty fathoms (300 feet) of water.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, fishing in New England was just as good but safer than fishing in Newfoundland. George Waymouth tried his hand at fishing in 1605 by casting two hooks into a Maine harbor and caught enough fish to feed the entire crew for three days. This inspired the voyage’s chronicler to speculate that New England fishing would show a great profit because the codfish were “so plentiful, so great and so good.”<sup>88</sup> While the Popham colonists were searching for an ideal planting site in 1607, they fished for cod in twenty fathoms (120

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<sup>84</sup> The second voyage to Virginia -- the *Tiger* journal, 1585, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 285.

<sup>85</sup> That translates into 2005 money as £2,505.80, or roughly £418 per hour.. The National Archives, “Currency Converter,” accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>. In 2014, that equated to \$655 per hour (with £1 equal to \$1.57).

<sup>86</sup> The region of northern Virginia is now called New England. Virginia used to stretch from Newfoundland to Florida. Northern Virginia was also known as Norumbega. For more on the history of the region’s name see Emerson W. Baker ed., *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

<sup>87</sup> John Brereton, “A Briefe and true Relation of the Discoveries of the North part of Virginia,” in Andrew J Wahll, *Sabino: Popham Colony Reader, 1602-2003* (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 2003), 7.

<sup>88</sup> James Rosier, “A True Relation of the most prosperous voyage made this present yeere 1605, by Captaine George Waymouth, in the Discovery of the Land of Virginia,” in Wahll, 48.

feet) of water and caught 200 fish in just three hours. This event prompted Richard Davies to note that the cod caught that day were “very great Fish” and could “have laden their ship in little time.”<sup>89</sup>

Fishing from Florida to Newfoundland was believed to be profitable, and this spurred a number of projectors to found colonies to “mine” this natural resource including Bristol’s Hope, New Cambriol, Renewes, Avalon, South Falkland in Newfoundland; and Wessagusset, Weymouth, York, and Cape Ann in New England. John Smith, the intrepid leader of Jamestown during its early and troubled days, approached Francis Bacon through a private letter in 1618 about providing military aid to a proposed fishing and trading colony in New England. Smith’s letter to Francis Bacon exemplified the English faith in the success of a fishing colony. Bacon was the right man to approach as he had just been appointed chancellor by James I and made Baron of Verulam. Bacon was in the position to be a patron since he was wealthy and could act as an intermediary between projectors and the crown.<sup>90</sup> As a scholar who once wrote about plantations and had moved into a position to promote them, Bacon was the type of person a colonial projector needed to influence.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Davies, “The Davies Journal of the 1607 North Virginia Voyage,” in Andrew J. Wahll, ed. *Sabino: Popham Colony Reader, 1602-2003* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2003), 75.

<sup>90</sup> Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Philip L. Barbour, Introduction to ‘Letter to Francis Bacon’ in John Smith, *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631) in Three Volumes*, vol. 1, Philip L. Barbour ed., 373.

Smith promoted the fiscal potential of New England, particularly in fishing, by laying out seven proofs in his letter to Francis Bacon.<sup>92</sup> Each proof was centered on trade voyages in which Smith was involved, or that he knew about. The first proof relayed the account of an expedition headed by Smith, which left England March 3, 1614 and arrived in New England the last week of April. According to Smith, his voyage yielded from fishing 40,000 pieces of dry cod fish and salt fish, and train oil; from trading with the Indians he acquired 1,000 beaver skins, 100 martins, and 100 otter pelts. He claimed the six month effort profited him £1,500 after paying the wages of his crew of forty-five.<sup>93</sup> Smith continued with six more proofs by discussing six voyages to New England between 1615 and 1617. He concluded that the average voyage took six months and New England fish could be shipped directly to Spain, while furs and train oil could be sent to England.

However, according to Smith, these voyages were designed to meet private ends and “none for any generall good.” He saw private greed destroying something with unlimited potential for the public weal. Smith continued by saying “the desyre of gaine in Marchants so violent: everyone so regarding his private, that it is worse then slaverye to follow any publique good, and impossible to bring them intoy a bodye, rule, or order,

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<sup>92</sup> Philip J. Barbour viewed the Letter to Bacon (1618) as a text where Smith worked out his argument that he would later present to the public in *New England Trials* (1620), see John Smith, *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, Philip J. Barbour ed. vol. 1, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina, 1986), 373-375.

<sup>93</sup> John Smith, “Letter to Francis Bacon,” in Smith and Barbour, *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, vol. 1, 380.

unless it be by some extraordinary power.”<sup>94</sup> Something had to be done so the untapped potential of America would benefit all of Britain, and not just a handful of transient fishermen.

That something, according to Smith, was direct government military intervention. Smith requested James I spare a pinnace for protection against pirates. Smith estimated that 13-19% of the ships sent to New England had been attacked by pirates. An armed ship could protect a fishing colony during its crucial first eight to ten months when the colony was weak and defenseless.<sup>95</sup> Smith's fear of pirates was undoubtedly enhanced by the recent activities of Peter Easton, an English pirate who raided Newfoundland fishing colonies in 1612, inflicting damage on fishing fleets estimated at £20,400. By 1613, Easton acquired the title of the Marquis of Savoy from the cash strapped Duke of Savoy, who welcomed Easton to Spain along with Easton's reported £2,000,000 worth of gold.<sup>96</sup> Easton's actions demonstrated that valuable fishing colonies could be ravaged without proper protection and Smith hoped Francis Bacon could convince James I to contribute to the defense of fishing colonies. However, Smith, Bacon, and James had to act immediately. Smith estimated as more time passed, more money was being lost, as the

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<sup>94</sup> John Smith, “Letter to Francis Bacon” in Barbor and Barbour, vol. 1, 381.

<sup>95</sup> Smith estimates two or three of the last 16 ships had been taken by pirates, “Letter to Francis Bacon,” in Smith and Barbour, vol. 1, 381.

<sup>96</sup> E. Hunt, “Easton, Peter,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 25, 2013, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/easton\\_peter\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/easton_peter_1E.html).

“Savages grow subtle and the Coast be too much frequented with strangers, more may be done with 20.<sup>li</sup> then hereafter with a 100.<sup>li</sup>,”<sup>97</sup>

The cost of Smith's proposed New England fishing colony was negligible. Smith estimated the cost to be “such trash, only for fishing and trade with the Savages,” including salt, nets, hooks, lines, knives, coarse cloth, beads, glass, and hatchets.<sup>98</sup> “Such trash” along with crew wages and victuals would cost £15,000, and even if the colony did not take hold, Smith calculated that an aborted expedition would turn a profit of 60% from fishing alone.<sup>99</sup> Not only that, Smith believed he could sell New England land for twenty to forty shillings per acre to his colonists.

While Smith was overly optimistic about the profitability of his proposed New England fishing colony, he offered the caveat that “I can promise noe mynes of gold, the Hollanders are an example of my projects, whose endevores by fishing canoot be suppressed by all the kinge of Spaynes golden powers. Truth is more then wealth and industrious Subjects are more availeable to a king then gold. And this is so certaine a course to gett both.”<sup>100</sup> Smith was wrong. New England fishing colonies were not profitable for several decades. Even after the influx of Puritans into Massachusetts fifteen years after Smith's letter to Bacon, John McCusker and Russel Menard estimated that “the fishery contributed little to New England's economy beyond a supplementary

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<sup>97</sup> John Smith, “Letter to Francis Bacon,” in Smith and Barbour, vol. 1, 381.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, “Letter to Bacon,” in Smith and Barbour, vol. 1, 381.

<sup>99</sup> Smith claimed each ship could turn £60 profit on £100 investment.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, “Letter to Bacon,” in Smith and Barbour, vol.1, 382.

food supply in the form of fish caught off the New England coast by English West Country and foreign ships and purchased from them whenever they called at Boston.”<sup>101</sup>

Fishing only became a profitable undertaking in New England as a side effect of the English Civil War. The war brought about a decline of fishermen from Britain in the Atlantic, opening up an opportunity for fisherman living in New England. At that point, the fishery became profitable to New England, and then only in combination with the emergence of ship building and the carrying trade along the Atlantic seaboard and the Caribbean (see chapter 6).<sup>102</sup> For Smith in the early seventeenth century, the fishery was much like Frobisher's gold mines - a failed realization. The lure of riches across the ocean never materialized. Bacon's refusal to fund Smith and his colony was most likely based upon observing the outcomes of the Virginia colony centered at Jamestown. Writing between 1620 and 1624, Bacon remarked in an essay entitled “Of Plantations” that “Planting of countries is like planting of woods; for you must take account to lose almost twenty years' profit, and expect your recompense at the end.”<sup>103</sup> Smith's projections of immediate profit did not persuade Bacon to invest.

The Newfoundland and New England fisheries were profitable only as places of seasonal and temporary occupation. The attempt to turn the fisheries into places of

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<sup>101</sup> John J. McCusker and Russel R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789, with Supplementary Bibliography* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 99.

<sup>102</sup> McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 91-116; Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 19; Nicholas Canny, “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30.

<sup>103</sup> Francis Bacon, “Of Plantations,” in *Settlements to Society, 1607-1763: A Documentary History of Colonial America* Jack P. Greene ed., (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 9.

permanent settlement failed. And the fishing colonies established by the English, notably in Newfoundland, survived only a few years. The profits made from fishing were not enough to overcome the costs of permanent settlement. While the evidence is hard to come by since many of the shipping, tax, and accounting records are unavailable, the fact remains that several permanent fishing colonies in Newfoundland and Massachusetts were established between 1610 and 1630 and none of them survived more than a few years.

### **Silk, Spices, and other Commodities**

North America was also viewed as an alternate source for commodities commonly found in Asia, including silk. Thomas Hariot, writing about modern-day North Carolina, titled a section of his 1588 *A Briefe and True Report* “The first part of Merchantable commodities.” The first thing listed is “silke of grasse, or grasse silke.” He said that silk grew upon the blades of grass in the form of a thin glittering skin. The blades are about two feet in length, and half an inch broad. It is similar to a plant found in Persia which was harvested and sold to Europeans as silk. Hariot reasoned that if the silk grass was systematically planted and harvested as it was in Persia, then the commodity would “rise [raise] in shorte time [to] great profite to the dealers therein.”<sup>104</sup> Silk grass was also mentioned on a map that was for a long time associated with a letter written by John Smith in 1618. However, David Beers Quinn attributed the map to Ralph

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<sup>104</sup> Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*, 1588 edition, in David Beers Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages 1584-1590 Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584* vol. 1 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1955), 325-326.

Lane and believed it to have been drawn on Roanoke Island in September 1585. Off the coast of an island labeled “y<sup>e</sup> Kinges ill” lay three smaller islands. Lane wrote above the map, “the grasse that berithe the silke groithe here plentifully.”<sup>105</sup> Roughly forty years after the discovery of silk grass at Roanoke, English colonists were still trying to figure out how to capitalize on the commodity, eventually using it for cordage. Overtime, instead of comparing silk grass to Asian silk, projectors started to be compared to flax.<sup>106</sup> However at the time of Roanoke, projectors like Hariot believed silk grass could be used to manufacture silk.

Hariot also mentioned “worme silke.” He wrote “In many of our iourneys we found silke wormes fayre and great; as bigge as our ordinary walnuts.” He continued by arguing if mulberry trees were planted and skilled silk husbandmen sent over to Virginia “there will rise as great profite in time to the Virginians, as thereof doth now to the Persians, Turkes, Italians, and Spaniards.”<sup>107</sup> John Smith wrote in 1607 that mulberry trees were found in Virginia “growing naturally in pretie Groves. There was an “assay made to make silke, and surely the Wormes prospered excellent well, till the Master workman fel sick. During which time they were eaten with Rats.”<sup>108</sup> The same year, Ferdinando Gorges, upon hearing the first reports back from Sagadahoc, told Lord

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<sup>105</sup> TNA MPG 1/584. See also David Beers Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages*, 215-217.

<sup>106</sup> Charles E. Hatch, Jr., “Mulberry and Silkwormes: Sericulture in Early Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 65, no. 1 (Jan., 1957): 3-61, especially fn. 11, 7-8.

<sup>107</sup> Hariot, “A briefe and true report, 1588,” in Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages*, 326.

<sup>108</sup> John Smith, “The Description of Virginia” in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* vol. 18 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 430.

Salisbury that there was “a certayne silke that doth grow in small Coddys,” of which he assured Lord Salisbury that he would send a sample.<sup>109</sup>

The failure to find and produce silk at Roanoke, Sagadahoc, and Jamestown did not deter colonial projectors. Ralph Hamor published *A true discourse of the present estate of Virginia* in which he described a shipment of “silke wormes sent thither from England, in seeds the last winter (1613/14).” The worms “came foorth...thousands of them grown to great bignesse, and a spinning, and the rest well thriuing of their increase, and commodity well knowne to be reaped by them.” This in part was due, according to Hamor, to the fact that no country but Virginia “affoordeth more store of Mulbery trees, or a kind with whose leafe they more delight, or thriue better.”<sup>110</sup> The excitement surrounding sericulture in Virginia continued and in 1621, James I ordered the Virginia Company to “use all possible diligence in breeding Silkwormes, and erecting Silke workes” because silk worms are a “rich and solid Commodity.”<sup>111</sup> In 1623, an order made by the Virginia Company included a number of books on silk production including: ninety-one copies of John Bonoeil’s *His maiesties gracious letter to the Earle of Southampton...Also a treatise of the art of making silke* (1620, 1622).<sup>112</sup> Literature

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<sup>109</sup> Sir Ferdinando Gorges reports the first news of the Sagadahoc colony, December 1, 1607 in Andrew J. Wahll ed., *Sabino: Popham Colony Reader, 1602-2003* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2003), 94.

<sup>110</sup> Ralph Hamor, *A true discourse of the present estate of Virginia and the successe of the affaires there till the 18 of Iune. 1614* (London, 1615), 35.

<sup>111</sup> James I to The Earl of Southampton, 9 July 1621, “His Majesties gracious Letter to the Earle of Southampton, Treasurer, and to the Counsell and Company of Virginia here: commanding the present setting up of Silke workes, and planting of Vines in Virginia” in Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, vol. 19, 154-155.

<sup>112</sup> David B. Quinn, “A List of the Books Purchased for the Virginia Company,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 77, no. 3 (Jul., 1969): 358-359. See fns. 23, 35, 32, and 33. Quinn speculates the

supporting silk production in North America continued to be published throughout the seventeenth century including works by anon, *A Perfect Description of Virginia*; Edward Williams, *Virginia More especially the South part thereof, Richly and truly valued*; and Samuel Hartlib, *A rare and new discovery of a speedy way and easie means found out by a young lady in England...for the feeding of Silk worms in ...Virginia*. These various sources promised that silk would be productive and profitable, and Edward Digges presented Virginia silk to Charles II in 1661.<sup>113</sup> Plans continued to be put forth and sericulture promoted throughout the eighteenth century. However, as was true for gold and fish, profit from sericulture proved to be ephemeral.

From Columbus' first voyage onward, Europeans imagined the presence of Asian spices in America. Columbus remarked in 1493 that he "found rhubarb and cinnamon, and a thousand other things."<sup>114</sup> In 1562, Jean Ribault who was involved in the failed French colony in Florida reported to have "founde there a great number of Peper trees, the Pepper yet greene, & not ready to be gathered."<sup>115</sup> George Popham, the President of the Sagadahoc colony, wrote James I in 1607 to report the presence of nutmeg, mace, and

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books to be multiple editions and printings of the same book. John Bonoecil, *Observations to be followed, for the making of fit roomes, to keep silk-wormes* (London, 1620); and John Bonoecil, *His maiesties gracious letter to the Earle of South-Hampton...Also a treatise of the art of making silke* (London, 1622).

<sup>113</sup> Joseph Ewan, "Silk Culture in the Colonies," *Agricultural History* 43, no. 1 (Jan., 1969): 130-132.

<sup>114</sup> Don Christopher Columbus to his friend Don Luis de Santangel, or his arrival from his first voyage, at the Azore, Feb. 15, 1493, in Benjamin Franklin French ed., *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida, Including Translations of Original Manuscripts Relating to Their Discovery and Settlement, with Numerous Historical and Biographical Notes* (New York: Albert Mason, 1875), from *Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment*, <http://solomon.tinyurl.alexanderstreet.com/19LTR> (accessed October 6, 2014).

<sup>115</sup> Jean Ribault, *The whole and true discoverye of Terra Florida (englished in the flourishing lande)*, (London, 1563), r. ciiii.

cinnamon on the Maine coast, alongside "many other products of great importance and value; and these, too, in the greatest abundance."<sup>116</sup>

Projectors envisioned North American commodities that would replace European items. Alum mined in Europe, was used for dyeing cloth and making drugs. It was believed by Thomas Hariot that a fifty-mile-wide alum vein lay in North Carolina, and alum mines were assured to exist by Ferdinando Gorges in Maine.<sup>117</sup> Iron was to be mined in Virginia, and Newfoundland was to import iron ore from abroad and process it into iron bar.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, potash, pitch, tar, turpentine, timber, wine, and salt were all argued, at some time or another, to be commodities from which early Anglo-American colonies could make money. Fortunes, lives, time, and reputations were poured into ventures with the hope that these American commodities would turn a profit.

For the first decades of English colonization in North America, it did not make economic sense to pursue some of these American commodities. The English iron industry was at an absolute disadvantage to its Swedish equivalent; Swedish bar iron was cheaper and of higher grade. This led to England importing Scandinavian iron instead of

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<sup>116</sup> George Popham to James I, 13 December 1607 in Wahll, *Sabino*, 96-97.

<sup>117</sup> Hariot, *A briefe and true report*, in Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages*, 327.; and Sir Ferdinando Gorges reports the first news of the Sagadahoc colony, December 1, 1607, in Wahll, *Sabino*, 93.

<sup>118</sup> A Note of the Shipping, Men, and Provisions sent to Virginia, by the Treasurer and Company, in the yeere 1619 in Purchas, vol. 19, 126-129. Also see, CO 1/4 no. 50, and CO 1/1 no. 50 in W. Noël Sainsbury ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 90, 23.

developing their domestic and nascent colonial industries.<sup>119</sup> It was not until the eighteenth century that large scale iron production became possible in England.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, there was also no need to pursue timber overseas. The English supply was not exhausted, and the price of timber did not rise faster than any other industrial raw material. Additionally, the demand for naval stores was not met by colonial suppliers, but rather, from Scandinavian and Baltic countries.<sup>121</sup> At this time, English merchants could acquire timber more cheaply and quickly from Norway and the Baltic than they could from North America, despite the Dutch controlling most of the Baltic trade during the seventeenth century. England was not the only European power dependent on Baltic timber, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands all relied on Baltic timber and naval stores.<sup>122</sup> Up until the eighteenth century, Britain depended on the Baltic for cheap iron, timber, and naval stores.<sup>123</sup> Sixteenth and seventeenth century projector's imaginations simply did not add up to the economic realities of North America.

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<sup>119</sup> Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 20. Bristol merchants would also import iron from the Baltic and Scandinavia and re-export it to the Amsterdam, David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chapter 1.

<sup>120</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 328.

<sup>121</sup> John J. McCusker and Russel R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 93.

<sup>122</sup> For a discussion on the Scandinavian and Baltic trade, see G.D. Ramsay, *English Overseas Trade during the Centuries of Emergence: Studies in some Modern Origins of the English-Speaking World* (London and New York: Macmillan & Co, 1957), 96-131; and J.K. Fedorwicz, *England's Baltic Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). The English depended on the Baltic trade until about 1650 and then turned towards Scandinavia.

<sup>123</sup> Ramsay, *English Overseas Trade during the Centuries of Emergence*, 227.

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The visions put forward by colonial projectors failed to materialize. North America did not become the alternative source for Asian, European, and African commodities. Established colonies did not become wealthy or self-sustaining through the pursuit of gold, fish, and silk. Ultimately, projectors and colonizers found that the products and raw materials they were looking for either did not exist in North America, or, were cheaper to acquire from other sources. A string of colonies, imagined to be profitable and sustainable, failed due to the economic realities of North America.

## CHAPTER III

### "THE SAVAGES SAY THERE BE UNICORNS"<sup>1</sup>

A man breaking his journey between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance, sees a unicorn cross his path and disappear. That in itself is startling, but there are precedents for mystical encounters of various kinds, or to be less extreme, a choice of persuasions to put it down to fancy; until—"My God," says a second man, "I must be dreaming, I thought I saw a unicorn." At which point, a dimension is added that makes the experience as alarming as it will ever be. A third witness, you understand, adds no further dimension but only spreads it thinner, and a fourth thinner still, and the more witnesses there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience... "Look, look!" recites the crowd. "A horse with an arrow in its forehead! It must have been mistaken for a deer."<sup>2</sup>

Tom Stoppard (1937 - ), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, 1966.

The differing and competing visions of North America held by colonial projectors in the early modern era ebbed and flowed in response to politics, economics, and the spread of print culture. No one perception of North America was constant or shared by everyone; however a generalized view of the continent emerged. It represented a panacea, a remedy for England's and later Britain's diverse economic needs. It was imagined to be an amalgam of the best that Spanish America, northern Europe, Africa,

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Alfonse and John Pinkerton, "Here followeth the Course from Belle Isle, Carpont, and the Grand Bay in Newfoundland up the river of Canada, for the space of 230 leagues, observed by Jean Alphonse of Xanctogne, chief pilot to Monsieur Roberval, 1542" in *A General Collection of the Best and Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World* (London: Longman, Hurst, Bees, Orme, and Brown; and Cadell and Davies, 1812), 674.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 15.

and Asia had to offer. The previous chapter explored the various visions English colonial projectors held regarding trade and commodities in North America. This chapter takes the notion of vision and imagination among colonial projectors to an extreme by introducing the unicorn as a paradigmatic vehicle to explore the assumptions and desires of colonial projectors. At a time when medieval beliefs continued to influence intellectual, medicinal, and economical pursuits, it was perfectly reasonable for projectors to believe in unicorns, as well as the unlimited potential of America filled with marketable and lucrative commodities. However, the inevitable profitability of North American commodities was in reality as illusory and deceptive as the unicorn. The pursuit of the unicorn was emblematic of projectors' failure to pursue profitable commodities.

### **History of the Unicorn**

In 1607, the same year the Sagadahoc and Jamestown colonies were planted by the Virginia Company, Edward Topsell published his *The historie of foure-footed beastes Describing the true and liuely figure of euery beast*.<sup>3</sup> Topsell described the unicorn, and recounted how in “a certain region of the new found world, wherein are found liue Vnicornes.”<sup>4</sup> Topsell recognized that some did not believe in unicorns, but he concluded “we should easily beleeeue that there was Vnicorne in the worlde, as we do beleeeue there

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Topsell, *The historie of foure-footed beastes Describing the true and liuely figure of euery beast* (London, 1607).

<sup>4</sup> Topsell, *The historie of foure-footed beastes*, 715.

is an Elephant although not bred in Europe.”<sup>5</sup> Topsell’s rationale lay in ancient authorities and eye-witness testimony, including his own.



Figure 1. Print of a Unicorn from Edward Topsell’s *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents* (London, 1658).

Ancient authorities confirmed the existence of the unicorn. Ctesias (ca. 400 BCE), the Greek physician who served the Persian ruler Artaxerxes II, examined the unicorn. In his work entitled *On India*, Ctesias referenced the unicorn which he called the wild ass of India. It was roughly the size of a horse and had one horn. It also had pharmacological benefits because its horn was an antidote to poison, and those who drank

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<sup>5</sup> Topsell, *The historie of foure-footed beastes*, 711.

from the horn could not be harmed. The beast could only be killed by bow and javelin.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, according to Ctesias, unicorn flesh was inedible on account of its bitterness.<sup>7</sup> From roughly 400 BCE onwards, an animal in the shape of a horse with one horn existed in the minds of people, and its horn had the pharmacological benefit of being an antidote to poison.

The Roman scholar Pliny the Elder discussed the unicorn in the eighth book of the *Natural History* around 77-79 CE. Pliny called the creature “the Licorne or Monoceros,” (monceros in Greek means one-horn, the direct translation into Latin is unicorn). The monceros’ body “resembles a horse, his head a stag, his feet an Elephant, his taile a bore.” It had “one black horne he hath in the mids of his forehead, bearing out two cubits in length.” It was a ferocious beast because “by report, this wild beast cannot possibly be caught aliue.”<sup>8</sup> Livy contributed to the western lore of the unicorn by claiming the unicorn was uncatchable.

The Roman author Aelian/Claudius Aelianus (ca. 175-235 CE) also wrote about the unicorn. His work *De natura animalium* was a miscellany of facts designed to describe the behavior of animals to illustrated a moral tale. Aelian based his information on mythology, superstition, facts of nature, and mariner’s yarns.<sup>9</sup> In discussing the horn

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<sup>6</sup> The relationship between the javelin and the unicorn resurfaced in the Middle Ages when it was associated with piercing of Jesus’ side by Longinus during the crucifixion.

<sup>7</sup> Ctesias and Andrew Nichols, *Ctesias on India and Fragments of his Minor Works* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 128-135.

<sup>8</sup> Pliny the Elder, *The historie of the vworld: commonly called, the natural historie of C. Plinius Secundus. Translated into English by Philemon Doctor of Physicke*, Chapter XXI (London, 1634), 206.

<sup>9</sup> A.F. Scholdfiend, “Introduction,” in Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, vol. 1, xiii.

of the Indian ass, which the side notation labeled as “The Horn of the Unicorn,” Aelianus wrote “India produces horses with one horn, they say, and the same country fosters asses with a single horn. And from these horns they make drinking-vessels, and if anyone puts a deadly poison in them and a man drinks, the plot will do him no harm. For it seems that the horn both of the horse and of the ass is antidote to poison.”<sup>10</sup> The notion that unicorn horn had the pharmacological benefit of being an antidote to poison existed in the Greco-Roman tradition for at least 600 years before it was introduced to medieval Europe.

The unicorn also existed in the ancient, and at the time, the unchallengeable Christian text, the Bible. Various editions of the Bible over the centuries described Unicorns including the Vulgate (400s), Wycliffe (1383), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale/Great Bible (1535), Matthew (1537) Bishop’s (1568), Geneva (1587), and the King James (1611). The unicorn appeared in these editions probably due to an issue of translation. The Hebrew Old Testament described an animal most likely to be a wild ox or an oryx, and the scribes who translated the Hebrew into Greek called it *monokeros* (mono-one, kerato-horn, or, monceras). When the Bible was translated from Greek into Latin, the word became unicorn (uni-one, cornu-horn). The unicorn appeared in the Old Testament in the Book of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Job, Psalms, and Isaiah. In the Book of Numbers, after the Israelites fled Egypt but before they arrived in Canaan, Balaam refused the King of Moab’s offer to curse the Hebrews and said, “God brought them out

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<sup>10</sup> Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals* Book III, section 41, trans. A.F. Sholfield vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1958), 201.

of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.”<sup>11</sup> In the Book of Isaiah when Isaiah recited the oracles against the kingdom of Edom, he said, “And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land all be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.”<sup>12</sup> Whether Anglican, Puritan, or Catholic, most British Christians heard, read, or at the least were exposed to the stories of the Bible. Thus, Christianity affirmed the existence of unicorns.

The medieval *Physiologus* also discussed the unicorn thereby contributing to the Christian context of unicorns. The *Physiologus* was widely known in the middle ages and “enjoyed a circulation second only to that of the Bible.”<sup>13</sup> The *Physiologus* was a collection of stories about animals, plants, and minerals originating in Indian, Hebrew, and Egyptian legends. They were passed into Greek and Roman literature, folklore, and art and eventually written down in Alexandria, Egypt sometime in the early Christian era by an anonymous author (100 to 300 AD). The author fused the ancient tradition of using moral allegories about nature with Christianity, thereby reflecting the teachings of the Apostle Paul in Romans when he said, “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.”<sup>14</sup> The analogic structure of nature and divinely created

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<sup>11</sup> Numbers 23:22

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah, 34:7

<sup>13</sup> Rüdiger Robert Beer, *Unicorn: Myth and Reality* trans. Charles M. Stern, (New York: Mason/Charter, 1977), 44.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 1:20, see Anon, *Physiologus*, Michael J. Curely trans. (Austin TX and London: University of Texas Press, 1979), xiv.

symbols described in the *Physiologus* provided the Christian world with the tools to bridge the visible and the invisible worlds.<sup>15</sup> The unicorn was one such symbol.

The *Physiologus* used scripture to explain the unicorn's importance, particularly from Deuteronomy (33:17), John (10:30 and 1:14), Luke (1:69), Psalms (22:21), Matthew (11:29), and Romans (8:13). The unicorn was described as small and shrewd, with one horn on its head. It was small due to the "humility of his incarnation;" shrewd to the point that the "most clever devil cannot comprehend him or find him out;" and had one horn "because the Savior said, 'I and the Father are one.'" It could only be caught by force and only when "hunters place a chaste virgin before him. He bounds forth into her lap and she warms and nourishes him into the palace of kings."<sup>16</sup> This depiction of a creature with one horn that can only be tamed by a virgin, carried forward into the European medieval era.

Unicorns also appeared in medieval bestiaries furthering the belief in unicorns. Bestiaries were compilations about animals influenced by the *Physiologus*, as well as by the writings of Solinus, St. Ambrose, and Isidore of Seville. Since bestiaries were compilations with bits and pieces added at different times and places, no two bestiaries were identical. The earliest bestiary from England dates to the twelfth century. Bestiaries were not scientific treatises on animals; rather, they were texts that used

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Curely, Introduction, *Physiologus*, xiv-xv.

<sup>16</sup> Curley, *Physiologus*, 51.

animals to teach moral and allegorical lessons.<sup>17</sup> The Harley manuscript in the British Library contains several works bound together, including works by Alain de Lille, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Richard of Thetford. Intertwined in these works is a bestiary with an entry for the unicorn.<sup>18</sup> The illumination shows a knight spearing a unicorn in the breast with a giant lance as it lies in the lap of a maiden. This is probably a reference to the medieval notion of how to hunt the unicorn. Hunters placed a virgin in an area they believed the unicorn to frequent. The unicorn would see the virgin and lay his head in her lap as it was believed only a virgin was able to tame a unicorn. As the unicorn slept in the virgin's lap, the hunters would emerge from hiding and either kill or capture the unicorn.<sup>19</sup>

The unicorn hunt was depicted in a series of tapestries dating to roughly 1500. The tapestries probably originated in Flanders and are now housed in the Cloisters Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Musée National du Moyen Âge in Paris. The first panel depicted five hunters carrying spears and accompanied by hunting dogs as they prepared for the unicorn hunt. The second panel showed a unicorn dipping his horn into a stream to cleanse the water of poison in the foreground, while in the background several hunters gathered to spy on the beast. Panels three and four showed the hunters unsuccessfully attempting to take the unicorn down

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 675-676.

<sup>18</sup> British Library, Harley MS 3244, ff 36r-71v. The unicorn appears on f. 38r.

<sup>19</sup> Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1930), 47.

while the ferocious creature defended itself by spearing a dog to death. Panel five showed a maiden taming the unicorn and lulling him to sleep while a hunter watched from the background. Panel six showed hunters spearing the unicorn to death while hunting dogs exact revenge for their fallen canine comrade from the previous panel. The unicorn's corpse was then brought to the castle as the remaining hunters gathered around the virgin to congratulate and thank her for her necessary and crucial role in the unicorn hunt. Panel seven showed a unicorn held in captivity in a pen centered in a field of flowers.<sup>20</sup>

The unicorn hunt depicted in the tapestry was also commented on by Leonardo da Vinci. In Da Vinci's notebooks, he created a section entitled "Studies on the Life and Habits of Animals." Under this section Da Vinci inserted an entry for "Incontinence" where he wrote, "The unicorn, through its intemperance and not knowing how to control itself, for the love it bears to fair maidens forgets its ferocity and wildness; and laying aside all fear it will go up to a seated damsel and go to sleep in her lap, and thus the hunters take it."<sup>21</sup>

### **Uses of Alicorn**

One of the first pieces of Anglo-American exploration literature to be translated and circulated to a wider European audience was Dionyse Settle's 1577 account about

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Norris et al., "The Unicorn Tapestries," Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1, 2013, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/interactives/adults-teachers/the-unicorn-tapestries>.

<sup>21</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, "Incontinence" in Jean Paul Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci* vol. 2 (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883), 320.

Martin Frobisher's second voyage entitled *A true reporte of the last voyage...by Capteine Frobisher* (see chapter 2).<sup>22</sup> The account was typical of others in the period. It narrated the path of the ship, described the natural resources found in northern North America, and highlighted English encounters with Native Americans in both trade and war.

Unremarkably for the period, Settle encountered the physical remains of a sea unicorn. Settle described seeing two shorelines, Asia in the east and America in the west. On the western shore of America, the men of the Frobisher expedition "found a dead fishe floating, whiche in his nose a horne streight & torquet, of lengthe two yeardes lacking two inches, being broken in the top...we supposed it to be the Sea Unicorne."<sup>23</sup> The account of this event was casually sandwiched between a straight forward description of icebergs, and an encounter with Native Americans.

Coming across a dead sea unicorn did not surprise Settle or seem out of the ordinary, however, it was clearly a significant event because he chose to take the time to record and publish the material. This in part, may be due to the value of the sea unicorn. Land and sea unicorns were very real and prized to early-modern Europeans. The sea unicorn in Settle's account, with its thirty-four inch twisted and torqued horn may have been the same horn presented by Martin Frobisher to Queen Elizabeth I, "who greatly

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<sup>22</sup> David B. Quinn, Alison M. Quinn, and Susan Hillier, *Newfoundland from Fishery to Colony*, New American World: A Documentary History of North America, vol. 4, 207. Settle, *A True Reporte of the Laste Voyage into the West and Northwest Regions, &c. 1577. Worthily Atchieued by Capteine Frobisher of the Sayde Voyage the First Finder and Generall With a Description of the People There Inhabiting, and Other Circumstances Notable. Written by Dionyse Settle, One of the Companie in the Sayde Voyage, and Seruant to the Right Honourable the Earle of Cumberland.*

<sup>23</sup> Dionyse Settle, "A true reporte of the last voyage...by Capteine Frobisher," titled as *May to October, 1577. The second Frobisher voyage for the discovery of the Northwest Passage* in Quinn and Quinn, *Newfoundland from Fishery to Colony*, 210-211.

valued it as a jewel, and commanded it thenceforth to be kept in her wardrobe."<sup>24</sup> The horn was dubbed the "Horn of Windsor." Roughly two decades later, a German traveler named Hentzer claimed to have seen the Horn of Windsor, and valued it at £100,000.<sup>25</sup> This was not Elizabeth's first horn. During her first year as queen in 1558, an inventory taken at Windsor Castle catalogued a unicorn horn valued at £10,000.<sup>26</sup> Not only were unicorns real, their horns were expensive.

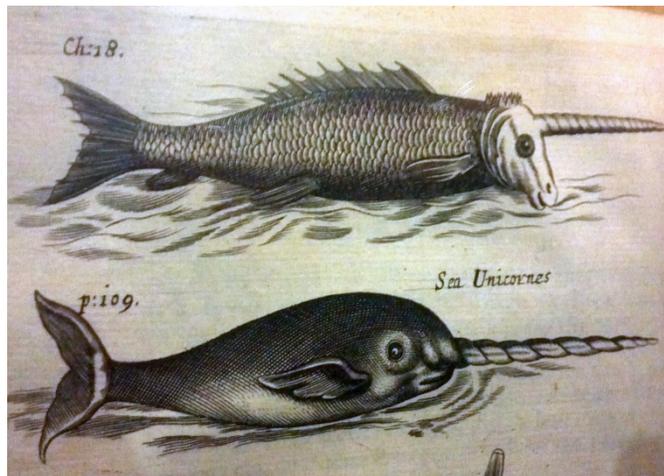


Figure 2. Sea Unicorns from *The History of Barados, St. Christophers, Mevis, St Vincents, Antego, Martinico, Monserrat, and the rest of the Caribby-Islands* (London, 1666).

Elizabeth I was not the first English monarch to possess a unicorn horn. In 1599, the Swiss traveler Thomas Platter witnessed two alicorns, or unicorn horns while in England. He saw the first at Hampton Court and was told it was originally from Arabia

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<sup>24</sup> Frank Jones, *The Life of Sir Martin Frobisher, Knight containing a Narrative of the Spanish Armada* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1878), 67.

<sup>25</sup> Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1930), 113.

<sup>26</sup> James Cross Giblin, *The Truth About Unicorns* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 67.

and given to Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father. It was filed down and used as medical powder, most likely as an antidote for poison. Platter saw a second horn at Windsor Castle that weighed twenty pounds and stood a foot taller than Platter (however, Platter does not give his height). It was also thick to the point that Platter "could almost compass its circumference with one thumb and forefinger."<sup>27</sup> This may have been the same horn seen by Georg von Schwartzstät, Baron of Offenbach in 1609 which he considered "without doubt of enormous wealth if it is genuine."<sup>28</sup> Platter also visited the home of Walter Cope, a member of the Elizabeth Society of Antiquaries, who owned a cabinet of curiosities. Cope owned, amongst other things, an African charm made of teeth, a mummy of a child from China, and the tail of a unicorn.<sup>29</sup>

The physical remains of unicorns, especially their horns, hooves, and bones were owned by a variety of people, from royalty to apothecaries. Some large horns were kept intact and used as scepters by royalty, or croziers by churchmen. St. Mark's cathedral in Venice possessed three alicorns which city officials used as batons, and the abbey of Saint-Denis outside Paris used a seven foot tall alicorn as a chalice until it was destroyed in the turmoil of the French Revolution.<sup>30</sup> The Danish throne was made up of various unicorn horns, probably in part to symbolize the strength and wealth of the crown, but

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<sup>27</sup> Madeleine Doran, "On Elizabethan 'Credulity': With Some Questions Concerning the Use of the Marvelous in Literature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1, no. 2 (Apr., 1940): 159-160.

<sup>28</sup> Georg von Schwartzstät, Baron of Offenbach in G.P.V. Akrigg, "England in 1609," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (Nov., 1950), 91-92.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 156-157.

<sup>30</sup> Lise Gotfredsen, *The Unicorn* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1999), 155.

possibly also to reflect the alicorn market captured by Danish merchants.<sup>31</sup> Feodor I was crowned Czar of Russia in 1584 while holding a unicorn horn in his right hand.<sup>32</sup>

Medium sized horns were used for the bodies of beakers, goblets, and knives. Smaller pieces of unicorn horn were used as amulets, rings, and other jewelry.<sup>33</sup> John Davies, an Englishman deposed for a court case in November 1616, listed several precious items once owned by his late wife including jewels, a plate, and a unicorn horn.<sup>34</sup> Cups made of unicorn horn were designed to counteract the poison secretly placed into drinks by assassins and spies. Horns were also dipped into liquid to act as an antidote to poison, and horn was ground up and consumed to treat the plague and the flux.

The belief in unicorn horn to treat plague is found in a receipt book from the early seventeenth century. The recipe was called “An Electuary of an wonderfull vertue in the tyme of Pestilence,” and called for a variety of ingredients including: “Cynamone...Terra Sigillata<sup>35</sup>...fyne Mirrhe, Vnicornes horn...[and the] seede and rynde of Cytrone.” The

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<sup>31</sup> John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible* vol. 2 (Pittsburgh: Carmer, Spear, and Eichbaum, 1811), 613.

<sup>32</sup> Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Guido Schoenberger, "A Goblet of Unicorn Horn," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 9, no. 10 (Jun., 1951): 284.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Eccles, "Brief Lives: Tudor and Stuart Authors," *Studies in Philology* 79, no. 4 (1982): 38.

<sup>35</sup> Terra Sigillata was earth or soil from a Greek island in the Aegean Sea and believed to have medicinal properties. Thomas Hariot's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* reported the existence of *waipeih*, "a kinde of earth so called by the naturall inhabitants; very much like to *terra Sigillata*: and hauing beene refined, it hath beene found by some of our Phisitions and Chirurgeons to bee of the same kinde of vertue and more effectuall. The inhabitants vse it very much for the cure of sores and woundes: there is in diuers places great plentie, and in some places of a blewe sort," in *The Roanoke Voyages 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584* vol. 1, ed. David Beers Quinn, 2nd ser., no. CIV (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1955), 328.

recipe also called for red corral, red and white marigold flowers, saffron, basil seeds, white sugar, and “the bone of a Stagge.”<sup>36</sup> All of these ingredients were known to exist and their origins were identified. Unicorn horn was just another acknowledged commodity of the era with acknowledged medicinal properties.

In addition to plague, poison was a legitimate fear during the early-modern era that could be allayed by unicorn horn. Isabel, the Duchess of Clarence and the daughter of Richard Neville, the ‘kingmaker’ of the War of the Roses, was reportedly poisoned in 1476. It was alleged that Isabel’s ale was poisoned on the 10th of October, and she languished in pain until her death on the Sunday before Christmas.<sup>37</sup> According to the prevailing wisdom of the day, if Isabel had dipped an alicorn into her ale, or drank from cup crafted from alicorn, she would have lived.

At least one colonial projector was involved with the legal process to prosecute the assassins who tried to kill Elizabeth I via poison. John Popham was Lord Chief Justice under Elizabeth I and James I, and was the driving force and chief financier behind the Sagadahoc colony and Maine (1607), and an earlier plantation in Munster, Ireland (1587).<sup>38</sup> Probably not incidentally, he also edited the charter granting Virginia

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<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Corlyton, “En Electuary of an wonderfull vertue in the tyme of Pesitilence,” 1606, Wellcome Library MS.213/66, folio 88.

<sup>37</sup> Public Record Office and Court of the King’s Bench, “Bundle I,” *Inventory and Calendar of the Baga de Secretis: 1477-1813*, Edward IV-George III, Appendix II to the Third Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, 214.

<sup>38</sup> For more on John Popham see Douglas Walthew Rice, *The Life and Achievements of Sir John Popham 1531-1607: Leading to the Establishment of the First English Colony in New England* (Madison NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2005).

to Sir Walter Raleigh.<sup>39</sup> Roderigo Lopez, Emanuel Tinoco, and Stephen Ferreira da Gama were convicted of trying to kill Elizabeth via poison in 1594. Lopez was her personal physician and was paid 50,000 crowns by Philip II of Spain to poison Elizabeth. The record of the court case was delivered to the Queen's Bench by Chief Justice John Popham, who funded a failed colonial attempt in Maine twelve years later, in an area believed to contain unicorns.<sup>40</sup> In 1598, Edward Squires was also convicted of trying to poison Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex. Chief Justice Popham again delivered the court record.<sup>41</sup>

Poison was not reserved for heads of state in early modern England and Britain, and therefore an antidote for poison was also in the interest of the *hoi polloi*. Commoners like Robert Freston fled the house of Nicholas and Elizabeth Ive upon suspicion of being poisoned. Freston brought a suit against the Ives to reclaim his money, deeds, and goods left behind by fleeing.<sup>42</sup> Thomas Edwardes suspected Roger Walcot of trying to poison him over an annuity promised to Walcot upon resigning his benefice as parson of Ledon.<sup>43</sup> John Zeley accused Philip Batten of slander when Batten claimed Zeley

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<sup>39</sup> A draft dated 1583 of the charter granted to Raleigh in 1584 appears to contain the editing marks of John Popham. TNA PRO 30/34/1. Also, Popham and Raleigh were both undertakers/colonial projectors for Munster.

<sup>40</sup> Pouch LII, Trial and Conviction of Dr. Loppez (or Lopez), Emanuel Louis Tynoco, and Stephen Ferrera da Gama, *Inventory and Calendar of the Baga de Secretis*, 285-289. Jean Alfonse reported the existence of unicorns in the region of the Sagadahoc failed colony sixty-five years before the colony was planted.

<sup>41</sup> Pouch LV, Trial and Conviction of Edward Squyer, *Inventory and Calendar of the Baga de Secretis*, 291-292.

<sup>42</sup> TNA CO 1/796/26-27, Freston v. Ive.

<sup>43</sup> TNA C 1/920/6, Walcot v Edwardes.

poisoned his mother-in-law.<sup>44</sup> Edward Talbot was accused of trying to poison his brother, the Earl of Shrewsbury.<sup>45</sup> Poison affected commoners, clergy, aristocracy, and royalty. Unicorn horn and its miraculous use as an antidote for poison was of interest to all strata of English society.

In 1597, the use of an alicorn saved the life of Englishman Anthony Knivet from poison. Knivet was a member of Thomas Cavendish's last and disastrous voyage. Cavendish became a rich man during his first voyage around the world from plundering Spanish ships. He intended to duplicate his fortunes with a second voyage, but it ended in disaster and ultimately his death. When the voyage touched the shores of Brazil, Knivet as part of the Cavendish expedition, was captured by the Portuguese. His adventures had just begun. Knivet was subsequently enslaved, escaped, recaptured and re-enslaved, escaped again, and fled to Africa only to be captured again. He eventually made it back to England and Samuel Purchas published his memoir. The memoir recounted Knivet's captivity in Brazil when "all our men both Indians and Portugals fell sicke by eating a kinde of sweet pleasant fruit that was poyson." According to Knivet, had "it not beene for a Gentleman called Enefrio de say my Masters Kinsman, who had a piece of Unicornes horne, we had all died."<sup>46</sup> The alicorn saved them all, English, Portuguese, and Indian alike. Its medicinal properties were well known and proven.

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<sup>44</sup> TNA STAC 3/9/135, Zeley v. Batten.

<sup>45</sup> TNA STAC 7/6/1, Talbot v. Woode.

<sup>46</sup> Anthony Knivet, "The admirable adventures and strange fortunes of Master Anthonie Knivet, which went with Master Thomas Candish in his second Voyage to the South Sea, 1591" in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas, His Pilgrimes* vol. 16 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 212. **[Get original cite]**

Today, one can explain and dismiss the claims from the past about the existence and medicinal use of unicorns. More likely than not, early-modern Europeans confused the bones, horns, and ivory of Indian rhinoceroses, Arctic narwhals, deformed goats, or even extinct mammoths with the physical remains of the mythical unicorn. It may be as simple as mythological beliefs, desires, and prejudice being placed upon real physical objects.

Some people encountered living unicorns, and they did so in a world where unicorns and other now-mythological beasts existed. Bernhard von Breydenbach, a German priest, published *A Journey to the Holy Land* in 1486, in which he recounted how he saw a unicorn near Mt. Sinai.<sup>47</sup> This was entirely plausible to the early modern mind since unicorns had been known and written about since antiquity, their remains were visible and physically possessed. Unicorns even appeared in the Holy Bible, a book whose authenticity was not questioned.

The early modern world was sticky with the residue of medieval enchantment and belief, and the division between the worldly and the other worldly was not yet concrete. Richard Eden's 1555 translation of Peter Martyr (1516) included an account of Sebastian Cabot's voyage to North America. Martyr, using Cabot's findings, speculated about "great straits which provide a passage for the waters flowing from east to west," the supposed Strait of Anian (see chapter 2). Martyr tried to determine why the water flowed in the direction reported, and he hazarded it was caused "by the attraction of the heavens in their rotation round the earth, but not to be blown out and sucked in again by the

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<sup>47</sup> Bernhard von Bredenbach, *A Journey to the Holy Land* (Mainz, 1486).

breathing Demogorgon, as some have supposed."<sup>48</sup> Here, Martyr dismissed the notion of the demogorgon, a primordial ancient beast first mentioned by medieval writers, and whose existence continued in literature like Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). However, Martyr implied people in the early sixteenth century Europe still believed in the monster.

Beside the demogorgon, other creatures that today are considered mythical were still real in the early modern mind. When Walter Raleigh ventured into present day Guyana and Venezuela in the 1594, he spoke to an Indian who described the Ewaipanoma, a people who "are reported to have their eyes in their shoulders and their mouths in the middle of their breasts."<sup>49</sup> Raleigh made no mention of disbelieving the report. The report was visualized in the *Map of Guiana* by Theodor de Bry in 1590.<sup>50</sup> At the bottom of the map, standing on the banks of the Amazon River and positioned next to a dog, an Amazon woman, a deer, and a lion, stood an Ewaipanoma underneath the description "*Ein man des landt IWALPANOMA ohne kopf.*" This description roughly translated from German to English as "One of the land of Iwalpanoma without a head." Writing in 1596, Lawrence Kemys on a voyage to Guiana also confirmed the presence of these creatures. Kemys' interpreter, an Indian named John, substantiated Raleigh's

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<sup>48</sup> The first account of Sebastian Cabot, 1516, Peter Martyr in Richard Eden, in David B. Quinn, Alison Quinn, and Susan Hillier, *American from Concept to Discovery. Early Exploration of North America*, New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612 vol. 1 (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 124.

<sup>49</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh, "The Discovery of Guiana" in Benjamin Schmidt, ed., *The Discovery of Guiana by Sir Walter Raleigh: with Related Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), 92.

<sup>50</sup> Theodor de Bry in *Americae pars VIII Contines Primo, Descriptionem Trivmitiner* (Frankfort, 1625). Wellcome Library.

claims. John certified to Kemys “of the headlesse men, and that their mouthes in their breasts are exceeding wide...and the Guianians called them Ewiapanomos.” Kemys ended his discussion on the matter claiming that there were a “sorte of people more monstrous” but did not mention them because “the report otherwise will appear fabulous.”<sup>51</sup>

Two centuries earlier, John Mandeville had also written about headless men. In 1356, the French edition of *Sir John Mandeville's Travels* first appeared. The text was later translated into English and Mandeville became known as the "English Marco Polo" because Mandeville supposedly traveled across Asia like Polo did the generation before. Laurence Bergreen described *Mandeville's Travels* as a "collection of tall tales and beguiling myths passed off as fact." Bergreen, among others, argued that Mandeville did not actually travel across Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East as claimed, and probably "never traveled farther than a well-stocked nobleman's library." Mandeville probably was not a real person, but a vehicle used to compile stories and accounts from diverse authors including Pliny, Herodotus, Albert of Aix, William of Tripoli, Ordoric of Pordenone, Vincent of Beauvais, and various Alexander romances.<sup>52</sup> The British Library's Egerton text of *John Mandeville's Travels* described an island populated by "foul men of figure without heads, and they have eyes in either shoulder one, and their mouths are round shaped like a horseshoe."<sup>53</sup> Mandeville's description influenced early

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<sup>51</sup> Lawrence Kemys, *A relation of the second voyage to Guiana* (London, 1596), C3r-C3v

<sup>52</sup> Laurence Bergreen, *Marco Polo: From Venice to Xanadu* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 344-345.

<sup>53</sup> John Mandeville, *Mandeville Travels* vol. 1 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), 142.

modern explorers like Walter Raleigh in Guyana, to confirm what they already expected to exist, in this case headless men known in the Old World as Blemmyes and Anthropophagi, which Raleigh found in the New World with the name Ewaipanoma. Mandeville was well known and read by the intellectual elite writing about cosmography. Richard Eden quoted Mandeville in his editorial and marginal notes, and Richard Hakluyt included 55 pages of Mandeville in his *Principall Navigations*.<sup>54</sup> Geographer Robert Hues in his 1594 *Tractatus de globis et eorum usu* cited Mandeville for his “strict view of all India, China, Tartary, and Persia, with Regions adjoyning.”<sup>55</sup> Mandeville was accepted by many as fact.<sup>56</sup>

This was a world where demogorgons, headless men, and unicorns were not just envisioned to exist, but their existence was confirmed through eye-witness sightings and the possession of the creatures’ physical remains. The creatures were typically found in far off and exotic lands in America, Asia, and Africa. Mandeville wrote about unicorns in Asia. When describing the land conquered by Alexander the Great, Mandeville mentioned a series of islands, including one where “there are many unicorns and lions and many other hideous beasts.”<sup>57</sup> He claimed there “are many elephants all white and some all blue and of other colour without number” on the same island. Something of

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<sup>54</sup> John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965), 47, 137.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Hues in Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> For more on Mandeville, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>57</sup> John Mandeville and Malcom Letts, *Mandeville's Travels: Texts and Translations* vol. 1 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), 209.

note is in the handwritten copy of Mandeville known as the Cotton Manuscript; the copyist omitted the portion about the blue and colored elephants. This may have been caused by a copying error, or perhaps, it was an editorial decision made by the copyist.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the copyist did not believe in the existence in blue and other colored elephants but did believe in the existence of unicorns.

### **Unicorn Sightings in America**

Unicorns were often seen in areas outside of early-modern Europe. The Italian traveler, Ludovico di Varthema (1470-1517) journeyed to Africa and Asia, and while en route visited modern day Somalia, Egypt, Yemen, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. He is believed to be the first non-Muslim European to enter Mecca, and he did so as a member of a Mamluk military garrison. While at Mecca, Ludovico di Varthema, or as Samuel Purchas “Englished” him, Lewis Barthema, witnessed two unicorns. They were gifts to the Sultan of Mecca from an unnamed Ethiopian king. The first unicorn was older and therefore larger than the second. In forehead of the first unicorn, “groweth only one Horne, in manner right forth, of the length of three Cubits,” according to Varthema. The second unicorn’s horn was “of the length of foure spannes.” Varthema described the unicorns having the head of a hart but without the long neck, and possessing thin and slender legs like a fawn or a hind. Their front feet looked like a goat’s because they were cloven. These unicorns were savage animals. Varthema wrote “this beast doubtless

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<sup>58</sup> Mandeville, *Travels*, vol. 1, 209 see footnote 1.

seemeth wild and fierece, yet tempereth that fiercenesse with a certain comelinesse.”<sup>59</sup>

Varthema’s account was translated from Italian to English by Richard Eden and published in *A history of travayle in the West and East Indies* in 1577, the same year Dionyses Settle encountered a sea unicorn in North America.

Others found unicorns in North America. In 1542, Jean-Francois Roberval attempted to establish a colony of 200 people at Charlesbourg Royal, Canada. The colony failed and was abandoned the following year. Roberval’s pilot, Jean Alfonse wrote a narrative about his experiences in North America. When describing the area called Norumbega (present day New England and parts of Atlantic Canada), he recounted the various hardwoods, fruit trees, berries, birds, and mammals. He wrote, “there are goodly forests wherein men many hunt; and there are great store of stags, deer, porkespicks, and the savages say there be unicorns.” After mentioning unicorns, Alfonse continued by discussing the abundance of fowl including buzzards, geese, ravens, and turtle doves. He did not appear surprised that the Indians mentioned the existence of unicorns. Unicorns were just one of the many pieces of North American flora and fauna to be listed alongside walnut trees, gooseberries, deer, and cranes. Moreover, he ended the paragraph referring to unicorns with the statement, “all things above mentioned are

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<sup>59</sup> Lewis Barthema, “The Travels of Lewis Barthema or Vertoman into Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Persia, and India, heretofore published in English by R. Eden, and here corrected according to Ramusios Copie, and contracted” in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* vol. 9 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), 73-74.

true.”<sup>60</sup> In the mind of Alfonse, it was possible for unicorns to run through the forests of Norumbega alongside deer and porcupines.

The existence of unicorns in America was visually reinforced on a map produced in France in the 1540s, probably influenced by the recent undertakings of Roberval and his pilot Alfonse, as well as Jacques Cartier whose third voyage to Canada was part of Roberval’s colonizing efforts. The untitled map had unicorns occupying space in the region roughly described in the sixteenth century as Canada and Norumbega. Two white unicorns stand north of the St. Lawrence River and three are on the coastline near what might be Penobscot Bay, Maine.<sup>61</sup>

Unicorns appeared on other maps of North America. A solitary white unicorn was situated between the Penobscot Bay and Cape Cod on the 1546 *Map of the World* by Pierre Desceliers.<sup>62</sup> The map provided names given to areas of North America by Cartier and Roberval like Saguenay and Gaspé, therefore, one has to assume the map maker was familiar with the writings of Jean Alfonse.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps Desceliers depicted a unicorn based

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<sup>60</sup> Jean Alfonse and John Pinkerton, “Here followeth the Course from Belle Isle, Carpont, and the Grand Bay in Newfoundland up the river of Canada, for the space of 230 leagues, observed by Jean Alphonse of Xanctogne, chief pilot to Monsieur Roberval, 1542” in *A General Collection of the Best and Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World* (London: Longman, Hurst, Bees, Orme, and Brown; and Cadell and Davies, 1812), 674.

<sup>61</sup> [Dieppe world map], Bibliotheque nationale (France), Ge DD 738. Photostatic reproduction of manuscript compiled ca. 154?. Forms part of the Louis C Karpinski Map Collection (Newberry Library), MapPhoto France BN Ge DD 738 (PrCt).

<sup>62</sup> Pierre Desceliers, Map of the World, 1546, French MS 1\*, John Rylands University Library Image Collections,

<sup>63</sup> Pierre Desceliers, Map of the World, 1546 in André Vachon, Victorin Chabot, and André Desrosiers, *Dreams of Empire: Canada before 1700* John F. Flinn trans. (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1982), 40.

on the testimony of Alfonse. Alongside the unicorn stood other animals of North America including porcupines, deer, and bears.

Giovanni Francesco Camocio's 1569 world map (first published in 1567) entitled *Cosmographia vniversalis et exactissima ivxta postreman neotericrv* and published in Venice also contained a unicorn. However, instead of being on the shores on Norumbega, it was located on a large southern continent roughly where Antarctica is today. The same map also had a rhinoceros north of the Arctic Circle in Canada, and just below the Arctic Circle but between the "Apalchen" Mountains in what today might be considered Alberta or the Northwest Territories of Canada stood a lion and a camel.<sup>64</sup> The placement of the unicorn, rhino, and lion in this case may be a result of, according to Chet van Duzer, the belief that Europeans held "that monsters were generated by extremes of climate, which tended to occur in regions distant from Europe."<sup>65</sup> While unicorns and camels were not monsters, they did share commonalities with monsters in that they were exotic, hard to locate, and enchanted.

Paulo Forlani's 1565 map entitled *Universale descrizione di tutta la terra conosciuta fin* also depicted a unicorn. Forlani placed exotic animals located on the continent of Antarctic terra incognita, including a unicorn, elephant, leopard, monkey, and camel. These animals were clearly geographically out of place, but, the unicorn was

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<sup>64</sup> For a brief discussion on the map see Chet van Duzer, "Hic sunt dracones: The Geography and Cartography of Monsters" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle eds. (Farnham, Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 417. The map can be accessed online via the John Carter Brown Library's LUNA portal.

<sup>65</sup> Chet van Duzer, "Hic sunt dracones," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, 387.

situated amongst real animals, giving credence to the notion that Europeans believed unicorns to be real.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time the French were learning about unicorns in Norumbega, the Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado expedition encountered unicorns while traveling through present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. An account of the expedition was published in English by Purchas. At Cibola, an Indian city that lay somewhere near the Arizona/New Mexico border, the expedition learned of an animal resembling a unicorn. Coronado and his men saw a hide “halfe as big againe as the hide of an Oxe” and it was “the skinne of a beast which had but one horne upon his fore-head, bending toward his breast, and that out of the same goeth a point forward with which he breakes any thing that he runneth against. The colour of the hide was as of a Goat-skinne, the haire a finger thicke.”<sup>67</sup> An English reader of Purchas might have interpreted this passage to mean Coronado saw the hide of a unicorn due to the description of “one horn upon his fore-head.” Today, the reader would interpret it as a hide of a deformed buffalo.

In addition to English, French and Spanish voyagers and colonizers, the Dutch also encountered unicorns in North America. Isaack de Rasieres, the secretary of New Netherland wrote to Samuel Blommaert, the director of the Dutch West Indian Company in 1628 and remarked, “The savages say that far in the interior there are certain beasts of

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<sup>66</sup> JCB Map Collection, Cabinet A565 / 1.1. Paulo Forlani, *Universale descrizione di tutta la terra conosciuta fin qui* (Venice, Ferando Berteli, 1565). Map accessed through the John Carter Brown Library’s Luna portal. <http://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/t6wo7i>.

<sup>67</sup> The Voyages of Frier Marco de Niça, Don Fr. Vasquez de Coronado, Don Antonio de Espeio, and divers into New Mexico, and the adjoyning Coasts and Lands in *Purchas, His Pilgrimes* vol. 18, 62.

the size of oxen, having but one horn, which are very fierce. The English have used great diligence in order to see them, but cannot succeed therein although they have seen the flesh and hides of them which were brought to them by the savages.”<sup>68</sup> The description of beasts that “have but one horn, which are very fierce” matches da Vinci’s description of the unicorn being fierce and wild.<sup>69</sup> Rasieres also emphasized the English attempt to see the hides.

A similar account about unicorns was told by fellow Dutchman Adriaen van der Donck in his 1655 *A Description of New Netherland*. New Netherland encompassed the area now known as New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Van der Donck came to New Netherland in 1641 after earning a law degree from the University of Leiden. He first worked in the position of *schout* (judicial functionary) for Kiliaen van Rensselaer, and afterward worked as an attorney on Manhattan for settlers associated with the West India Company. He was on the wrong end of a political rivalry with Peter Stuyvesant and consequently left the colony in 1648 and returned to the Netherlands. Once home, he wrote about what he witnessed in the New Netherland colony.

The unicorn was mentioned in the section entitled “Of the Wild Animals,” Van der Donck wrote:

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<sup>68</sup> Isaack de Rasieres, “Letter of Isaackde Rasieres to Samuel Blommaert (1628)” in *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664*, J. Franklin Jameson ed., (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 114.

<sup>69</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci, “Incontinence” in Richter *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 320.

I have often heard from the Mohawks that deep inside the country there are animals that seldom show themselves, resembling a horse in size and shape, also cloven hoofed, and having in the middle of the forehead a horn one and a half or two feet tall. Since they are fleet of foot and strong, they are hard to catch or snare. I have never seen any evidence but do believe they exist, because Indian hunters attest unanimously to it, while certain Christians say they have seen the skins, though not the horns.<sup>70</sup>

This description fits the medieval and early modern understanding of the unicorn, horse like with, a single horn growing from the head, and hard to catch.

In 1587, during his third voyage looking for the Northwest Passage, John Davis encountered the physical remains of a unicorn. Near Labrador, Davis traded with the Inuit and exchanged a knife for a dart made out of unicorn's horn. He described the encounter taking place on June 24th at 6pm in the evening. He said two Indians came up to his ship “giving us birdes for bracelets, and of them I had a darte with a bone in it, or a piece of Unicorns horne, as I did judge. This dart he made store of, but when he saw a knife, he let it go, being more desirous of the knife then of his dart.”<sup>71</sup> The unicorn horn that Davis acquired was most likely a piece of narwhal tusk. A narwhal is a small Arctic whale which has only two teeth, which in males develops into a straight spirally twisted tusk. Randall Reeves argued "It is reasonable to assume that the precontact Inuit in some areas of the eastern Canadian Arctic hunted the narwhal," and narwhal tusks “were used

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<sup>70</sup> Andriaen van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, Charles T. Gehring and William A Starna eds., Diederik Willem Goedhuys trans., Foreword by Russel Shorto (Lincoln NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 50.

<sup>71</sup> John Davis, “May 19 to September 15, 1587. The third voyage by John Davis in search of the Northwest Passage,” in David B Quinn, Alison M Quinn, and Susan Hillier, *Newfoundland from Fishery to Colony. Northwest Passage Searches*, vol. 4, 5 vols., New American World A Documentary History of North America to 1612 (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 249.

by the subsistence hunters and their families as tent poles and walking sticks or to manufacture hunting implements.”<sup>72</sup>

The narwhal were not the only sources of unicorn horn. In *The History of Barbados*, written in French by Charles-César Rochefort in 1658 and “Englished” by John Davies in 1666, the section on “sea-monsters” concluded “with a description of so remarkable and miraculous a Fish, as may justly deserve a particular Chapter to treat it; It is the Sea-Unicorn.” In 1644, a dead sea unicorn washed ashore on the coast of Tortoise Island which is now Tortuga Island in Haiti. Rochefort gave the account of an eyewitness, Monsieur du Montel. Montel claimed the unicorn was pursuing fish with “such earnestness and impetuosity” that it accidentally grounded itself ashore, “whence it was destroy’d by the Inhabitants.” It was covered with hard skin, and “as the Land-Unicorn hath one horn in his forehead.” The horn was nine feet long with a sharp tip “that being thrust hard it would enter into wood or stone, or some more solid substance.” However, contrary to Ctesias’ claims that unicorns were inedible, 300 inhabitants of Tortuga ate the sea-unicorn and Montel found the meat “extremely delicate...and being boiled it came up in steaks like fresh Cod, but it had a much more excellent taste.” Rochefort suspected that Montel was probably describing another type of sea unicorn than the one he was most familiar with which is found in the northern seas and “are many times by the Ice carried to the Coast of Iseland.” The key difference is the Caribbean sea-unicorn was covered in scales, while the northern sea unicorn was not, and “most Authors

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<sup>72</sup> Randall R. Reeves, "Developments in the Commerce in Narwhal Ivory from the Canadian Arctic," *Arctic and Alpine Research* 24, no. 2 (May, 1992): 179.

who have written of them [northern sea unicorns] rank them among Whales,” meaning they did not have scales.<sup>73</sup> Montel was most likely describing either a swordfish or a marlin. However, it is telling that the French eyewitness Montel, the French author Rochefort, and the English translator Davies believed in sea unicorns.

### **Value of Unicorns**

Englishman John Sparke saw the existence of unicorns as an economic opportunity. John Sparke was a participant of John Hawkins' second voyage in 1564. His narrative reported encountering the French on the Florida coast near the St. Johns River, and relayed information back to an English audience about French activities. He wrote, "The Floridians [Indians] have pieces of unicornes hornes which they weare about their necks, whereof the Frenchmen obtined many pieces. Of those unicornes they have many; for that they doe affirme it to be a beast of one horne, which comming to the river to drinke, putteth the same into the water before he drinketh." One could speculate that since unicorn horns dipped in liquid could serve as an antidote to poison, that the unicorns were making the river water safe to drink. Sparke continued, "Of this unicornes horne there are of our company, that having gotten the same of the Frenchmen, brought home thereof to shew. It is therefore to be presupposed that there are more commodities aswell as that, which for want of time, and people sufficient to inhabit the same, can not yet come to light: but I trust God will reveale the same before it be long, to the great

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<sup>73</sup> Charles-César Rochefort, *The History of Barbados* John Davies trans., (London: John Starting and Thomas Dring Jr), 1666), 107-109.

profit of them that shal take it in hand.”<sup>74</sup> Sparke saw a future of a settled Florida with valuable commodities like unicorn horn that would bring individuals and a nation great profit.

English explorer William Baffin also commented on the value of unicorns. In 1615 Baffin wrote a letter to an investor and backer of the voyages of discovery for the Northwest Passage, John Wostenholm. The letter stated "As for the Sea Unicorne, it being a great fish, having a long horne or bone, growing forth of his forehead or nostril." Baffin exclaimed that "in divers places we saw of them, which if the horne be of any good value, no doubt but many of them may be killed."<sup>75</sup> The northern parts of North America offered bountiful amounts of horn of "good value" through the capture and slaughter of the sea unicorns.

Merchants and apothecaries knew unicorn horn to be valuable. The horns owned by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I reportedly ranged in price from £10,000 to £100,000. Furthermore, the remarks made by John Sparke in 1564 and William Baffin in 1615 demonstrated that some Englishmen openly speculated on the idea that North American unicorn horn could be made into a profitable commodity. Readers of Hakluyt, Purchas, and Davies in the seventeenth century read evidence of unicorns in Labrador, Norumbega, and Florida.

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<sup>74</sup> John Sparke, "July 1565. John Sparke's report on Florida," in David B Quinn, Alison M Quinn, and Susan Hillier, *Major Spanish Searches in Eastern North America. Franco-Spanish Clash in Florida. The Beginnings of Spanish Florida*, vol. 2, 5 vols., New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612 (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 368.

<sup>75</sup> William Baffin, "To the Right Worshipfull Master John Wostenholme Esquire, one of the chiefe Adventurers for the discoverie of a passage to the Northwest," in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* vol. 14 (Glasgow, UK: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 399.

There was profit to be made from unicorn horn. In 1609, the London satirist and literary figure Thomas Dekker mentioned the perceived value of the unicorn horn by stating “likewise that the lion, being the king of the beasts; the horse, being the lustiest creature; the unicorn, whose horn is worth half a city.”<sup>76</sup> A horn possessed in Dresden was valued at 75,000 thalers, an equivalent to over 66,000 pounds of silver.<sup>77</sup> Pomet’s *General History of Druggs* claimed unicorn “has been valued at its Weight in Gold.” Pomet also described a unicorn horn presented to the King of France valued at £20,000.” Along with Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and James I, Charles I was also presented with an unicorn horn that Pomet “suppos’d to be one of the greatest that ever was seen in the World; it was seven Foot long, weigh’d thirteen Pounds, and was in the Shape of a Wax Candle, but wreath’d within itself in Spires.”<sup>78</sup>

In addition to traders in Florence, France, and the Holy Roman Empire, English merchants were probably aware of merchants profiting from unicorn in Denmark and Russia. A Danish merchant group based out of Copenhagen sent an expedition to Greenland in 1636. They found sand that they believed to contain gold and brought back two ships full of the sand. When trying to process the sand, they found they could not

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Gulls’s Hornbook*, R.B. McKerrow ed., (London: Alexander Moring, 1905), 29.

<sup>77</sup> William Jackson, “The use of Unicorn Horn in Medicine,” *The Pharmaceutical Journal* vol. 273 (December 2004): 925. The thaler was the principle currency used in the Holy Roman Empire. Thalers were also used in the Netherlands and Scandinavia. Thalers were called dollars in English and therefore are the origin of the word for the American dollar. "dollar, n.". OED Online. September 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56602?redirectedFrom=dollar> (accessed October 31, 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Pomet, *Pomet’s General History of Druggs With what is further observ’d by Monsieur Lemery, Tornefort, &C* vol. 2, in Lemery and Tornefort *A Compleat History of Drugges, Written in French by Monsieur Pomet* 3rd ed. (London, 1737), 233.

extract any gold and quickly abandoned their efforts. However, shortly after, a new and promising process to extract gold from sand was developed in Norway and the Danish merchants returned to Greenland to find their golden beach. They could not find the original site and returned home relatively empty handed, however, they brought back either the teeth or horns of a narwhal, “which sold at Copenhagen for 6,000 rix-dollars a piece, and were bought at a still higher price in Russia, as the horns of the land unicorn.”<sup>79</sup>

However, like many New World commodities, the price of unicorn horn dropped. After 1625, the price of the horn dropped considerably. By the 1730s, a horn that cost thousands of dollars previously would have cost just twenty-five. Over time, the wealthy lost interest in alicorn, but the poor continued to buy them.<sup>80</sup>

### **Doubters**

There were some who did not believe in unicorns. In 1634, a translation of the writings of Ambrose Paré appeared in English. Paré was the physician to the French kings Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III, and helped revolutionize battlefield surgery and designed a number of surgical instruments. He primarily wrote in the 1560s and 70s. The Thomas Johnson translation of Paré’s writings contained a chapter entitled

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<sup>79</sup> David Crantz, *The History of Greenland* vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), 255-256.

<sup>80</sup> Odell Shephard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, 113-115.

“Of the Unicornes Horne.”<sup>81</sup> Paré began by discussing how unicorn horn powder or an infusion made with such was believed to protect people against poison and contagion. However, he stated “I think that beast that is vulgarly called & taken for an Unicorn, is rather a thing imaginary than really in the world.”<sup>82</sup> He came to this conclusion by comparing the description of the creature provided from a variety of sources including Pliny and Cardanus. He found discrepancies in the size and shape of the unicorn, and similarities between unicorn horn and elephant ivory. He also found no evidence of the pharmacological benefits of the horn. In 1646, physician and author Thomas Browne arrived at a similar conclusion in his *Pseudodoxia epidemica*. He declared in the chapter entitled “Of Vnicornes hornes” that “no such animall extant.” Rather, items passed off as unicorn horn were probably parts of rhinoceroses, sea lions, or swordfish. Like Paré, this conclusion was drawn by reexamining the writings and conclusions of ancient writers, as well as not seeing any empirical evidence of the pharmacological benefit of the horn, going so far as to call the use of the “horn” as a “good remedy for fluxes...an insufferable delusion.”<sup>83</sup> Pierre Pomet, the druggist to the French King Louis XIV, also doubted the existence of the unicorns. Pomet claimed it was impossible to tell if druggists and apothecaries were in fact selling “true” horn. Furthermore, Pomet concluded that what

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<sup>81</sup> Ambroise Paré and Thomas Johnson, *The workes of that famous chirurgion Amborse Parey translated out of Latine and compared with the French by Th: Johnson* (London: Th: Cotes and R. Young, 1634), 813-815.

<sup>82</sup> Paré and Johnson, *The workes*, 813-815

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica* (London, 1646), 166-169.

was commonly sold as unicorn horn “comes from a Fish called the Sea Unicorn, and is brought from Davis’s Streights near the North Passage.”<sup>84</sup>

If anyone would believe in the power of the unicorn horn, it might have been James I, but he, too, came to doubt unicorns due to lack of evidence. He authored *Daemonologie*, a book about magic, witchcraft, and spirits. He claimed to have written *Daemonologie* “only to proue two things...that such diuelish artes haue bene and are. The other, what exact trial and seure punishment they merite.”<sup>85</sup> In addition to believing in witches and ghosts, he placed the unicorn on the shield of his new “United Kingdom” when as sitting king of Scotland, he ascended the throne of England, Ireland, and Wales in 1603. James I tested the efficacy of unicorn horn, particularly the notion that alicorn was an antidote to poison. James poisoned a drink and treated the poisoned beverage with powdered unicorn horn, and then made a servant drink the lethal concoction. The servant drank and promptly died.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Pierre Pomet, *A Compleat History of Drugs* trans. Lemert and Tournefort, vol. 1, (London: 1712), 234-235.

<sup>85</sup> James I, King of England, *Daemonologie in forme of a dialogue* (Edinburg, 1597), 3.

<sup>86</sup> Rüdiger Robert Beer, *Unicorn: Myth and Reality* trans. Charles M. Stern (New York: Mason/Charter, 1977), 117, 138. Beer’s book is not a scholarly publication, however, the journal *Medical History* called Rüdiger’s handling of the unicorn’s “varying image, its symbolism and supposed physical form, the legends associated with it, and the therapeutic value of its horn, are all dealt with in a scholarly manner,” see “Review of Rüdiger, Robert Beer *Unicorn. Myth and Reality*” in *Medical History* 22, no. 4 (October 1978): 458.

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While some like Paré, Browne, and James I doubted the existence and medicinal potency of unicorns, many continued to believe in the existence of the beast. Ancient knowledge, eyewitness testimony, and physical remains all proved the animal to exist. Moreover, these same sources confirmed and reconfirmed the profitability of North America – from exotic objects like gold, silk, and unicorns, to the more mundane like fish and iron (see chapter 2). Colonial projectors continued to envision and imagine North America as profitable despite illusory and ephemeral financial returns from such commodities as the unicorn. The pursuit of the unicorn epitomizes, what at the time, was perfectly reasonable in the minds of early modern projectors. They imagined the unlimited potential of America, and if someone could believe in a unicorn, it was not a stretch of the imagination to believe in the profitability of fish, gold, and later, sassafras: all of which were emblematic of the failure to pursue profitable commodities.

## CHAPTER IV

### “A TREE OF HIGH PRICE AND PROFIT”<sup>1</sup>

And that a new Plantation Sir (marke me)  
Is made in Covent Garden, from Sutleries  
Of German Camps, and the Suburbs of Paris,  
Where such a salt disease does reign as makes  
Sasaphras dearer than Unicornes Horn.<sup>2</sup>

William D’Avenant (1606-1668), *The Wits* (1636).

Martin Pring visited the shores of northern Virginia (present day New England) in the summer of 1603 as captain of the ship *Speedwell*, incidentally, which was incidentally the same ship that would carry over the Pilgrims seventeen years later. A consortium of Bristol merchants, including Richard Hakluyt and under the license of Walter Raleigh, hired Pring to explore northern Virginia and determine what, if any, exploitable economic assets Virginia possessed. Pring explored the coast from present-day Maine to Massachusetts searching for commodities, notably sassafras. He put in along the modern-day New Hampshire coastline and failing to find sassafras, he pushed further south. Near present-day Cape Cod, Pring found sassafras and put in to harvest its roots. Pring called it “a plant of sovereigne vertue for the French Pox...the Plague and

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<sup>1</sup> 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: George Bishop, 1602), 7.

<sup>2</sup> William D’Avenant, *The vvitts A Comedie* (London, 1636), modified quote taken from William D’avenant, *The Works of Sir William D’avenant Knight* (London: 1673), 208.

many other maladies.”<sup>3</sup> Pring immediately sent a shipload of sassafras home to England in order to bring “speedie contentment” to his voyage’s investors.<sup>4</sup> Harvesting the tree’s roots, at least during the summer of 1603, was a quick and easy way to make money for English merchants who ventured to the northern Virginia coastline. Sassafras’ value lay behind the belief that it was medicine that cured what the English called the French Disease or French Pox, a disease today known as syphilis.

Syphilis entered Europe hidden in the blood and on the genitals of Christopher Columbus’ crew when they returned from the New World at the end of the fifteenth century. Once introduced to Europe, the disease ravaged the continent with no real relief until the introduction of antibiotics in the twentieth century. However, doctors and quacks alike tried to treat the disease with a myriad of remedies, notably mercury and sudorific woods, including sassafras. The knowledge of sassafras was introduced to the English at the end of the sixteenth century, and sassafras became a topic of note in Anglo print and manuscript cultures. Physicians and merchants, operating within the early-modern framework of natural philosophy, believed sassafras could cure and/or treat syphilis. For a moment in the Anglo-Atlantic world, sassafras was imagined by colonial projectors as an important and lucrative medical commodity, and the projectors visualized the tree as a money-maker that would fill the coffers of colonial investors in Britain. Harvesting the tree was an impulse behind colonial settlements and failures in

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Pring, “A Voyage...for the discoverie of the North part of Virginia” in Quinn et. al, *New American World* vol. 3., 361.

<sup>4</sup> *A Voyage set out from the Cities of Bristol...for the discoverie of the North part of Virginia* in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 362.

northern and southern Virginia (roughly from Florida to Newfoundland) from approximately 1580 to 1630. The over-harvesting of sassafras saturated the British market leading to a boom and bust cycle. The overlooked and short-lived sassafras boom at the turn of the seventeenth century reveals the generally unnoticed link between sassafras and early Anglo-American colonial failure. While sassafras cannot be directly linked to the failure of a specific colony, the shift in the commodity's price did contribute to colonial failure in general, particularly the failure of colonial projectors to find and secure a long-term profitable commodity.

### **Sassafras**

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) is a small deciduous tree native to eastern North America with green apetalous flowers and dimorphous leaves. It grows up to roughly 20 feet tall and its wood and bark possess a characteristic sweet smell. Its leaves can form in three distinct shapes with one, two, or three lobes. The trilobed leaf is the best known and most common shape. Smaller trees the size of large shrubs are desired for their roots and leaves, while bigger trees are desired for their timber.

It is not entirely clear how the name sassafras was applied to the tree by Europeans. The word sassafras may have been confused with the saxifraga, a European plant used for medicinal purposes. A general lack of botanical knowledge coupled with linguistic confusion might have led early-modern Europeans to conflate sassafras, saxifraga, and sarsaparilla since all three plants were assigned similar medicinal virtues and their names sound alike. It is difficult to ascertain if authors in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries properly differentiated between them all, interchangeably used terms, or misidentified plants.

Presently sassafras is primarily known for its gastronomic qualities. Ground sassafras leaves make up the filé in filé gumbo, a unique and earthy tasting thickening agent. Filé was probably introduced to Africans and Europeans by the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians and has been used by African and Europeans since the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Sassafras roots are associated with hot sassafras tea, the distinct flavoring of root beer, and home-made cure-all tonics. A decoction made from sassafras wood was combined with sugar and sold in European coffee houses as bochet.<sup>6</sup> Bochet could also be mixed with mead, beer, and coffee.<sup>7</sup> In back country Appalachia, sassafras roots were worn by Scotch-Irish immigrants to ward off witches, and they believed the devil would roost on their rooftops if sassafras wood was ever burned.<sup>8</sup> In addition to gastronomy, sassafras has commercial uses. Oil extracted from its roots is used to scent soaps, and the timber is used for furniture, cooperage and fence posts. Most notoriously, two chemicals derived from sassafras oil, isosafrole and safrole are used as ingredients to make the drugs MDA (3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine) and MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-

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<sup>5</sup> Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 99.

<sup>6</sup> "Laurus sassafras," in *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* vol. 12 (London: J. Adlard, 1814), 312.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Ewan, "Plant Resources in Colonial America," *Environmental Review* 1, no. 2 (1976): 48.

<sup>8</sup> Marie B. Mellinger, "The Spirit is Strong in the Root," *Appalachian Journal* 4, no. 3/4 (Spring & Summer 1977): 246.

methylamphetamine).<sup>9</sup> MDMA is commonly known as “molly” or “ecstasy” and is a Schedule 1 drug under the Controlled Substances Act.

Sassafras had a history in America prior to European contact. Native Americans used sassafras wood for dugout canoes, and its leaves, roots, and bark as food and medicine.<sup>10</sup> Cherokees gave an infusion of sassafras bark to treat children with worms, used sassafras poultices made from root bark to treat open wounds and sores, and applied sassafras infused water to flush sore eyes. Chippewas used the root bark to thin the blood and the Choctaw used a decoction of roots to treat the measles. Houmas used the roots to treat scarlet fever, and the Iroquois soaked sassafras roots in whiskey to treat tapeworms. Koasatis used a poultice of sassafras to treat bee stings and Rappahannocks used a branch pith decoction to wash burns as well as raw buds to “increase vigor in males.” The Seminoles used an infusion as mouthwash and as an appetite stimulant.<sup>11</sup> William Strachey described how the Powhatan Indians of Virginia used sassafras to treat syphilis to “quencheth and mortifieth the malignant poyson of that fowle desease.”<sup>12</sup> In the late sixteenth century, Englishman Thomas Harriot reported the Algonquian speaking Indians

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<sup>9</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration, “Drugs of Abuse 2011 Edition,” [http://www.justice.gov/dea/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug\\_of\\_abuse.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/dea/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug_of_abuse.pdf), p.30, 61-62, (accessed May 2, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> US Forest Service, “Sassafras albidum,” <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/sasalb/all.html> {accessed May 2, 2014}.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel E. Moerman, *Native American Medicinal Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary* (Portland OR and London: Timber Press, 2009), 445-446.

<sup>12</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia*, R.H. Major ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1849), 110.

of coastal North Carolina called sassafras winauk,<sup>13</sup> and Scotsman Robert Gordon also claimed the Indians on Nova Scotia called it by the same name.<sup>14</sup> Spaniard Nicolas Monardes said the Timucua speaking Indians of southern Georgia and northern Florida called it Pauame or Pavame.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 3. Mark Catesby, The Tyrant Bird on a Sprig of Sassafras, *Natural History of Carolina* vol. 1 (London, 1731), plate 55.

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Harriot provides the name Winauk in *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Gordon, *Encouragements* (Edinburgh, 1625), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Monardes provided the name Pauame in *Joyfull Newes out of the new founde worlde*.

## The English Knowledge of Sassafras

The introduction of sassafras to the English imagination took a circuitous route. Printed knowledge of the tree probably first appeared in English through the publishing of *Joyfull Newes out of the New Founde Worlde*, originally written in Spanish and “Englished” by John Frampton in 1577. The original Spanish text was written in two parts by Nicolas Monardes in 1569 and 1571.<sup>16</sup> The parts were then combined into one large volume, and it is this combination that John Frampton translated into English. John Parker described the translation as “as the most frequently issued book of overseas interest in the Elizabethan period.”<sup>17</sup> The book explored the medicinal plants found across Spanish Florida, the Caribbean, New Spain (Mexico), and Peru. There is a question about Frampton’s motivation for translating the work, but whatever his purpose, the publication contributed to the expansion of European pharmacology.<sup>18</sup>

Monardes claimed he learned of sassafras from “a Frenche manne whiche had been in those partes [Florida].” The Frenchman told Monardes that his countrymen in Florida “had been sicke...of greevous and variable deseases, and that the Indians did shewe them this Tree, and the maner how thei should use it, and so thei did, and thei healed of many evilles.” The French in this case were probably part of the failed

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Gaselee, “Introduction,” Nicholas Monardes, *Joyfull Newes out of the Newe Founde Worlde* trans John Frampton vol. 1, 1925 reprint (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), vi.

<sup>17</sup> John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Donald Beecher, “The Legacy of John Frampton: Elizabethan trader and translator,” *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 3 (May 2006): 327. There are questions surrounding whether Frampton was trying to earn a living as a translator, or, if was promoting the formation of the Spanish Company.

settlement at Ft. Caroline, indicated by Monardes saying “the Frenche menne were destroyed.”<sup>19</sup>

Monardes described sassafras as a panacea for many illnesses and praised God for its existence: “Blessed be our Lord GOD that deliuered vs from so great euill, and gaue vs this most excellent tree called *Sassafras*, which hath so great vertues, and worketh such mauellous effects as we haue spoken of, and more which Time wil shewe vs, which is the discoverer of all thinges.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, it was a general belief during the early modern period that “God often placed remedies for a disease in the areas where that disease flourished,” and since syphilis was of American origin, its cure was to be found in America.<sup>21</sup> In 1535, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés discussed this idea when he wrote “such is the divine mercy that where it permits us to be afflicted for our sins, it places a remedy equal to our afflictions.”<sup>22</sup> Oviedo’s sentiment was translated and published by Samuel Purchas to read “God so in judgment remembering mercy, that where our sinnes produce a punishment, he also sends a remedie.”<sup>23</sup> Mondardes admitted

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<sup>19</sup> Monardes, 99. For more on the two failed French settlements in the American southeast during the sixteenth century, see John T. McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: In the Eye of the Hurricane* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Nicolas Monardes and John Frampton, *Ioyfull newes out of the newfound world* (London, 1580), 55.

<sup>21</sup> John Parascandola, *Sex, Sin, and Science: A History of Syphilis in America* (Wesport CT: Praeger, 2008), 16.

<sup>22</sup> Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, *Relacion sumaria de la natural historia de las Indias*, quoted in Max H. Fisch and Nicolaus Pol, *Nicolaus Poll Doctor 1494*, ed. and trans. Dorothy M. Schullian (New York: Herbert Reichner for the Cleveland Medical Library Association, 1947) 44-45.

<sup>23</sup> Gonzalo de Oviedo, “Extracts of Gonzalo Ferdinando de Oveido his Summarie and Generall Historie of the Indies,” in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes* vol. 15 (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 222.

that hearing reports out of Florida of the beneficial uses of the tree gave him the “courage to experimente it.”<sup>24</sup> He used it on “a gentlewoman” suffering from “certaine indispositions of the Mother, and of greate colde,” and “was burdened in suche sorte with a verye greate Agewe.” After following Monardes’ instructions on how and when to take sassafras water, the woman was “healed very well, of her disease.”<sup>25</sup> Monardes also healed “a yong man which had an Opilation of certaine Tertians. And thereof he was all swolne, and in such sort that he was well nere full of Dropsie” by treating him with “water of this sassafras” in conjunction with “Pilles of Ruibarbe, and by takying of Dialaca.”<sup>26</sup> Monardes healed a gentleman with “with foule deseased hands...which could not write...paste five or six letters,” upon drinking sassafras water “he came to be remedied.”<sup>27</sup> Reminiscent of plague doctors, Monardes used sassafras as a pomander because the sweet smell of the roots was “so acceptable it did rectifie the infected ayre.” He carried it when treating patients, and in addition to the sassafras, Monardes believed he “was delivered by the healpe of God from the fyre, in the whiche we that were Phisitions went in.”<sup>28</sup>

Monardes also heard anecdotes and eyewitness reports of the miraculous plant. Spanish soldiers under the command of Pedro Menedez (the same Menedez who

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<sup>24</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 102.

<sup>25</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 105-106. I am assuming that “indispositions of the Mother” means pain associated with pregnancy

<sup>26</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 107.

<sup>27</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 114.

<sup>28</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 117.

destroyed Ft. Caroline) drank sassafras water to ward off disease; a priest accompanying the soldiers cured his kidney stones by drinking sassafras water; a captain in Florida who was unable to walk and had to be carried by his soldiers was cured by sassafras; and a physician in Havana used sassafras to cure his patients of constipation. In addition to the previously mentioned diseases (pregnancy pains [indispositions of the mother], fever and malaria [ague] edema [dropsy], blockages [opilations], arthritis [foul diseased hands], kidney stones, lameness, constipation), Monardes claimed sassafras could cure dysentery (staie the flux), headaches (griefes of the head), stomachaches (griefes of the Stomacke), bad breath (stinking breath), toothaches, gout, comfort the liver, engender clean blood, restore appetite (cause lust to meate), help digestion, consume winds, cause urination, cure bareness in men and women, cause weight gain, and reduce childbirth pains (evill of the Mother)<sup>29</sup> Probably not coincidentally, centuries later, *The British Medical Journal* reported on the toxic properties of sassafras. Dr. John Bartlett found that sassafras resembled opium due to its action as a narcotic and sudorific. Bartlett also found sassafras to cause tetanic and clonic spasms followed by paralysis, and had the “power of exciting the uterus.”<sup>30</sup> These toxic properties probably helped in easing the “evills of the mother” by reducing birth pains via temporary paralysis. Additionally, sassafras was used to treat “the evill of the Poxe,” or syphilis.<sup>31</sup> Monardes claimed that sassafras had “the same effectes that the reste of the water of the holie woodd, the China, and the

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<sup>29</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 99-120.

<sup>30</sup> “United States, from a correspondent,” *The British Medical Journal* 1 no. 1312 (Feb. 20, 1886): 365.

<sup>31</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 113.

Sarcaparillia dooeth.”<sup>32</sup> Monardes is referring to the four sudorific woods: sassafras, guaiacum, china root, and sarsparilla,<sup>33</sup> all of which were found in America.<sup>34</sup>

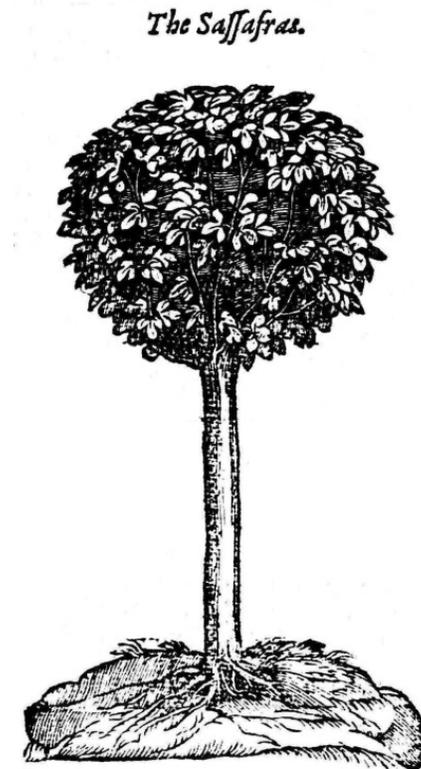


Figure 4. Sassafras Tree from Nicolás Monardes, *Ioyfull Nevves out of the Newe Founde Worlde* (London, 1580), fol. 45r.

Monardes’ description of sassafras laid the foundation for future authors to understand the physical and medicinal properties of the sassafras and its leaves, roots,

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<sup>32</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 113.

<sup>33</sup> George Wood defined the fours sudorific woods as guaiacum, sarsparilla, china root, and sassafras root, George P. Wood, *A Treatise on the Practice of Medicine* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Co., 1855), 633.

<sup>34</sup> Generally, sassafras was found in North America, sarsaparilla in Central America, Guaiacum in the Caribbean. China root was found in both Asia and the Americas.

wood, and bark. A side by side comparison of John Frampton's translation of Monardes's *Joyfull Newes*, and the Thomas Johnson's edition of John Gerard's *The herball or Generall historie of plantes* (originally published by Gerard in 1597, edited Johnson edition published in 1633) demonstrates how Monardes' work served as the cornerstone of knowledge for the English knowledge of sassafras for at least two generations. The following is a description of the "vertues" of the "Sassafras, or Ague tree:"

Table 3. Comparison of Monardes and Gerard.

Monardes <sup>35</sup>	Gerard <sup>36</sup>
<p>The beste part of all the Tree is the roote, and that dooeth worke the best effect, the whiche hath the rinde verie fast to the inner parte, and it is of the colour taunie, and much more of swete then all the Tree, and his branches,</p> <p>the rinde dooeth taste of a more sweete smell, then the Tree, and the water beeyng sodden with the roote, is of greater and better effectes, then of any other parte of the Tree, and it iis of a more sweete smell, and thereof the Spaniardes dooeth use it, for that is of better and greater effects.</p> <p>It is a Tree that groweth nere unto the Sea, and in temperate places, that hath not much drouthe, nor moisture, there by Moutaines growyng full of them, and thei dooe caste a moste sweete smell: and so at the beginning when thei sawe them, thei thought that thei had been Trees of Sinamon, and in parte thei were not deceived, for that the rinde of the Tree hath as swete a smell, as the Sinamon hath, and it dooeth imitate it in colour and sharpnesse of taste, and pleasaunte smell, as so the water that is made of it, is of moste sweete smell and taste, as the Sinamon is, and doeth the same workes and effectes that it doeth.</p>	<p>The best of all the tree is the root, and that worketh the best effect, the which hath the rinde cleaving very fast to the inner part, and is of colour tawnie, and much more sweet of smell than all the tree and his branches.</p> <p>The rinde tasteth of a more sweet smell than the tree; and the water being sod with the root is of greater and better effects than any other part of the tree, and is of a more sweet smell, and therefore the Spaniards vse it, for that it worketh better and greater effects.</p> <p>It is a tree that groweth vnto the sea, and in temperate places that haue not much drouth, nor moisture. There be mountaines growing full of them, and they cast forth a most sweet smell, so that at the beginning when they saw them first, they thought they had een trees of Cinnamon, &amp; in part they were not deceiued: for that the rinde of this tree hath as sweet a smell a Cinnamon hath, and doth imitate it in colour and sharpnesse of taste, and pleasantnesse of smell: and so the water that is made of it is of a most sweet smell and taste, as the Cinamon is, and procureth the same works and effects as Cinamon doth.</p>

The sweet and powerful smell of sassafras as described by Monardes' *Joyfull Newes* and echoed by Gerard also appeared in the writings of Thomas Harriot. Harriot, while visiting southern Virginia in the 1585, encountered and described sassafras as "a kind of wood of most pleasant and sweet smell, and of most rare virtues in physic for the

<sup>35</sup> Monares, 1925 reprint, 103.

<sup>36</sup> John Gerard, *The herball of Generall historie of plantes* (London, 1633), 1525.. The 1633 edition was edited by Thomas Johnson and is considered more well received and scholarly version of Gerard's work.

cure of many diseases.”<sup>37</sup> Harriot advised his readers if they wanted to know about “the description, the maner of using, and the manifold vertues thereof,” they should read “the Booke of Monardus, translated and entituled in English, The joyfull newes from the West Indies.”<sup>38</sup> David Beers Quinn argued that Harriot brought a copy of Monardes with him to Virginia to help identify medicinal plants.<sup>39</sup> In 1631, Robert Fludd claimed that sassafras could be “scented by nauigators vpon” the shores of Guaiana and Virginea “sometimes before they can discerne any land.”<sup>40</sup> In 1633, James Hart claimed the scent of sassafras wood in the West Indies could “be many miles carried into the aire, and by sailers smelt a farre off.”<sup>41</sup>

### Natural Philosophy

Sassafras was conceptualized for medicinal use within the framework of natural philosophy. Medicine in the early-modern era had more in common with medieval notions than with modern medicine. Natural philosophers read the “book of nature,” and accepted occult or secret ways of knowing that now “seem antithetical to modern

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Harriot, “Thomas Harriot’s Report on Virginia” in Quinn, Quinn, and Hillier, *New American World* vol. 3, 142.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Harriot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588), in Quinn and Quinn, *The First Colonists*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> David Beers Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages*, fn. 5, 329.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Fludd, *Doctor Fludds answer vnto M Foster* (1631), 83.

<sup>41</sup> James Hart, *Klinike, or the diet of the diseased* (1633), 368.

scientific methods.”<sup>42</sup> Most medical thought of the era was based on the teachings of Galen (119-216 CE), the physician to the emperors Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180) and Commodus (r. 177-192).<sup>43</sup> His teachings dominated medical thought in the medieval Latin, Greek, and Arab worlds. While Galen did not fully develop the theories of medical practice during his era, western physicians inherited his writings in the middle ages, particularly *The Art of Medicine*.

Galen’s works were printed in Greek in 1525 sparking a reinvigoration of Galenic thought and study. Galenism survived in academic medicine up to 1800 because no new discovery could undermine the entire system of thought. Galenism was flexible because its adherents were able to incorporate contradictory ideas and discoveries into the existing intellectual framework.<sup>44</sup>

Classical, medieval, and early-modern Galenic medicine taught that the body was comprised of four humours. Each humour was comprised of the ancient elements of water, earth, fire, and air, and the amount of each element contributed to every humour possessing a quality. Phlegm was cold and wet; black bile, cold and dry; blood, hot and wet; and choler (yellow bile), hot and dry. Each humour contributed to a person’s temperament. Yellow bile made individuals quarrelsome and black bile made people melancholic. Every person’s temperament reflected the unique blend of humours within

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University press, 2010), 84-85.

<sup>43</sup> Marcus Aurelius and Commodus ruled as co-emperors from 177 to 180.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 87.

their body. In addition to the four classical elements and the four humours, the body was made up of five other “naturals:” complexions or temperament reflecting the individual’s blend of hot, cold, wet, and dry; parts of the body including the three major organs of the liver, heart, and brain; an animating spiritus which is an pneuma produced by the heart; virtues; and the operations of individual organs.

Galen viewed the body as a mass of fluids made up of the four humours rather than distinct body parts and biological systems.<sup>45</sup> The body would fall sick when there was an excess of one humour. The physician's role was to identify which humour was in excess and then to rebalance the levels of humours. Medicines were considered hot, wet, cold, or dry, and their effect on the body depended on their classification. Treatment of a sick patient was done through contraries, so, a cold medicine would cure a hot disease.<sup>46</sup> However, diseases rarely affected just one humour. William Clowes, in his 1588 translation of the Spanish physician John Almenar entitled *A prooed pratise for all young chirurgians*, remarked “for as corruption seldome happeneth in one onely humour (sayth Galen. 1. regim. acut.) euen so you shall seldome finde the signes foretelling one onely humour.”<sup>47</sup>

According to the notions of early-modern natural philosophy, sweating helped to rebalance humours and aided in curing certain diseases. Sassafras is a sudorific wood

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<sup>45</sup> Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 17-20.

<sup>46</sup> Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 145.

<sup>47</sup> William Clowes, *A prooed practise for all young chirurgians* (1588), 102.

which, when ingested, made patients sweat. There were four known sudorific woods: sassafras, guaiacum, sarsaparilla, and china root. The search for sassafras was not an isolated search, but it was done with the other sudorific woods in mind.

The sudorific wood called guaiacum or guaiac was known as the Holy Wood, *lignum sanctum*, or *lignum vitae*. It is a tree native to the Caribbean and was probably introduced to Europe by the Spanish, and it was the first American word to enter the English language.<sup>48</sup> One of the first recipes calling for guaiacum to treat syphilis originated in 1516 from Seville from “a certain spice-dealer who had it [but] was unwilling to show it except to his intimate friends.” The surviving copy of the recipe was written down in 1519 by “Ippolito of Montereale...in the house of Master Giovanni Lorenzo of Sassoferrato, a doctor of most excellent in every faculty.”<sup>49</sup> The first published medical recipe using guaiacum was printed in 1518 in Augsburg, an important trading and banking city in the Holy Roman Empire, and entitled *A recipe for using a wood for the French disease and other running open sores, translated from Spanish into German*.<sup>50</sup> The rest of Europe was introduced to guaiacum through Ulrich von Hutten’s 1519 book *De Morbo Gallico* in which he claimed the tree could “hele the frenche pockes cleane, pluckyng them vppe by the rootes, but specially whan a man ben diseased

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<sup>48</sup> Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford, *Languages in the USA: Themes for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Fisch and Pol, “Recipe for the use of the wood from the Indies wich is called guaiac and which is good fro the French Disease. This recipe came from Spain, and I had it from Master Giovanni Lorezo of Sassoferrato,” 85-87.

<sup>50</sup> Fisch and Pol, 42-43,

with them of alonge tyme.”<sup>51</sup> Behind mercury, guaiacum was the second most widely drug used to treat syphilis.

Sarsaparilla was considered the third sudorific wood. There were at least two species of sarsaparilla harvested in the early colonial era. The first is the vine native to Central America (*Smilax regelii*) and it was used alongside sassafras and guaiacum to treat syphilis. The second species was probably wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*) found from Newfoundland to North Carolina. English sailors and colonists most likely collected wild sarsaparilla from North American shores and passed it off as the same plant native to Central America and the Caribbean. This would account for the 1607 report given by Ferdinando Gorges that area around the newly established Sagadahoc colony “doth yealde Sauceparelia in a great abundance.”<sup>52</sup> North American wild sarsaparilla continued to be of some importance. The Newfoundland Company reported in 1628 that profit was made from “fishing, furs, and sarsaparilla.”<sup>53</sup>

China root (*Wolfiporia extensa*) was considered the fourth sudorific wood; however, it is not a wood but rather a wood-decay fungus that grows underground. Native Americans considered the fungus a food, and was called Indian bread or Tuckahoe by Europeans after contact. It also grows in China and it is this Asian connection that

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<sup>51</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Of the vwood called guaiacum that healeth the Frenche pockes, and also healeth the goute in the feete, the stoone, the palsey, lepree, dropsy, fallynge euyll, and other dyseases* (London, 1536), 64f-64r.

<sup>52</sup> Sir Ferdinando Gorges to the Earl of Salisbury, December 1, 1607 in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 438.

<sup>53</sup> Dr. James Meddus to Katharine Viscountess Conway, June 27, 1628 in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660*, W. Noel Sainsbury ed., (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860), 92.

supplied the name China root. It was considered a medicinal mushroom in traditional Chinese medicine. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was grown in large quantities in southern China and imported to Britain by the British East India Company.<sup>54</sup>

The bioprospecting of these several sudorific woods sometimes occurred in conjunction with each other. For example, when Samuel Mace was sent to Virginia to find and rescue the failed Roanoke colony, instead of returning with Eleanor and Virginia Dare, he returned with sassafras, guaiacum, and china root.<sup>55</sup> William Strachey claimed that the price of “saxafras, at that tyme [was] of a good value, worth some three shillings the lb.”<sup>56</sup>

The sudorific woods were often used in conjunction with each other for the treatment of syphilis. Jacques Guillemeau, the surgeon to the French king, discussed how to treat children with syphilis who contracted the disease “from his mothers womb or else by the Nurses fault, who may be defiled and infected with it.” He recommended a decoction that included an ounce of “ling. sanct.” (guaiacum), an ounce of “Chinae” (china root), and an ounce of sassafras.<sup>57</sup> John Pechey recommended a decoction to treat the French Pox that read in part: “Take of Sassafras six Drams, of Sarsaparilla four

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<sup>54</sup> Pratik Chakrabarti, “Medical Marketplaces beyond the West: Bazaar Medicine, Trade and the English Establishment in Eighteenth-Century India” in *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c. 1450-1850*, ed. Mark S.R. Jenner and Patrick Willis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 202.

<sup>55</sup> Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 251.

<sup>56</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1849), 154.

<sup>57</sup> Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth, or, The happy deliuerie of vvomen* (1612), 113-114.

ounces, of the inner Resinous Wood of Guaiacum three Ounces, of the Bark of the same one Ounce...”<sup>58</sup> Francis Bacon recommended syphilitics keep “Dyets of Guaiacum, Sarsa-perilla, China, and Sassafras.”<sup>59</sup> Richard Elkes recommended a treatment of syphilis that included one pound of guaiacum bark, two ounces of china root, six ounces of sassafras, and nine ounces of sarsaparilla.<sup>60</sup> Gideon Harvey recommended a cure for dropsy (edema) that included “the chips of Guaiacum wood, two ounces; Sassafras wood cut small, one ounce.”<sup>61</sup> Sassafras was also used in folk medicine. As late as the 1980s, descendants of slaves who worked the Stagville Plantation in Durham NC reported using sassafras to “clean the blood.”<sup>62</sup>

British patients and physicians often acquired medicines from apothecaries, including sassafras and other sudorifics. In 1666, probate records listed sassafras, guaiacum, sarsaparilla, opium, and green ginger in the inventory of Christopher Gore, apothecary of London.<sup>63</sup> The 1667 probate records of Richard Foucant, an apothecary in Covent Garden, listed sarsaparilla and sassafras alongside a list of his outstanding debtors owing him £215.15.00.<sup>64</sup> In 1683, the probate records of Richard Beaumont,

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<sup>58</sup> John Pechy, *The compleat herbal of physical plants containing all such English and foreign herbs* (1694), 325.

<sup>59</sup> Francis Bacon, *The historie of life and death* (1638), 253.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Elkes, *Approved medicines of little cost* (1651), 28.

<sup>61</sup> Gideon Harvey, *The family-physician, and the house-apothecary* (1678), 138.

<sup>62</sup> Alice Eley Jones, “African American Material Culture in North Carolina,” in *The African American Presence at Stagville Plantation* (Murfreesboro NC: Minnie-Troy Publishers, 2003), 4r.

<sup>63</sup> TNA PROB 4/17465, Gore, Mr., Christopher, Citizen & Apothecary of London.

<sup>64</sup> TNA PROB 4/1190, Foucant, Richard, of St. Paul, Covent Garden, Mdx., apothecary.

apothecary in Ipswich, listed sassafras and sarsaparilla alongside other exotic drugs like cassia lingnum (China bark or China cinnamon), oil of nutmeg, and ointment of orange flowers.<sup>65</sup>

Receipt books and loose papers from early-modern Britain also documented the use of sassafras. Loose papers associated with the Privy Seal Office included a receipt or recipe for “The electuarie of sarsafas.” The receipt said to boil rasped and bruised sassafras roots in a double vessel for 18 hours, cool the liquid, and then boil it down further into the consistency of an electuary. Afterwards, add powdered sassafras and nutmeg. The author claimed “this is an exceeding good electuary to open obstructons to disoulue wynd to open y<sup>e</sup> liuer and t<sup>e</sup> spleene And y<sup>e</sup> tidnes to comfort y<sup>e</sup> hart and spirits.”<sup>66</sup> A receipt book with handwriting on the outside of the upper cover reading “Alice Corbett her booke” dating from the mid-seventeenth century also contained a recipe for an electuary of sassafras. The electuary was described as “precious in all Stoking of y<sup>e</sup> Liver, spleene. Raines & Stomacke Good for windines to Comfort digistion. Expelleth Crude windy & water humors preserueth health & procuerth a good Colour.” The recipe also called for cinnamon, wine, nutmegs, sugar, ambergris, and musk. On the same page was a recipe for “Sasafras of Beare” that called for finely shaved sassafras to be seeped in beer alongside nutmeg, fennel, caraway, and anise.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> TNA PROB 4/8815, Beaumont, Richard, of Ipswich, Suffolk, apothecary.

<sup>66</sup> TNA SP 9/36/8, Loose papers, containing Memorandum of expenses in the Privy Seal Office 1603-1604.

<sup>67</sup> Wellcome Library, MS.212/53, Alice Corbett her booke, “Corbett, Arthur,” middle 17th century

Using sudorific woods such as sassafras as a medicine appears ludicrous in modern times; however, spices and other foodstuffs were commonly used as medicines in the early-modern period. In 1588, Walter Baley published *A short discourse of the three kindes of peppers vse and certaine special medicines made of the same, tending to the preseruatiō of health* to inform his British audience that Asian and African peppers could be used as medicine.<sup>68</sup> In the eighteenth century, Hans Sloane, the president of the Royal College of Physicians, introduced England to Jamaican chocolate. Chocolate was sold by apothecaries as a medicine for a century before it was used as a recreational sweet beverage. While not a foodstuff, tobacco was considered a medicine in the early seventeenth century. Edmund Gardiner wrote two books touching on the medicinal benefits of tobacco with long titles that included the lines *With the true vse of taking that excellent hearbe tobacco, aswell in the pipe by sume, as also in phisicke, medicine, and chirurgerie*<sup>69</sup> and *The triall of tabacco...his speciall vse in all phisicke*. While pepper, chocolate, and tobacco may seem like strange medicines today, they were no stranger than other medical remedies in early-modern Britain. A receipt book linked to Henry Pagett listed a remedy for someone “that cannot sleep ffor paine in the head or other like greife” was to ingest “oil of violets, yolk of an egge, and woman’s milk.” The removal of warts included mixing earth with “dogs pisse and lay it where the warts are and they will dry and fall away.” A toothache could be cured by drying “the greatest and fowlist

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<sup>68</sup> Walter Baley, *A short discourse of the three kindes of peppers* (London: Eliot’s Court Press, 1588).

<sup>69</sup> Edmund Gardiner, *Phisicall and approved medicines* (London, 1611), and *The triall of tabacco* (London, 1610).

toad...in an ouen” and applying the toad’s thigh bones to the problematic tooth.<sup>70</sup> In a time when pepper, tobacco, chocolate, and dog’s urine were considered medicines, the use of sassafras seemed perfectly reasonable.

### **Origins of Syphilis**

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection that occurs from contact between genital and mucous membranes. There are several phases to the modern twenty-first-century disease: primary, secondary, and latent stages. There is usually a three week incubation period from infection to the first signs of symptoms during the primary stage. The lesion at the site of inoculation starts as a macule, grows to a papule, and then turns into an ulcer. Symptoms of secondary syphilis include papular rash, snail trail ulcers, wart-like lesions, fever, malaise and headaches. Latent syphilis can develop in three manifestations: neurosyphilis occurs 10-20 years after infection and affects the spinal cord and brain; cardiovascular syphilis occurs 15-30 years after infection and affects the heart causing heart failure, angina, and aneurysm; and gummatous syphilis occurs 3-12 years after infection and causes destructive lesions affecting skin and bone. Pregnant women can pass the disease on to their fetus. Modern treatments such as benzathine penicillin, procaine penicillin, and doxycycline can cure the disease.<sup>71</sup>

In early-modern Europe, syphilis was a very different disease. It was more ferocious, fast acting, and destructive. Symptoms included rashes and ulcers extending

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<sup>70</sup> “Cookbook [manuscript], ca. 1678- ca. 1689,” V.b.13, Folger-Shakespeare Library.

<sup>71</sup> Patrick French, “Syphilis,” *British Medical Journal*, vol. 334, no. 7585 (January 2007): 143-147.

into the mouth and throat, fever, pain, and often death.<sup>72</sup> The Italian physician and poet Girolamao Fracastoro (1478-1553) echoed these symptoms: “The foul Infection o'er his Body spread / Prophanes his Bosome, and deforms his Head; / His wretched Limbs with filth and stench o'er flow, / While Flesh divides, and shews the Bones below. Dire Ulcers (can the Gods permit them) prey / On his fair Eye-balls, and devour their Day.”<sup>73</sup> In 1516, a medical recipe from Spain described syphilitic “ulcers...so deep that bones can be seen.”<sup>74</sup>

There is uncertainty about the origins of syphilis, however most scientists and historians believe in a New World origin of the disease, and the bacteria was transported to Europe, Africa, and Asia by Spanish sailors (New World theory). However, others argue that syphilis was an Old World disease that had existed in Europe for centuries before the Spanish brought it to America (Old World / unitarian theory). A third group claims that syphilis was present in both the Old and New Worlds at the same time (world-wide theory).<sup>75</sup> While not unanimous, the predominant view is that syphilis arrived in Europe from America. The proponents of the Old World / unitarian theory that argue that syphilis was an Old World disease brought to America base their position on

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<sup>72</sup> Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* 30th anniversary edition (Westport CT and London: Praeger, 2003), 125.

<sup>73</sup> Fracastoro and Tate, 29-30.

<sup>74</sup> Ippolito Montereale, “Recipe for the use of the wood from the Indies which is called guaiac and which is good from the French Disease. This recipe came from Spain, and I had from Master Giovanni Lorenzo of Sassoferrato,” in Max. H. Fisch and Nicolaus Pol, *Nicolaus Pol Doctor 1494*, ed. and trans. Dorothy M. Schullian (New York: Herbert Reichner for the Cleveland Medical Library Association, 1947), 85-87.

<sup>75</sup> John E. Lobdell and Douglas Owsley, “The Origin of Syphilis,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 10, no. 1 (Feb. 1974): 76, and Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 69.

anthropological remains which they believe show bone damage caused by syphilis prior to 1492. However, anthropologist Donald Ortner argued against the unitarian theory because he saw that the three of the variants of diseases caused by the bacteria *Treponema* (syphilis, bejel, and yaws) affected the human skeleton in roughly the same way for upwards of twenty percent of the patients with the disease.<sup>76</sup> This can lead to people incorrectly identifying evidence of syphilis in the bone record because the three diseases caused by *Treponema* can leave similar markings. Therefore, symptoms of syphilis were mistakenly ascribed to European bones predating 1493.

Physician Bruce M. Rothschild explained why syphilis first emerged in the Americas and not in the Old World. He argued that Treponematosi s originated in Africa in the form of yaws. The disease entered mutated into the bejel and entered into Asia and North America. Once in North America, bejel then mutated into syphilis.<sup>77</sup> The North American mutation was introduced to Europe most likely by the returning participants of Columbus' first voyage in 1493.

The link between Columbus and syphilis was not made until 1526. Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes made the connection in his *Natural History of the Indies*. In addressing the King of Spain Oviedo remarked, "Your majesty may take it as certain that this malady (the bubas) comes from the Indies, where it is very common knowledge amongst the Indians, but not so dangerous in those lands as it were our own...The first

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<sup>76</sup> Donald J. Ortner, "Foreword," in *The Myth of Syphilis: The Natural History of Treponematosi s in North America*, Mary Lucas Powell and Della Collins Cook eds., (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2005), ix.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce M. Rothschild, "History of Syphilis," 1457.

time this sickness was seen in Spain was after Admiral Don Christopher Columbus had discovered the Indies and returned from those lands.”<sup>78</sup>

Writing roughly 150 years later, Gideon Harvey, like Oviedo, made the connection between Columbus and syphilis, but had some fun doing so by using provocative language to remind the reader that syphilis was spread via sexual intercourse and some of its symptoms.<sup>79</sup> In *Great Venus Unmasked: Or a more Exact Discovery of the Venereal Evil, or French Disease*,<sup>80</sup> Harvey discussed the origins of syphilis and claimed “that tis first descent was the Neapolitan Spaniards; some of whom having lately been abroad with Columbus, to wit in the year 1492. upon the discovery of a new world, after two years absence arrived back to their Native Country, with a number of pretty curious sangles, and among the rest was this new pretty toy, whereof they soon made present to several of their dearest Julietta’s at Naples.” The arrival of syphilis in Naples was linked to the Italian Wars, a series of conflicts sparked over rival claims to the throne the Kingdom of Naples and involved France, the Holy Roman Empire, Milan, Florence, Spain, and the Ottoman Empire. According to Harvey, some of these Neapolitan Spaniards linked to Columbus rushed to reinforce Alphonso of Aragon who was besieging 80,000 French troops under Charles VIII in Italy. In his description, Harvey used a play of words and double entendres when he described how the Spaniards committed a form of germ warfare by releasing their “Julietta’s,” meaning infected

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<sup>78</sup> Gonzalo Oviedo quoted in Quétel, 35.

<sup>79</sup> Gideon Harvey, *Great Venus unmasked*, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Gideon Harvey, *Great Venus unmasked* 2nd ed. (London: 1672),

prostitutes, into the French camp. The Spanish, “being streightned of provisions, were forced to dismiss their Mistresses (already sufficiently rubbed with the Indian Loadstone) into the enemies Camp, where they met with very good quarter among those hungry Mushrooms, almost starved for want of womens flesh; which they found so Well seasoned, and daubed with Mustard, that in few weeks it took ‘em all by the Nose.”<sup>81</sup>

Another possibility for the introduction of syphilis to Europe, still in tune with the New World theory of the origin of the disease, was through Caribbean Indians taken as slaves and forced into prostitution in Naples at the time Charles VIII besieged the city. Columbus encouraged the enslaving of Indian women for sexual purposes, and various authors in Italy remarked on the presence of Indian sex slaves. According to Claude Quétel, this theory rests on the unprovable assumption that Indian slaves had syphilis and brought the disease with them from America to Italy.<sup>82</sup>

Rather quickly, early-modern Europeans knew syphilis was a contagion spread through sex. Ulrich von Hutten warned about touching “inwardly polluted” women. “This thing as touchyng women resteth in their secret places,” according to Hutten, “hauynge in those places litel prety sores ful of venemus poison, being very da[n]gerous for those y<sup>t</sup> vnknowingly medle with them. The which sicknes gote[n] by such enfected

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<sup>81</sup> Gideon Harvey, *Great Venus unmasked*, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, trans. Judith Braddock and Brian Pike (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 44.

wome[n], is so moch the more vehement and greuous, how moch they be inwardely poluted and corrupted.”<sup>83</sup>

Although the term “syphilis” was not used widely until the nineteenth century, the term was coined in 1530 by Girolamo Fracastoro in his 1530 poem *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*. Fracastoro used the poem for didactic purposes, to tell the audience how the disease was transmitted and cured.<sup>84</sup> The poem was widely read, going through 100 editions in the first seventy years after its initial publication. Critics compared the poem to Virgil’s *Georgics*,<sup>85</sup> and its beauty and success likely contributed to Fracastoro being hailed as the greatest Latin poet of the age, and helped secure his position as the physician to the Council of Trent.<sup>86</sup> The poem recounted the mythical origin of syphilis. A shepherd named Syphilis tended the sheep of Alcithoüs, the king of Atlantis. Syphilis overturned the altars dedicated to Apollo and rededicated them to Alcithoüs. As punishment, Apollo gave Syphilis a venereal disease. The Atlantians named the disease after their cursed shepherd. The shepherd was only cured of the disease by ingesting the bark of the guaiacum tree. A Syrian hunter named Ilceus also appeared in the poem and was stricken by syphilis. Ilceus found his cure in mercury treatments.

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<sup>83</sup> Ulrich von Hutten, *Of the vwood guaiacum that healeth the Frenche pockes*, trans. Thomas Paynell (London, 1536), folio 4.

<sup>84</sup> Margaret Healy, “Bronzino’s London ‘Allegory’ and Art of Syphilis,” 20, no. 1 (1997): 7.

<sup>85</sup> Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, Judith Braddock and Brian Pike trans., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 53.

<sup>86</sup> Healy, “Bronzino’s London ‘Allegory’ and the Art of Syphilis,” 7.

Fracastoro's syphilis story was engraved and printed in the sixteenth century by Johannes Sadeler.<sup>87</sup> On the left stands a statue of Venus. Water flows from Venus' breast into a cistern, and from the cistern the water flows into a stream. Sitting on the banks of the stream is a lute playing woman wearing an extravagant dress and a string of pearls around her neck. Her hair is done up to give the appearance of two horns growing from her head. Underneath her is a Latin distich that is a paraphrase of Proverbs 7:19 reading "Come here and join your limbs with me in a desirable embrace while my husband is absent, while there is no fear." To the right of the seated woman is a dog urinating into the stream. Downstream and to the right of the dog is the shepherd Syphilis, drinking the water contaminated by both the dog and Venus' breasts. Behind Syphilis is the Syrian hunter Ilceus who stands above a Latin distich reading "He who burns for Venus does the same as does he whom thirst compels to wet his mouth with whatever he finds first," a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 42:11. In the center of the engraving stands the poet Fracastoro holding a copy of his poem. Beneath him is a Latin distich paraphrasing Proverbs 5:15-21 that reads "Let not the ways of the whore seduce you, but drink, alone, the pure liquid from the proper source." Fracastoro is warning both Syphilis and Ilceus of the dangers of venereal disease that comes from the contaminated wetness associated with Venus and unclean women, during the "act of Venus."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Jan Sadeler, "Hieronymus Fracastorius shows the shepherd Syphilis..." engraving, Wellcome Library no. 524739i, and, Print 492, "Warning against Venereal Disease" in Dieuwke de Hoop Scheffer, *Hollstein's Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts ca. 1450-1700*, ed. K.G. Boon, vol. 21 (Amsterdam: Van Gendt & Co, 1980), 163.

<sup>88</sup> Erwin Panofsky described the engraving in "Homage to Fracastoro in a Germano-Flemish composition of about 1590?" *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 12, (1961): 1-31. A summary of Panofsky's



Figure 5. Hieronymus Fracastorius (Girolamo Fracastoro) shows the shepherd Syphilus and the hunter Ilceus being warned against yielding to temptation with the danger of infection with syphilis (1588/1595).

The use of the word “syphilis” to describe the disease was not generally used until the end of the nineteenth century; instead, the word “pox” was preferred, and the term “great pox” was used to differentiate it from smallpox.<sup>89</sup> Other names were applied and they varied depending on national origin of the speaker. The English and Italians called it the French Disease or the French Pox (*morbus gallicus*); the French; called it the Neapolitan sickness; Russians referred to it as the Polish sickness; Poles called it the

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translation is found in the Wellcome Library’s catalogue, <http://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/record=b1524739~S8> (accessed February 6, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, Judith Braddock and Brian Pike trans., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 53.

German sickness; Flemings, Dutch, Portuguese and North Africans called it the Spanish or Castilian sickness; and the Japanese called it the Canton Rash or the Chinese Ulcer.<sup>90</sup>

Syphilis quickly spread throughout Europe and Asia after its arrival in Naples in 1594. City officials in Lyons expelled people suffering from the disease to avoid the spread of contagion. Officials in Geneva forbade entrance to the city by syphilitics, and sufferers were quarantined in Edinburgh.<sup>91</sup> Syphilis spread rapidly from Naples to France, Germany, and Switzerland within one year. It appeared in Holland, England and Greece in 1496; the Middle East and India in 1498; Hungary and Russia in 1499; China in 1505; and Japan by 1512.<sup>92</sup>

Syphilis reached England within four years of its introduction to Europe (1497), and its presence was recorded in court documents. In 1500, Antony Port was taken to court for failing to cure “the grete pox” within a month and receiving payment for the rather large sum of 13s 4d.<sup>93</sup> A similar case was brought up against Balthazar de Gracyes during the following decade for failing to cure the “great pox” afflicting Alexder Merten, the servant to the Bishop of Ely.<sup>94</sup> In addition to court records, the records of the London

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<sup>90</sup> Bruce M. Rothschild, “History of Syphilis,” *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 40, no. 10 (May 2005): 1457-1458, and, Quétel, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Quétel, 11-16.

<sup>92</sup> Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*, 150-151, Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis* Judith Braddock and Brian Pike trans. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1990) 51, and Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 68.

<sup>93</sup> TNA C 1/246, Vanhuchyn v. The Sheriffs of London 1500-1501.

<sup>94</sup> TNA C 1/442/28, Starky v. The Sheriffs of London, 1515-1518.

College of Physicians are littered with evidence of syphilis. The College was responsible for examining and approving doctors in London and the surrounding area, as well as regulating apothecaries.<sup>95</sup> In 1591, a foreigner named Harman was found guilty and forbidden to practice for treating Richard Wilson for the French disease because he was not properly licensed. Harman charged 15s for his potions made of colewort, spoonwort, and bull dung.<sup>96</sup> Syphilis confounded the medical experts of the day to the point that patients turned to unlicensed “doctors” who literally used bullshit to treat the disease. In 1595, the surgeon Matthew Eton was found guilty of treating Mr. Kyde’s French pox with a dietary drink and turbinth pills.<sup>97</sup> In 1603, the apothecary Edward Coker acted beyond his profession by advising James Gross on how to treat Gross’ sisters’ syphilis. Coker was fined £20 and imprisoned.<sup>98</sup> Margaret Bryers, “an aged quack, with a long

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<sup>95</sup> Juanita G.L. Burnby, *A Study of the English Apothecary from 1660 to 1760* (London: Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL, 1983), 3-5.

<sup>96</sup> Harman, Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17955> (accessed 06 November 2012).

<sup>97</sup> Eton, Matthew, Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17405> (accessed 06 November 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Coker, Edward, Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17325> (accessed 02 November 2012).

face.” confessed to treating the French pox and was fined and imprisoned in 1609,<sup>99</sup> and Dr. Cartmeale treated Mr. Smith for the pox in 1633.<sup>100</sup>

## Treatment

During the first half of the sixteenth century syphilitics commonly received treatments including the cauterization or cutting out of sores, and applying medicines directly to the infected skin including turpentine, worm powder, ox oil, and virgin’s honey.<sup>101</sup> However, it was mercury, an existing skin disorder treatment that became the most commonly used remedy.<sup>102</sup> The heavy metal treatment was given orally, topically, and by fumigation, and remained the most common treatment for syphilis until the twentieth century.<sup>103</sup> In spite of its popularity, mercury was dangerous. It corroded the membranes of the mouth, loosened teeth, ate away jawbones, and turned the mouth and throat into one large ulcer.<sup>104</sup> Patients salivated to such an extreme that their saliva was

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<sup>99</sup> Bryers, Margaret, Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17279> (accessed 25 October 2012).

<sup>100</sup> Cartmeale, Dr, Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17975> (accessed 26 October 2012).

<sup>101</sup> Hutten, folio 7.

<sup>102</sup> John Arrizabalaga, John Henderson, and Roger French, *The Great Pox: The French Disease in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 139.

<sup>103</sup> Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare’s England* (London and Bristol, PA: Jessica Kingsley Pub., 1994), 3.

<sup>104</sup> Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 70.

measured in pints and quarts.<sup>105</sup> One of the earliest prescriptions for syphilis in English dates to 1505. It was scribbled on a manuscript written by John Langley entitled “Rest off Rentes of Farmes in Kent.” The patient was wrapped up tightly in cloth and made to sweat while ingesting the concoction of grease, brimstone, turpentine, and quicksilver (mercury). The salivary effect of mercury was noted in the instruction to “take a quantete off lynte & Roll it together & make y<sup>e</sup> pacient hold it betwene his tethe that hes mouthe maye be open that y<sup>e</sup> water and y<sup>e</sup> corription maye Ryne owth.”<sup>106</sup> The danger of mercury is reflected in the records of the London College of Physicians. The surgeon Nicholas Kelway was found guilty for improperly treating a London tailor named Worcall with mercury pills, resulting in the unlucky tailor’s teeth falling out.<sup>107</sup> The College disciplined surgeon Richard Cowpwer for giving a mercury purge resulting in the patient coughing to death.<sup>108</sup> In another example, and surgeon Thomas Cooke allegedly killed his patient with four mercury pills.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Deborah Hayden, *Pox: Genius, Madness, and the Mysteries of Syphilis* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 46.

<sup>106</sup> John Langley and F. William Cock, An approved medicine for the French Pox in “Resyt off Rentes of Farmes in Kent, *British Medical Journal* (May 1924). Found in the Welccome Library General Collections, 65084.

<sup>107</sup> “Kelway, Nicholas,” Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17594> (accessed 19 December 2012).

<sup>108</sup> “Cowper, Richard,” Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17347> (accessed 02 November 2012).

<sup>109</sup> “Cooke, Thomas,” Physicians and Irregular Medical Practitioners in London 1550-1640: Database, Margaret Pelling, Frances White, in British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=17335> (accessed 02 November 2012).

It is difficult to diagnose syphilis in patients using the historical record. More likely than not, medical professionals probably confused syphilis with gonorrhea and leprosy.<sup>110</sup> Despite the misperceptions in diagnosis, physicians by the mid-sixteenth century noted that syphilis had become less virulent, weaker, and more manageable. While the use of mercury still remained popular, less extreme medicines became more fashionable to treat the disease, including sassafras.

In accordance to the notions of natural philosophy in the early-modern era, the physician treated and cured syphilitics by balancing or recalibrating the patient's humoural balances. A doctor approached treatment differently for a sanguine person (hot, wet, blood, liver) from a melancholic person (dry, cold, black bile, gall bladder). According to Richard Bunworth, sudorific woods like sassafras worked best on phlegmatic people.<sup>111</sup> Phlegmatics were wet and cold and therefore required a cure that was hot and dry. Sassafras met this requirement. Nicolas Monardes described sassafras as "The complexion and temperature of the Tree and of his Bowes is hotte and drie in the seconde degree, the Rinde is somewhat more hotte then the reste, for that it entereth into the third degree, of heate and drieth."<sup>112</sup> However, sassafras could be used on people with different humoural balances. According to Monardes, "I do make the water, and give it to the sicke person, givying to the Cholericke lesse seethyng, and less quantitie of

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<sup>110</sup> Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London: Jessica Kingsely, 1994), 5.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Bunworth, *A new discovery of the French disease* (London, 1662), 27.

<sup>112</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 104.

wood, and to the Flegmaticke more seethyng, and more quantitie of woodde, and to the Sanguine meanable: and so after this sorte to their infirmitie accordyng to this order.”<sup>113</sup>

Syphilis attacked the liver according to the medical authorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the prominent German physician Daniel Sennert.<sup>114</sup> The liver was believed to be responsible for the natural virtues of nutrition, growth, and reproduction.<sup>115</sup> Writing about the French Disease 1662, Richard Bunworth remarked “The Cause of this disease as the Galenists affirm, is a certain venom which preys upon the blood, is hurtful to the liver, and works by second qualities, heat and drowth.”<sup>116</sup>

Bunworth continued by explaining why syphilis patients suffered from body aches. He claimed it was caused by “a certain vapor which taketh it’s course from the liver...by reason of the fervent heat of the liver, which is caused by the infection, there is a certain small vapour ingendered, which is the cause of these pains that wander up and down the body.” Sufferers will often have “notable heat in the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, though it be in the winter time.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Monardes, 1925 reprint, 105.

<sup>114</sup> Daniel Sennert, *The sixth book of Practical physick of occult or hidden disease*, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 89.

<sup>116</sup> Richard Bunworth, *A new discovery the French disease* (London, 1662), 3.

<sup>117</sup> Richard Bunworth, *A new discovery*, 8-10.

## Sassafras and Colonization

For a moment in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world, sassafras was an important and lucrative medical commodity used to treat syphilis. Colonial projectors bioprosppected in search of new and profitable medicines and saw sassafras as a potential money-maker that would help colonies flourish, and fill the coffers of colonial investors in Britain. Londa Schiebinger argued that the European search for new medicines was part of a larger effort to make European countries pharmaceutically self-sufficient and fit within the logic of the mercantilist theory of creating a trade surplus and reducing the outflow of bullion. While Schiebinger was referring to the eighteenth century, her argument can also be applied to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and certainly to sassafras.<sup>118</sup>

The English were late comers to the North American sassafras drug trade. The French<sup>119</sup> and the Spanish<sup>120</sup> exported sassafras from Florida in the mid to late sixteenth century. Once sassafras was known to the English speaking world, its presence was sought out and noted in the colonial literature, and easily fit within a nascent bioprosppecting industry. Drugs were an important part of the early phases of English exploration and colonization. Instructions given to Sir Francis Drake ordered that he find

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<sup>118</sup> Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 73.

<sup>119</sup> James W. Covington, "La Floride: 1565," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 41 no. 3 (Jan., 1963): 279 n. 9.

<sup>120</sup> Eugene Lyon, "Spain's Sixteenth-Century North American Settlement Attempts: A Neglected Aspect," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 59 no. 3 (Jan., 1981): 288.

foreign locales to trade for “spieces, [and] druges...such as maye [enrich] her highnes domynons, and also [set] shipping awoork greatly.”<sup>121</sup> In that vein, the first decade of the seventeenth century witnessed two flurries of Anglo-American colonization linked to biosprospecting and centered on the Gulf of Maine and the Chesapeake Bay - in the middle of sassafras country.

### **Sassafras in Northern Virginia**

Sassafras was imagined as a profitable commodity in northern Virginia. Northern Virginia saw many attempts at settlement in addition to the Pilgrims and Puritans within Massachusetts. Settlements failed at Cape Ann, Cuttyhunk, and Weymouth. The origin of northern Virginia settlement lay north in Newfoundland. The first permanent attempt to establish an English colony in North America occurred in St. Johns, Newfoundland and was headed up by Humphrey Gilbert in 1583. The colony failed and this prompted George Peckham to publish *A true report* discussing the American territory claimed by Humphrey Gilbert. David Beers Quinn called the work a “nationalistic manifesto in favor of an oppressive colonizing policy which would be ‘good for’ the Amerindians and profitable for England”<sup>122</sup> Peckham proclaimed that his fifth chapter “sheweth, that the trading and planting in those Countries is likely to prooue, to the perticuler profit of all the Aduenturers.” He listed plants, animals, and minerals he believed would make a

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<sup>121</sup> Draft Instructions given to Sir Francis Drake, 1577, Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 1, 462.

<sup>122</sup> Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 2.

profit to colonial investors, including sassafras.<sup>123</sup> With Peckham's publication and the Roanoke voyages beginning the next year, colonial projectors envisioned all of Virginia containing the profitable sassafras.

This imagination was tested in the early seventeenth century. In 1602, Bartholomew Gosnold attempted and failed to colonize Elizabeth's Isle, now Cuttyhunk Island, Massachusetts. John Brereton, a participant on the voyage, described the Cuttyhunk landscape as being comprised of "Sassafras trees plenty all the Island over, a tree of high price and profit."<sup>124</sup> With the help of Indian allies, Gosnold and his men harvested and shipped sassafras to England. The sudden glutting of the market inadvertently drove prices down.<sup>125</sup> The following year, Martin Pring voyaged to the same area on the Gulf of Maine and sent a shipload of sassafras home to England in order to bring "speedie contentment" to his voyage's investors.<sup>126</sup> Sassafras was a quick and easy way to make money, and the desire to acquire the commodity contributed to the establishment of English colonies in the Gulf of Maine, particularly at Cuttyhunk.

Gosnold's sassafras was on the mind of Sir Walter Raleigh when he sat down in 1602 and fired off a letter off to Sir Robert Cecil pleading for help. Cecil was an

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<sup>123</sup> George Peckham, *A true reporte* (London, 1583), no page number given. Fifth chapter. Image 26 on Early English Books Online (EEBO) database.

<sup>124</sup> John Brereton, *A Briefe and true Relation of the Discoverie of the North part of Virginia*, in David B. Quinn, *New American World: English Plants for North America. The Roanoke Voyages, New England Ventures* vol. 3 (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 350.

<sup>125</sup> Henry S. Burrage ed., *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534-1608* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 327 and David B. Quinn, "Thomas Hariot and the Virginia Voyages of 1602," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27 no. 2 (Apr., 1970): 276.

<sup>126</sup> *A Voyage set out from the Cities of Bristol...for the discoverie of the North part of Virginia* in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 362.

important man and approaching him was not to be taken lightly. Cecil was the Earl of Salisbury and held the offices of Secretary of State, Lord of the Privy Seal, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He had many illustrious relatives including his father William Cecil, Lord Burghley; his brother Thomas Cecil, the 1st Earl of Exeter; and his cousin, Francis Bacon, Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England, 1st Viscount St. Alban, and the father of scientific empiricism.

Raleigh was furious that his 1584 patent to Virginia had been violated by Gosnold.<sup>127</sup> The patent was originally granted in March 1584 and gave Raleigh the exclusive right to trade and settle in Virginia. It forbade anyone “without the licence of the sayde Walter Raleigh” from trading in Virginia. If anyone was caught doing so, the patent assured Raleigh he could “deteine and possesse” the “shippes, vessels, goods and furniture” of the person who violated the patent.<sup>128</sup> Gosnold had violated Raleigh’s monopoly on Virginia, particularly regarding sassafras. Raleigh asked Cecil to write “a letter to make seasure” of the illegal goods.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Raleigh’s patent was “to continue the space of 6 yeeres and no more” unless he planted a permanent settlement in Virginia (“Letter Patent to Walter Raleigh,” March 25, 1584 in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 267-268. His attempt resulted in the “Lost Colony” of Roanoke Island. However, Raleigh never claimed the colony was “lost,” rather incommunicado. Raleigh’s right to the Virginia monopoly “depended on his interpretation of his Virginia patent of 1584, whose validity in turn depended on the presumption of the continued existence of the Lost Colony as proof that he had achieved an unbroken settlement,” in David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: The Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 414.

<sup>128</sup> “Letters Patent to Walter Raleigh,” March 25, 1584 in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 267-268.

<sup>129</sup> “Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Robert Cecil,” August 21, 1602 in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 347.

The illegal cargo consisted of 2200 weight (246,400 lbs) of sassafras and 26 cedar trees.<sup>130</sup> While it is not entirely clear how Raleigh initially learned of the illegal venture, he was upset (and demanded restitution for his lost sassafras).<sup>131</sup> Raleigh's demand for restitution was partially met when he was able to seize a portion of the sassafras cargo and tried to sell it via his agent, J.B. Zechelius, in Nuremberg and Leipzig. However, Raleigh was arrested and imprisoned for treason before the sassafras could successfully be transported out of England and into the Holy Roman Empire. The incident revealed an early example of the re-export of North American produce from England, particularly sassafras. The correspondence between Zechelius and Raleigh hints that this was not a onetime transaction in that Zechelius called the exchange "owr new begun trade."<sup>132</sup>

The discovery, successful harvesting, and nascent sassafras re-export trade convinced West Country merchants to invest in a permanent presence in northern Virginia via the Virginia Company. Proving this point becomes a challenge since there is no smoking gun, no letter clearly stating "The Sagadahoc colony, the northern arm of the Virginia Company, was founded in part due to sassafras." However, by compiling information from a number of sources, coincidences begin to emerge that strongly suggest that sassafras was one of many attractions that led to the establishment of

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<sup>130</sup> A hundredweight equals 112 lbs, so  $112 \times 2200 = 246,400$  lbs.

<sup>131</sup> David Quinn claimed Raleigh was made aware when he spoke to Gilbert in Weymouth, Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 414. Contrarily, Burrage claimed Raleigh learned of the voyage only after he inquired into the decline of the price of sassafras, Henry S. Burrage ed., *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534-1608* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 327

<sup>132</sup> David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 415-416.

Sagadahoc. Travel narratives describing the northern Virginian coast and its abundance of sassafras were collected and distributed by Richard Hakluyt, who was an original licensee of the Virginia Company.

The failure of the Sagadahoc colony may have been caused in part due to the lack of sassafras in the area.<sup>133</sup> Martin Pring noted that he only found it growing in sandy soil.<sup>134</sup> However, Sagadahoc was not established in sandy soil or near wide swaths of sassafras. William Strachey, commenting on the failed Popham endeavor, explained how the colonists explored the mainland and surrounding islands in September 1607 and found numerous trees, but explicitly pointed out “only they found no saxafras at all in the country.”<sup>135</sup> Mistakenly, Sagadahoc may have been planted too far north to exploit the abundance sassafras resources located 100 miles to the south. A few decades after the failure of Sagadahoc, John Pory visited the southerly Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts and remarked that “Sassafras wanteth not all ouer this maine.”<sup>136</sup> Christopher Levett, who planted failed colonies on Casco Bay just south of the Sagadahoc settlement remarked “there is also great store...and divers other holesome Earbes, both for profit and pleasure, with great store of Saxifrage, Cersa-perilla, and

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<sup>133</sup> See Chapter 1, footnotes 53-61 for how historians and contemporaries explained Sagadahoc’s failure.

<sup>134</sup> Martin Pring in Wahll, 30.

<sup>135</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia*, 174.

<sup>136</sup> John Pory, “A Coppie of so much of Mr. Poreys Letter to the Lord of Southampton as concerneth his Relation of New-England,” in *John Pory’s Lost Description of Plymouth Colony in the Earliest Days of the Pilgrim Fathers*, Champlin Burrage ed., (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), 42.

Anni-seeds.”<sup>137</sup> While the aniseeds may have been an exaggeration, the notion of abundant sassafras was not.

### **Sassafras in Southern Virginia**

Sassafras was imagined to be a profitable commodity in southern Virginia as well. In 1584, Arthur Barlowe voyaged to southern Virginia where he noted that the Indians on Roanoke Island “drinke water...sodden...sometimes [with] Sassaphras, and diverse other wholesome and medicinable hearbes and trees.”<sup>138</sup> Ralph Lane wrote Sir Francis Walsingham from Roanoke Island in 1585 to point out the potential for bioprospecting in Virginia. Lane remarked that they “discovered singular commodities (by the universal opinion of our apothecaries and all our merchants here.”<sup>139</sup> Lane echoed the same sentiment when he wrote Richard Hakluyt to report that Virginia not only had “the goodliest soile under the cope of heaven,” but also “so many sortes of Apothecarie drugs.”<sup>140</sup> Three years later while at Roanoke Island, Thomas Harriot named some of these apothecary drugs, including sassafras which he described as “a kind of wood of

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<sup>137</sup> Christopher Levett, *A Voyage into Nevv England in Christopher Levett, of York: The Pioneer Colonist in Casco Bay* (Portland ME: Gorges Society, 1893), 120.

<sup>138</sup> Arthur Barlowe on the first Virginia voyage, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 279.

<sup>139</sup> Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham, August 12, 1585, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3 289.

<sup>140</sup> Ralph Lane to Richard Hakluyt, the elder and Master H of the Middle Temple, September 3, 1585, in Quinn et al., *English Plans for North America*, 293.

most pleasant and sweet smell, and of most rare virtues in physic for the cure of many diseases.”<sup>141</sup>

After the disappearance of the failed Roanoke colony, Samuel Mace led an expedition to Virginia in 1602 to locate and rescue the colonists. It is alleged in the short report of the trip published by Purchas, that Mace and his crew “came along the coast to seeke the people [Roanoke colonists], they did it not, pretending that the extremitie of weather, and losse of some principall ground-tackle, forced and feared them from searching the Port of Hataraske.” Instead, the voyage returned with various profitable commodities, including sassafras.<sup>142</sup>

Writing five years after Mace’s expedition, George Percy commented that where so ever he landed on the James River in Virginia, he and his fellow colonists, “saw the goodliest Woods as Beech, Oke, Cedar, Cypresse, Walnuts, Sassafras and Vines...”<sup>143</sup> Percy continued by claiming “this countrey is a fruitfull soile, bearing many goodlie and fruitfull Trees, as...Sassafras.”<sup>144</sup> Colonists at Jamestown wrote to the Council of Virginia in London and remarked that “Our easiest and richest comodity being Sasfrix roots were gathered up by the Sailors with loss and spoil of many of our tools and with

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<sup>141</sup> Thomas Hariot, “Thomas Hariot’s Report on Virginia” in Quinn, Quinn, and Hillier, *New American World* vol. 3, 142.

<sup>142</sup> A briefe Note of the sending another Barque this present yeere 1602. by Sir Walter Raleigh, for searching out of his Colonie in Virginia, in Quinn et al., *New American World*, vol. 5, 162.

<sup>143</sup> George Percy, “Observations gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606” in in Alexander Brown, *Genesis of the United States* vol. 1 (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), 164.

<sup>144</sup> George Percy, “Observations,” in Brown *Genesis of the United States* vol. 1, 166.

drawing of our men from our labour to their uses against our knowledge to our prejudice.” The author continued by saying “I beleeve they have thereof two tonnes at the least which if they scatter abroad at their pleasure will pull down our price for a long time.”<sup>145</sup> This fear of glutting the market and driving sassafras prices down may have been influenced by the experiences of Gosnold and Pring a few short years earlier.

Colonial projectors imagined sassafras to be an important part of the emerging colonial ventures in southern Virginia, and promoted the tree accordingly. On the eve of sailing for Virginia and the establishment of Jamestown, Michael Drayton wrote *Ode to the Virginian Voyage*, a poem celebrating the upcoming colonization efforts at Jamestown. The poem included the lines:

You brave heroique minds,  
Worthy your countries name  
Britans, you stay too long,  
Quickly aboard bestow you  
Successe you still intice.  
To get the pearle and gold,  
And ours to hold,  
Virginia,  
Earth's only Paradise  
And the ambitious vine,  
Crownes with his purple masse  
The cedar reaching hie  
To kisse the sky,  
The cypresse, pine,  
And usefull sassafras.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> “Coppie of a Letter from Virginia, Dated 22d of June, 1607” in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 107.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Drayton, “Ode to the Virginia Voyage” in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 86-87.

Colonial projectors quickly moved sassafras from the world of ideas into reality as a profitable colonial Virginia commodity. One of the first ships sent back to England after Jamestown's founding carried sassafras.<sup>147</sup> In 1608, the Spanish ambassador to the Stuart court informed his king that "all that has so far been found is only 'Gomar Sasifrax,' and some other dye wood."<sup>148</sup> In 1609, the Spanish Father Cresuelo summarized a long tract on the English colonization efforts in Virginia and "such matter as seemed important to bring to the king's especial notice." Cresuelo made sure that his Spanish king knew the English had found sassafras, but little else.<sup>149</sup>

The attempt to establish sassafras as a vital piece of the southern Virginia economy was seen in the instructions sent to Jamestown by the Council of Virginia in 1610. The first point in the instructions read, "Small Sassafras rootes to be drawn in the winter and dryed and none to be meddled with in the Sommer, and it is worthe £50. and better per Tonne."<sup>150</sup> The Council figured that sassafras should be harvested in the winter because more men would be free since there were no food crops to grow during that time of the year. Also warfare between the English and the Indians typically declined during the winter months thereby making winter a safer time to explore the forest looking for sassafras trees.

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<sup>147</sup> George Alfred Townsend, "House of Brick Imported from England," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 7 (1904): 202.

<sup>148</sup> Don Pedro de Zuñiga to his King, September 10, 1608, in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 195.

<sup>149</sup> Father Cresuelo, "New Britain," in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 265.

<sup>150</sup> "Virginia Commodities," in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 384.

Three years later, a sermon was preached by William Crashaw to the Virginia Company, and is mostly remembered as an influential piece of literature on the justification of seizing Indian land. Crashaw argued that the English “will take from them only that they may spare us. First, their superfluous land. Secondly, their superfluous commodities” which included “Timber, Crystall, Masts, Wine, Copper, Iron, Pitch, Tarre, and Sassafras.”<sup>151</sup>

In 1610 Richard Rich commemorated the wreck of the Sea Venture with a poem that was not just a celebration of a ship wreck and survival, but also a promotion of an imagined future of the Virginia economy, including the role of sassafras. Rich’s poem is probably best remembered for the line “God will not let us fall,” but Rich also wrote about the commodities sent from Virginia to England:

Two ships, are these commodities  
Furres, sturgeon, caviare,  
Black walnut-tree, and some deale boards,  
With such they laden are;  
Some pearle, some wainscot and clap bords,  
With some sasafra wood,  
And iron promis't for 'tis true  
Their mynes are very good.

Fur, fish, iron, timber, and sassafras were Anglo-America’s celebrated commodities.<sup>152</sup>

The identification and celebration of sassafras at Jamestown continued.

Promotional literature targeting the leadership of the Muscovy and East India companies

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<sup>151</sup> Crashaw, Sermon, in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 363.

<sup>152</sup> Richard Rich, *Nevves from Virginia, The Lost Flocke Triumphant*, in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 425.

in the hope that these eastward looking companies would reorient themselves toward Virginia was published in the early seventeenth century. It was entitled *New Britain*, and its author addressed the commodities found amongst the hills, valleys, and mountains in Virginia including sassafras.<sup>153</sup> The promotion of sassafras continued in Alexander Whitaker's 1613 tract *Good News from Virginia*. Whitaker, the minister at Henrico Plantation and the person responsible for converting and baptizing Pocahontas, wrote the piece to help counteract negative reports of the region. He included a list of flora and fauna including sassafras, "which I dailie see and admire at the beautie and riches which God hath bestowed, upon this people, that yet know not how to use them." While the Indians may not have known how to use sassafras satisfactorily to Whitaker's approval, the English certainly did.<sup>154</sup>

Sassafras continued to be exported from the Chesapeake. Governor Thomas Dale returned to England in 1616 and wrote to Ralfe Wynwood. Dale described how his governance in Virginia was "the hardest taske that ever I undertooke," however, he believed he "left the Collonye in great prosperytye & pease countraye to manye mens Exspectatyon." In addition to the self-congratulations, Dale mentioned what cargo the ship he turned home carried including "exceedinge good tobaco, sasafrix sych, potashes Sturgyon & cavyarye and ....."<sup>155</sup> Dale saw a link between the "great prosperytye" of Virginia and sassafras.

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<sup>153</sup> "New Britain," in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 1, 265.

<sup>154</sup> Alexander Whitaker, *Good News from Virginia* in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 2, 587.

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Dale to Ralfe Wynwood, 3 June 1616, in Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, vol. 2, 783.

In 1620, much to the chagrin of the Council of Virginia, colonists spent their time harvesting sassafras instead of focusing on the products London had ordered them to produce.<sup>156</sup> Harvesting sassafras may have been partially behind a series regulations laid down by the Council of Virginia in 1612. Shovels, axes, and hatchets were probably the primary tools used to harvest sassafras. According to William Stachey, anyone who was caught robbing the store of “Instruments or Toolles of Steele, Iron...shall bee punished with death.”<sup>157</sup> These instruments may have been necessary for the sassafras harvest. Furthermore, if a company settler should “imbezell, lose, or willingly breake, or fraudulently make away, either Spade, Shoull, Hatchet, Axe, Matttocke, or other tools or instrument,” they would face the “paine of whipping.”<sup>158</sup>

For the first quarter decade of settlement in Virginia, the British demand for sassafras outstripped the required labor that was available. Settlers building their houses and planting crops was getting in the way of the company’s desire for more sassafras. The Council of Virginia wrote the Virginia Company in London to complain, “For gatheringe of Sasafras, although the necessitie of the yere doth require y<sup>e</sup> ymploymt of more handes then we haue, soe many People beinge to bee reseated vppon their plantacion havings howses to builde, and the tyme of plantinge drawinge neere, yet will

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<sup>156</sup> Council for Virginia, “Article CXIV,” *A declaration of the state of the colonies and affaires in Virginia in the names of the aduenturors and summes aduentured in that action* (1620).

<sup>157</sup> William Stachey, *For the colony in Virginia Britannia. Lavves diuine, morall and martiall* (London, 1612), 5-6.

<sup>158</sup> William Stachey, *For the colony in Virginia Britannia. Lavves diuine, morall and martiall* (London, 1612), 12.

wee doe out best to Satisfie your desires therin.”<sup>159</sup> Orders given by Henry Wriothlesley, the third Earl of Southampton and member of the Virginia Company’s council reflect the company’s desire for sassafras. He ordered “three score thousand weight” with “the size of the sassafras ... [to] not exceed the bigness of a mans arme.”<sup>160</sup> That equals to roughly 672,000 pounds by today’s measurements.<sup>161</sup> In 1622, Captain John Bargrave made a formal complaint against the government of Jamestown and charged that a small cabal of company men established a monopoly and set the prices for tobacco and sassafras in their favor.<sup>162</sup>

Eventually the Virginia Company levied a sassafras tax on all settlers. In February 1622/3 the Virginia Company (London) ordered the Virginia Council (Jamestown) to levy a tax on sassafras. In April of the same year, the Council of Virginia responded that every laboring man was to be taxed sixty-six pounds of sassafras per head, and if a colonist failed to pay the sassafras tax, then he would be penalized ten pounds of tobacco for every 100 pound weight of sassafras not brought in by the first of March. If the colonists failed to pay the sassafras tax or the tobacco penalty by hiding behind the

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<sup>159</sup> Council in Virginia. Letter to Virginia Company of London. January 20, 1622/3. *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* vol. IV, Documents II, Susan Myra Kingsbury ed., (Westminster MD: Heritage Books, 2009), 15.

<sup>160</sup> Governor of Virginia. Order or Warrant. February 4, 1622/3, in *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, vol. 4, 21.

<sup>161</sup> Using hundred weight at 112 pounds, score at 20.

<sup>162</sup> W.N. Sainsbury, “Captain John Bargrave’s Charges against the Former Government of Virginia, 1622,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 6 no. 3 (Jan., 1899): 226, 237.

excuse that he was building and removing to his plantation, then the next year's crop would be forfeited to the company.<sup>163</sup>

### **Boom and Bust**

A letter written by Walter Raleigh revealed the profitability of sassafras at the opening of the seventeenth century. Complaining about Bartholomew Gosnold's encroachment and violation of Raleigh's patent on Virginia, Raleigh noted that the sudden influx of sassafras saturated the market and he feared it would "distroy the trade which otherwize would yeild 8 or 10 for one in certenty." He also wrote that "sarsephraze was worth 10s 12s and 20s a pound before Gilbert returned [and] his cloying of the markt will overthrow all myne and his owne also."<sup>164</sup> Using Raleigh's prices, the illegal sassafras smuggled by Gosnold had the potential price of £123,200 to £246,400.

After roughly 10 years of harvesting sassafras from America, William Strachey remarked, "Of saxafra there is plenty enough, the rootes whereof not moneie yeares' since, were sold for twenty shillings per lb. and better, if order maie yet be taken that overmuch quantety be not returned, and that which shalbe brought kept in one hand, all Europe maie be served thereof at good rates."<sup>165</sup> Strachey and Raleigh were in agreement

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<sup>163</sup> Council of Virginia. Letter to Virginia Company of London, April 4, 1623. *The Records of the Virginia Company* vol. 4, 99.

<sup>164</sup> Raleigh to Cecil, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, 347. Gilbert was a participant on the Gosnold voyage.

<sup>165</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia*, 129-130.

on the price of sassafras during the previous decade, but, both feared that the over saturation of the market would drive prices down.

However, Strachey predicted sassafras would not be profitable in the long run. In his *Historie of Travaile into Virginia*, Strachey listed a series of Virginian commodities that he felt had no value, including “saxafras, and other aromaticall druggs,” which are not gums, oyle, and dyes “worthy the exposure of a colonie for secondarie and politique endes to be established there...”<sup>166</sup> Instead, Strachey argued the English could attain the same goods directly from European nations like Russia, Poland, Sweden, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands.

In a letter written in 1616 by the rising merchant John Chamberlain wrote his friend Dudley Carleton, the then ambassador at the Hague, echoed the emerging fear of the worthlessness of sassafras. Chamberlain wrote in part to discuss the arrival of Pocahontas to England, but he also mentioned imports from Virginia including, “I heare not of any other rices or matter of worth, but only some quantitie of Sassafras, tobacco, pitch and clapboard, things of no great value unles there were more plentie and neerer at hand.”<sup>167</sup> The market had already become saturated with sassafras driving the price down. More sassafras had to be produced to maintain profits, however, the supply was too far away from England to be economically sustainable.

The fear of the decline in the price of sassafras turned into a reality by 1622. In a letter dated October 1622 from the Virginia Company to the Governor and Council of

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<sup>166</sup> William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia*, 115.

<sup>167</sup> Chamberlain to Carleton, June 22, 1616. Brown, *Genesis*, vol. 2, 789.

Virginia, the company claimed it was pleased to receive a ship containing 60,000 weight of sassafras, but remarked that the colonists in Virginia should not hope that the sassafras cargo would pay off the captain of the ship or pay for the new fortifications required in Virginia, because “in regard to price [of sassafras] is so base, and the glut so great, that it will not sell but at very long time, and that for very little.”<sup>168</sup> The price had crashed.

Sassafras went through a boom and bust cycle in the early years of the seventeenth century. In 1602, Sir Walter Raleigh listed the price of sassafras ranging from 10s to 20s per pound.<sup>169</sup> Alongside mentioning the price, Raleigh feared that saturating the market with sassafras would cause prices to plummet. In 1639, Philbert Guybert listed sassafras as 1s 8d per pound - a decline of 91.7% from the Raleigh quote.<sup>170</sup> In 1650, the government of England and Wales listed the price of sassafras at 2d per pound<sup>171</sup> - a 90% decline from the 1639 price, and a whopping 99.2% decline from the 1602 price. This drastic reduction in price is reflected in the medical literature. The physician to Louis XIV of France, Nicolas de Blégnéy remarked in the 1670s that sassafras roots were no longer being used in the quantity they once were because their low price detracted from their esteem.<sup>172</sup> Sassafras declined in price for two primary

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<sup>168</sup> Virginia Company. A letter to the Governor and the Council of Virginia. October 7, 1622. *The Records the Virginia Company* vol. 3, 689.

<sup>169</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Robert Cecil, 21 August 1602, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 347.

<sup>170</sup> Philbert Guybert, *The charitable physitian with the Charitable apothecary* (London, 1639), 49.

<sup>171</sup> An Act for the redemption of captive, Public General Act (1650) 52. Listed price is £1 for 112 pounds

<sup>172</sup> Monsieur de Blégnéy, *New and curious observations* (1676), 101.

reasons. The first is market over saturation. If historian Henry Burrage was correct, then the single trade voyage led by Bartholomew Gosnold wrecked the English sassafras market.<sup>173</sup> This hints to the notion that the price of sassafras depended on its scarcity and not its widespread availability. Therefore, colonial activity seeking out sassafras for profit was inadvertently driving prices down. The continued shipping of sassafras from Virginia must have depressed prices further. Secondly, sassafras did not cure syphilis; when compared to other syphilitic treatments like mercury and guaiacum, it was less effective. Sassafras might be considered a fad - very popular and valuable for a short time then falling into relative obscurity rather quickly. However it is an important fad in understanding the complexity of early Anglo-American colonization. It was a motivation behind the flurry of colonial activity in the Chesapeake and the Gulf of Maine, for both failed and successful colonies, that ultimately led to the founding of the United States.

The lure of sassafras did not disappear completely despite the decline in its price. The importance of the tree is demonstrated on a late seventeenth century map of Virginia. The Ferrar map was designed to promote the lucrative landscape of Virginia. The map highlighted sassafras and mulberry trees, projecting and reimagining the old and flawed idea that Virginia was rich in valuable medicines and a center for sericulture. A century later in 1763, a Boston based ship arrived in St. Petersburg, Russia to trade in sugar, rum,

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<sup>173</sup> Henry S. Burrage ed., *Early English and French Voyages Chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534-1608* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 327

indigo, and sassafras.<sup>174</sup> In 1770 England imported seventy six tons of sassafras,<sup>175</sup> and in 1791 Virginia exported four and a quarter tons of sassafras each year.<sup>176</sup>

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Once syphilis arrived in Europe, doctors and patients sought out a remedy. While mercury was the most common treatment up until the twentieth century, sudorific woods, including sassafras, became more popular as the virulence of the disease decreased at the end of sixteenth century. From roughly 1580 to 1630 locating and harvesting sassafras was an impulse behind English economic activity in North America in both successful and failed colonies including Jamestown, Sagadahoc, and Cuttyhunk. Colonial projectors imagined sassafras to be a lucrative commodity that would support and enrich colonies alongside gold, silk, and sugar. The over-harvesting of sassafras flooded the English market and inadvertently drove the price down to the point where sassafras was no longer viewed as a long term money maker. An analysis of the short-lived sassafras boom at the turn of the seventeenth century reveals the often overlooked link between sassafras and early Anglo-American colonization. The imagined possibility of long-term profit from sassafras was a partial motivation behind many early English colonies and ventures.

While a colony's failure cannot be solely attributed to the collapse of the sassafras market

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<sup>174</sup> Norman E. Saul, "The Beginnings of American-Russian Trade, 1763-1766," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 26 no. 4 (Oct., 1969): 596.

<sup>175</sup> Estes, "The European Reception of the First Drugs from the New World," 19.

<sup>176</sup> Arthur G. Peterson, "Commerce of Virginia, 1789-1791," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 10 no. 4 (Oct., 1930): 308.

at the turn of the seventeenth century, sassafras was representative of the failure of colonial projectors to secure a profitable commodity in North America during the early phases of colonization.

## CHAPTER V

### “THIS PARTICULAR ADVICE WE THOUGHT NECESSARY TO GIVE YOU”

This particular advice we thought necessary to give you, lest that if it should have come to you mingled with others, you would have interpreted it as a common Instruction.<sup>1</sup>

The Treasurour, Counsell and Company of Virginia, to the Governour and Counsell of State in Virginia residing (1621).

The English had a tendency to follow precedent, and therefore theories on colonization were slow to change. In some cases, the same patterns were duplicated despite repeated examples of failure. For instance, in anticipation of a permanent settlement, projectors often sent a small advance party of men under military authority to stake out a beachhead to prepare for coming colonists. Karen Kupperman labeled this phase as part of the classical model of colonization.<sup>2</sup> Advance parties were sent to sites of the Roanoke (1585), Cuttyhunk (1602), and the Sagadahoc (1606) ventures. The Roanoke advance party disappeared, the Cuttyhunk party abandoned their settlement, and the Sagadahoc colony was captured by the Spanish. The failings of the Sagadahoc advance party is one of the best documented.

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<sup>1</sup> The Treasurour, Counsell and Company of Virginia, to the Governour and Counsell of State in Virginia Residing, 1621 in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, Or, Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*, vol. 19. (Glasgow: J. MacLehose and Sons, 1905), 156.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 4. See chapter 1 for a brief discussion on Kupperman’s description of “classical” and “successful” models of colonization.

In August 1606, the Virginia Company of Plymouth, sent Henry Challons to establish a base settlement somewhere in northern Virginia (present day New England), and lay the groundwork to ensure the founding of Sagadahoc the following year would run as smoothly as possible. En route, the Challons expedition, comprising of 29 Englishmen and two Abenaki Indians, was captured by a Spanish flota of eight ships. After a fierce but brief battle at sea, the crew of the Challons expedition was captured. Most of them were sent as prisoners to Seville, Spain. Conditions were not ideal for the English prisoners. Crewmember Robert Cooke, in addition to suffering a head wound in combat, languished with dysentery for three months before succumbing to the disease. Upon his death, the Spanish jailors dragged Cooke's naked corpse throughout the prison before defiling his body by carving off his ears, nose, and penis. A slave owned by the Spanish prison stabbed boatswain Nathaniel Humfrie in the belly. Humfrie suffered for 14 agonizing days before dying. The Spaniards sold Humfrie's body to the surviving English captives for burial. The two Abenaki Indians were sold into slavery.

In addition to their excruciating ordeal, the men of the Challons expedition found themselves in the center of a diplomatic spat between the English and Spanish crowns. The Spanish would only release the prisoners if the English recognized the Spanish land claims in America. This was problematic from the English perspective because they would have to admit that the Challons expedition was illegal, and that admission would cause them to abandon their plans to establish the Sagadahoc and Jamestown colonies. In the meantime, both sides refused to relent, and the English

proceeded with their plans to plant the Sagadahoc and Jamestown colonies. Finally in 1608, the Spanish released the English captives with no clear resolution concerning the territory. After the disappearance of the Roanoke advance party, the abandonment of the Cuttyhunk, and the capture of the Sagadahoc party, colonial projectors still sent advance parties including the Wessagussett (1622) and Nova Scotia (1629) colonies.

The rigid adherence to inherited beliefs and precedent made change difficult, but, roughly after a generation from the first English attempts to colonize North America, there was a shift in thinking in the minds of projectors. Projectors discussed this shift in their writings in which they also retained a flawed and overly-optimistic view of the continent. This change was based on autoptic evidence – information and testimony gathered from first-hand and lived experience. This chapter explores the advice colonial projectors gave based upon autoptic evidence, particularly three monographs written by colonial projectors who produced explicit examples of incorporating eye witness experience in formulating their plans and advice. Their advice turned away from the grandiose plans of finding gold and the Northwest Passage, and instead turned to more pragmatic advice such as what industries they believed to be profitable given North America's geography. However, the new advice was still problematic indicating that the second wave of colonial projectors learned slowly and marginally, and in some cases, did not learn anything at all from past. They failed to develop a new successful theory of colonization.

## Advice

Advice from colonial projectors defining the purpose and the know-how of colonies changed over time as new geographic and climatological knowledge came to light. One example is the notion of where to plant a colony. In the *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584), Richard Hakluyt advised colonists to “plante upon the mouthes of the greate navigable Rivers,” and many early colonies did just that including Jamestown on the James River, and Sagadahoc on the Kennebec River. However, establishing a colony at the mouth of a river did not guarantee success. The colony at Jamestown was established on an island near the mouth of a great, navigable river; however, it was low lying, swampy land. The immediate result was sickness and death for many of the colonists. Francis Bacon, in *On Plantations* (1620), remarked on planting on the mouths of rivers: “It hath beene a great Endangering, to the Health of some Plantations, that they have built along the Sea, and Rivers, in Marish and unwholesome Grounds.” Therefore Bacon advised “to avoid Carriage [transportation], and other like Discommodities, yet build, rather upwards, from the Streames, than along.”<sup>3</sup> Bacon’s comments were based on the experiences of colonists like Richard Frethorne at Martin’s Hundred, near Jamestown. Frethorne wrote home complaining of the colony’s location as “...the nature of the Countrey, [which] is such that is Causeth much sickness, as the scrivy and the bloody flux and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and Weak...And I have nothing to Comfort me, nor there is nothing to be gotten here but

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<sup>3</sup> Francis Bacon, “On Plantations,” in *The English Literatures of America*, 98-99.

sickness and death...for God's sake, pity me."<sup>4</sup> Planting further upriver and inland away from "Marish and unwholesome Grounds" would have prevented Frethorne's suffering.<sup>5</sup> Planting at the mouth of the James River is not explicitly what killed many of the Jamestown colonists; rather, it was planting on swampy and unwholesome land – which happened to be near the mouth of a great, navigable river.

A generation removed from Hakluyt's advice on where to plant, Bacon studied colonial advice and came to the understanding that advice had to be modified in light of the limits of climate and labor in North America. He recommended growing flora that developed quickly, like carrots, onions, maize, beans, and peas. He suggested that the English modify their diet once in America and substitute peas, beans, and rice for meat, and bread. He also recommended they only farm animals that were disease resistant and multiplied quickly, like pigs, goats, chickens, turkeys, and geese. Some of the recommendations Bacon made were clearly influenced by other people's experiences in North America, particularly accounts describing the foodways of the Indians. He recommended American flora and fauna to be grown (maize, beans, turkeys) in addition to some of the usual European domesticated animals and crops. In order to survive and plant a successful colony, Bacon understood that the English would have to change their dietary habits and adopt new plants and animals.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Frethorne, "A letter from Virginia," 1623, in *The English Literatures of America*, 123-124.

<sup>5</sup> Marish was synonymous with marshy, and marsh conditions were viewed as negative and unhealthy. "marish, n. and adj.1". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114150?rskey=CqrF1t&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed September 24, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Francis Bacon, "On Plantations," *The English Literature of America*, 98.

Other colonial projectors decided where to plant based on the written and oral testimony of others. William Bradford in *Of Plymouth Plantation* described how the Pilgrims debated amongst themselves on where to settle, Guiana or Virginia. The complaint against Virginia was that if the Pilgrims planted too closely to existing Virginian settlements, “they should be in as great danger to be troubled and persecuted for the cause of religion as if they lived in England; and it might be worse.”<sup>7</sup> When it came to Guiana, the Pilgrims’ objections were based on the failures of prior English colonial activity in the region. The Pilgrims concluded hot countries like Guiana “are subject to grievous diseases and many noisome impediments which other more temperate places are freer from, and would not so well agree with our English bodes.”<sup>8</sup>

William Bradford and the other Pilgrims probably were familiar with Walter Raleigh’s two voyages to Guiana in 1595 and 1617. Raleigh described Guiana as a fertile and healthy place; an enticing land “that hat yet her Maydenhead, neuer sackt, turned, nor wrought...It hath neuer been entred by any armie of strength.”<sup>9</sup> Ever the propagandist, Raleigh claimed Guiana was “so healthful” that despite intense heat, extreme labor, torrential downpours, and eating tainted fruits and reptiles “we lost not any one, nor had one ill-disposed to my knowledge; nor found any calentura or any other of those pestilent

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<sup>7</sup> William Bradford and Francis Murphy, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (New York: Modern Library, 1981), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 29-30

<sup>9</sup> Walter Raleigh, *The discouerie of the large, rich, and bevvitful empire of Guiana* (London, 1596), 96. For another account of Raleigh’s first voyage see Lawrence Kemys, *A relation of the second voyage to Guiana* (London, 1596).

diseases which dwell in all hot regions, and so near the equinoctial line.”<sup>10</sup> However, Raleigh did report the tale of a Spaniard named Don Antonio de Berrio whom he had taken prisoner. Berrio, like Raleigh, was in Guiana in part to find El Dorado and he explored the region prior to Raleigh’s arrival. Berrio claimed to have left his home in the New Kingdom of Granada (in modern day Colombia and Venezuela) and marched eastward with a number of men large enough to require 700 horses, 1,000 head of cattle, and “many women, Indians, and slaves.” His party “grew daily to fewer numbers; for both sickness and by encountering with the people of those regions” through their travels. They encountered red water that killed all horses and cattle, and reduced Berrio’s party to 120 soldiers by “a grievous kind of flux.”<sup>11</sup> Reading about Berrio’s experiences, via Raleigh, surely contributed to Bradford’s decision to not settle in Guiana. By reading Raleigh, Bradford likely assumed that Englishmen were just as susceptible to the tropical diseases that the Spanish suffered.

In addition to reading the account of Raleigh’s first voyage, Bradford must have been familiar with Raleigh’s second and disastrous experience in Guiana.<sup>12</sup> Raleigh set off with fourteen ships and 1,000 sailors and soldiers for Guiana in 1617 to claim and

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Raleigh and Benjamin Schmidt, *The Discovery of Guiana by Sir Walter Raleigh with Related Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2008), 108. F. 140 defines calentura as “a disease common to sailors in the tropics, characterized by delirium; fever or severe sunstroke, 108.

<sup>11</sup> Walter Raleigh and Benjamin Schmidt, *The Discovery of Guiana*, 59-63.

<sup>12</sup> See V.T. Harlow, *Raleigh’s Last Voyage: Being an Account Drawn on Contemporary Letters and Relations, both Spanish and English, of which the most part are now for the first time made public, concerning the voyage of Sir Walter Raleigh, knight, to Guiana in the year 1617 and the fatal consequences of the same* (London: Argonaut Press, 1932).

excavate a gold mine that he had supposedly discovered in 1595.<sup>13</sup> Against the explicit order of James I, Raleigh's men engaged in combat with Spanish soldiers, thus breaking the peace with Spain and eliciting the ire of James I.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the death of his son and the suicide of his friend and subordinate, some of Raleigh's men abandoned him upon the retreat from Guiana to St. Kit's. Furthermore while resupplying in Newfoundland, Raleigh's men mutinied and immediately returned to England forcing Raleigh to return to England and face certain death. Raleigh's execution sent shockwaves through the projecting class, and probably deterred Bradford and the other Pilgrims from planting in Guiana.

### **Newfoundland and New England**

Newfoundland and New England were the western extent of the northern crescent of British commercial and colonial activity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The bulk of the settlement in Newfoundland occurred on the Avalon Peninsula, which was oftentimes referred to as the English shore. In the United States, Newfoundland is not considered part of the north today, therefore its importance as a lure for and site of colonization in the literature of colonial projectors after 1577 is often overlooked by historians. This was in part due to the notion that Newfoundland failed to

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<sup>13</sup> The number of ships and men comes from a letter from the Spanish ambassador to England, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, 1st Count of Gondomar, in Harlow, "Gondomar to the King of Spain, 22nd October, 1617," *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, 153.

<sup>14</sup> "A proclamation declaring his Maiesties pleasure concerning Sir Walter Rawleigh, and those who adventured with him," in Harlow, *Raleigh's Last Voyage*, 246.

register on printed documents in the sixteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Prior to 1577; the English interest in Newfoundland was confined only to geographers and courtiers.<sup>16</sup> While Newfoundland was the location of the first “official” English landfall in America in 1497, England’s gaze did not return until the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century - at the same time the English started their colonial activity further south in the future United States.

Prior to Columbus’ historic 1492 voyage, English fishermen may have been on Newfoundland fishing for cod.<sup>17</sup> England officially claimed Newfoundland in 1497 when, according to the English mercer Hugh Say’s letter to Christopher Columbus, John Cabot went ashore with a crucifix and “raised banners with the arms of the Holy Father and those of the King of England.”<sup>18</sup> Cabot returned to Newfoundland in 1498 but failed to return to England so most historians assume the voyage was lost at sea. Cabot’s story would only be revived when English colonial projectors such as Richard Eden and Richard Hakluyt recovered the narrative and presented it to a new generation of Britons.

Evan T. Jones, in an attempt to reconstruct the lost work of historian Alwyn Ruddock, argued that Cabot’s 1498 voyage was not lost at sea, and may have instead

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<sup>15</sup> Mary C. Fuller, “Images of English Origins in Newfoundland and Roanoke,” *Decentralizing the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700* Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny eds.(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 142.

<sup>16</sup> Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1969), ix.

<sup>17</sup> David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: The Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 5-23.

<sup>18</sup> John Day alias Hugh Say to the Grand Admiral [Christopher Columbus], circa December 1497 to January 1498, in Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 1, 98.

coasted the entire length of North America before returning to England. Cabot's party may have landed at Newfoundland and from there William Weston split off and turned north in the earliest bid for the Northwest Passage while Cabot turned south to explore.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Evans pursued the claim made by Ruddock that a colony was planted in Newfoundland in 1498. The colony may have been centered on a church and have been populated in part by reformed Carbonara Augustan friars. Moreover, Fra Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis, an envoy for the Duke of Milan and the deputy papal collector in England knew, supported, and helped John Cabot secure loans from an Italian bank to fund the 1498 voyage and religious colony. Additionally, Carbonariis may have participated in the colonial venture, died, and was buried in Newfoundland.<sup>20</sup>

The English involvement in Newfoundland continued when Henry VII granted letters Patent to the region not just to Cabot, but also to English and Portuguese merchants. By 1502, an Anglo-Portuguese syndicate known as the Company of Adventurers into the New Found Lands was voyaging to the Newfoundland and New England coasts to fish. The same year, three Native Americans from Newfoundland arrived in England. The *Great Chronicle of London* described the natives as "clothed in beast's skins and they ate raw flesh spoke such speech that no man could understand them." After two years, the author of the Chronicle "saw two of them apparalled after Englishmen in Westminster Palace, which at the time I could not discern from English

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<sup>19</sup> Margaret Condon found supporting evidence for the Weston voyage in the 1970s but was unsure of its significance, Evan T. Jones, "Bristol, Cabot and the New Found Land, 1496-1500," *Exploring Atlantic Transitions: Archaeologies of Transience and Permanence in New Found Lands*, Peter E. Pope and Shannon Lewis-Simpson eds., (Rochester NY: Boydell Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>20</sup> Evan T. Jones, "Bristol, Cabot and the New Found Land: in *Exploring Atlantic Transitions*, 25-34.

men until I learned what they were.”<sup>21</sup> Between 1507 and 1509, Sebastian Cabot, the son of John Cabot, voyaged to Newfoundland and other parts of America twice. The account of his voyages were printed in 1516 by Peter Martyr but were not translated into English until 1555 by Richard Eden.

Despite the lack of colonial promotional literature in England at the time, the first confirmed (see the Jones/Ruddock claim above) attempt by the English to colonize North America occurred in 1517 by the lawyer, publisher, writer, and projector John Rastell. Rastell probably aimed to colonize Newfoundland but the attempt collapsed in spectacular fashion before his ships could sail west of Ireland. Rastell failed in his venture because he was an incompetent commander.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the Rastell voyage may have been sabotaged by the venture’s purser, John Ravyn, who was following the orders of The Lord High Admiral, the Earl of Surrey, to protect Surrey’s financial stake in the voyage from the potential of a total loss.<sup>23</sup> A decade later in 1527, Robert Thorne and Hugh Eliot orchestrated a voyage to discover the Northwest Passage and landed in Newfoundland. In 1536, Richard Hore combined a fishing voyage to Newfoundland with a sightseeing tour, transporting gentlemen who wanted to see America firsthand from the

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<sup>21</sup> Great Chronicle of London, 1502, Report of men brought from the new found isle, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 1, 110. The Chronicle read, “clothid in besys skynnys” and they “ete Rawe flesh and spak such spech that noo man cowde undyrstand theym,” and, “saw ii of theym apparaylyd afftyr Inglysh men In Westmynstyr paleys, which at that tyme I cowde not dyscern from Inglysh men tyll I was lernyd what men they were.”

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 54; David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 165-166.

<sup>23</sup> David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 165-166.

safety of a ship deck. For many Englishmen in the sixteenth century, Newfoundland represented North America. The journey did not end well, however, with the gentlemen's ship falling victim to French pirates. In 1597, the Magdalen Islands, situated between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, were the site of a failed colony founded by separatist Brownists - a group David Quinn labeled "the first pilgrims." The colony failed because a collection of Basques, Bretons, and local Indians violently protected their fishing waters and walrus hunting grounds from the Brownist incursion.<sup>24</sup>

There was a small explosion of colonial literature based on autoptic evidence about the north, especially Newfoundland and New England between 1576 and 1630. While it may be impossible to create an exhaustive list of all the published and unpublished works on the region, the following is a short list of the 'highlights:' material about John and Sebastian Cabot's voyages; works by Jean Alphonse, Jacques Cartier, John Davis, Richard Pope, Thomas Ellis, Martin Frobisher, Michael Lok, John Rut, Humphrey Gilbert, Richard Willes, Thomas Wiars, George Peckham, Thomas James, Richard Fisher, Charles Leigh, Richard Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas, John Smith, John Mason, Edward Winne, William Alexander, John Smith, John Winthrop, Thomas Morton, William Vaughan, and Richard Whitbourne. Some of these accounts were published on their own and republished by Hakluyt and Purchas, and others were stand-alone publications, circulated manuscripts, or private letters. While all of them grounded their material on evidence based sources, Richard Whitbourne, William Vaughan, and John Smith provide the best examples of using autoptic evidence to support their

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<sup>24</sup> David B. Quinn, "The First Pilgrims," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23. no. 3 (Jul., 1966):359-390.

arguments. All three authors had ties to colonial failure. Whitbourne was a governor of failed colony; Vaughan was a financial backer of a failed colony; and Smith failed to secure funding for a New England colony despite his success in governing the fledgling Virginia colony, and several profitable trade and fishing voyages to New England. All three authors struggled with the dissonance and tensions between imagination and reality in regard to colonial ventures, and in the process, attempted but failed to develop successful theories of colonization.

### **Richard Whitbourne**

Richard Whitbourne (1561-1635) was a Devon born seaman turned colonial projector who stressed his personal experiences in forming his theories on the practice of colonization in America. He is best known for being the governor of the failed Cambriol colony on Newfoundland, as well as working on behalf of the London and Bristol Company, and advising George Calvert, the 1st Baron Baltimore on his failed colony of Avalon. Whitbourne presented his credentials in the beginning of his 1620 book *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*. In arguing for a colonizing scheme in Newfoundland, he stressed that his past American endeavors shaped his proposed project to be “of no fantasie in mee, but a truth grounded vpon a well-weighed experience.”<sup>25</sup> Despite a long English presence in Newfoundland arguably predating the discovery of America by Columbus, the island was not settled in the same way that the English

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Whitbourne, *A discourse and discovery of Nevv-found-land* (London, 1620), preface.

colonized other parts of the Atlantic rim.<sup>26</sup> Rather, Newfoundland was the site of a temporary and migratory labor force, paid in wages for producing salt-dry cod for consumption in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Whitbourne argued that the planting of Newfoundland along the lines of the traditional English model of colonization, with permanent military and political institutions manned by permanent settlers, in order to enrich and better Great Britain and her inhabitants. The certainty Whitbourne presented rested on his 40 years' experience in Newfoundland, and he assured his readers that he had "desire not to inuent, or enlarge matters beyond my obseruations."<sup>28</sup> Whitbourne's book was well received and a copy was presented to King James I, who granted Whitbourne the copyright for the book for 21 years upon the request of the Privy Council. One estimate claimed that Whitbourne made £240 in profit from the book.<sup>29</sup> The book was printed in three different runs in 1620, 1622, 1623.

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<sup>26</sup> David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: The Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 5-23.

<sup>27</sup> Edward M. Test, "The Tempest and the Newfoundland Fishery," Barbara Sebek and Stephen Deng eds. *Global Traffice: Discourses and Practices of Trade in English Literature and Culture from 1550 to 1700* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 201-202.

<sup>28</sup> Whitbourne, *Discourse and Discovery*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> W/ Noël Sainsbury ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 82; *At Theobalds, the 12. of Aprill 1622. The copy of a reference from the Kings most excellent Maiesty: as also a letter from the right honourable lords of His Maiesties most honourable Priuy Councell, to the most reuerend fathers in God, the lords arch-bishops and Yorke their graces* (London, 1622); "Whitbourne, Sir Richard (1561–1635)," Christopher English in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, see online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, , <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29230> (accessed September 30, 2014). All three editions of the book were printed in London by Felix Kingston, 1620, 1622, and 1623.

Whitbourne's experience with America started in 1579 when he voyaged to Newfoundland for with the purpose of whale hunting, train oil production, and trading with the Indians. However, the voyage did not go as planned because the voyage's leadership instead opted to hunt for bears, beavers, and otters - which was safer than hunting whales.<sup>30</sup> In 1583, Whitbourne commanded a ship to Newfoundland at the same time Humphrey Gilbert arrived at the island to plant his colony. Whitbourne claimed to be an eye-witness to Gilbert's taking possession of Newfoundland for England, an event traditionally marked as the foundation of the First British Empire. In 1585, Whitbourne described partnering with Bernard Drake and voyaging to Newfoundland as well as participating in taking Portuguese ships laden with fish and returning them to England as prizes.<sup>31</sup> He also claimed to be on Newfoundland in 1612 when the pirate Peter Easton was preying on the ships along the coast. Whitbourne alleged he was "kept eleuen weeks vnder" the command of Easton until he persuaded Easton to "desist from his euill course."<sup>32</sup> In 1615, Whitbourne was again in Newfoundland when the sometimes naval officer, sometimes privateer, and sometimes pirate Henry Mainwaring arrived on the coast to recruit and impress men into his pirate fleet, as well as plunder ships. Whitbourne claimed Mainwaring "caused me to spend much time in his company."<sup>33</sup> The following year Whitbourne returned to Newfoundland under the authority of the

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland* (London, 1620), preface.

<sup>31</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, preface.

<sup>32</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, preface.

<sup>33</sup> Whitborne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, preface.

Court of Admiralty to empanel juries and redress the grievances of crimes committed against English fishermen. In 1617, Whitbourne fished Newfoundland and upon his return to England was intercepted by the French pirate Daniel Tibolo who stole £860 stolen from him. Whitbourne was then held prisoner in Lisbon, Portugal. After his release from prison, Whitbourne returned to Newfoundland in 1618 with food for colonists already on the island when his ship was intercepted by a captain under the command of Walter Raleigh who shockingly took the ship as a prize. In addition to these numerous encounters, he claimed to have omitted other voyages to Newfoundland. He emphasized his extensive experience in the region, including his role in pivotal parts of Newfoundland's history, such as the founding of the British Empire and the Peter Easton affair. Whitbourne stressed his experience fishing, trading, dealing with pirates, and overseeing legal proceedings as important factors shaping his theories on the practice of colonization.

The subtitle to Whitbourne's book summarized the purpose of the work, "to prooue how worthy and beneficiall a Plantation" in Newfoundland could be. Furthermore, he evaluated "certaine enormities and abuses committed by some that trade to that Countrey," and developed "the means laide downe for reformation thereof." He envisioned a profitable colony that would "yeerely be so beneficiall..as the West Indies are now yeerely worth to the King of Spaine."<sup>34</sup> The idea of Newfoundland being as profitable as the Caribbean may seem ridiculous in the twenty-first century, but, in the late sixteenth century, European commercial activity with Atlantic Canada exceeded the

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<sup>34</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 61.

European trade with the Gulf of Mexico - the traditional center of early transatlantic commerce. The precedent set during the past century spurred Whitbourne to speculate that more and greater profit could be made in Atlantic Canada than the Caribbean. The cod fishery was the chief profitable commodity in North America.<sup>35</sup> He saw a fishing settlement at Renew's as the first step in creating a colony that would compete with Spain and France for the southern European fish trade, as well as make inroads into the Amerindian fur trade for beaver, otter, martins, and seal. Whitbourne realized through his experiences that get-rich-quick-schemes were not possible in America. He cited Walter Raleigh's two voyages to Guiana in search of El Dorado where gentlemen believed "they should load their ships with gold-oare, and drawe it aboard their ships with Wheele-barrowes, and then share it by the pound; and suck like proiects."<sup>36</sup> He knew that only hard work and perseverance would make a Newfoundland colony profitable.

Whitbourne laid out a series of prescriptions for settlement. The colony should set out from England no earlier than the 25th of March. Leadership should learn "sea-affairs," and surround themselves with at least two other people who are acquainted with sailing and fishing. The three partners should bounce ideas off each other and serve as a form of checks and balances to make sure that sound and proper decisions were made, and they should leave 20% of their ship's crew behind on Newfoundland upon return to England to free up space to send more fish home. Those who remained on shore would

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 13-14.

<sup>36</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 33-34.

“build strong and fitting necessary roomes for all purposes” and other infrastructure for the burgeoning colony. As each fishing vessel continued to leave 20% of their crew behind, the number of colonists would grow into thriving settlements. Furthermore, 20% of each crew should be greenhorns and new to the trade; that way, Britain could grow its fishing and sailing workforce by continually training new people in the trade. In doing so, the colony would march towards self-sufficiency and profit, and “the charge thereof will yeerely repay it selfe, with the benefits of their labours that shall be so left there, with great aduantage.”<sup>37</sup> He envisioned the population growing by 1,000 per year. Additionally, some of the settlers should be “handycrafts-men with their wiues,” and all should “voluntarily goe thither, haue good conditions, both for allowing them land, and other conuenient priuiledges”<sup>38</sup>

Whitbourne offered cost cutting measures. He believed leadership should buy their ships and not charter them, and he recommended purchasing two types of vessels: 100 ton ships and 40 ton pinnances. Furthermore, to save money in freight costs, the salt required for preserving fish should be made in Newfoundland and not shipped there. This model was adopted by other fishing colonies, including the Dorchester Company’s settlement at Cape Anne, Massachusetts headed by Roger Conant. Additionally, leadership should send their ships from Britain to Newfoundland laden with corn to feed the settlement. Once the ships unloaded their corn, they could work the carrying trade because in “fiue days with a faire winde,” they could reach “the Ilands of Flowers, and

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<sup>37</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 26.

<sup>38</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 43, 47.

Azores, which ilands about in Wheat, Beeues, Sheepe, Goates, Hogs, Hennes, Potatoes, Muske-millions, Onyons, and many other fruites which they may haue there at cheape rates.”<sup>39</sup>

Whitbourne’s experience led him to believe a government presence in the colony was necessary. This was in part due to his prior service as a representative of the admiralty court which demonstrated the need for “some better gouerment established there.”<sup>40</sup> Noting his experiences with multiple pirates, including Peter Easton, Whitbourne wanted a small naval force to protect against pirates. He envisioned a tax being levied amounting to the equivalent of “halfe a good daies fishing” which would maintain “two good ships of warre, of 200. tunne a piece, and two Pinnaces of 40. tunne a piece well prouided, to there maintained all the Summer time.”<sup>41</sup> Whitbourne modeled his defense policy on the Dutch, whom he described “generally in all their trades, but most specially in their fishing...are attended with men of warre, which are defrayed by a certain contribution from those men, in whose defence they are employed.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Whitbourne recommended settling at Renewes because it had a good harbor that could be easily defended.

Whitbourne had imperfect notions about the geography of Newfoundland despite all his personal experience with the island. He noted that the weather was a deterrent to

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<sup>39</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 48-49.

<sup>42</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 49.

settlement, particularly the icebergs and fog. The iceberg solution was easy. Sailors needed to understand where icebergs originated, which was obviously the “North side of Tartaria.” The ice traveled through the Northwest Passage and into Newfoundland waters. Once sailors understood that, they could better predict the pathways of icebergs by knowing the currents and the winds of the area. Whitbourne advised that sailors needed to know “Ilands of ice” will “driue faster with the winde,” and therefore sailors will know when to “turne from it when there is cause” and when not to. However, the more difficult issue to handle was the fog. Whitbourne stressed his experience in Newfoundland when discussing the fog. According to him, the fog could be solved through terraforming. Whitbourne believed that the fog in part was created due to the landscape of Newfoundland. He stressed it “is well knowne vnto all those that haue seene the Country and obserued it” that woods and bushes and grown and rotted into the ground, and the “therottennes thereof hath so couered the earth” since the flood of Noah, thereby containing moisture that is relazed when “the heate of the yeere comes on.” Therefore, the “vnecessary bushes, and such vnseruiceable woods” should be burned off “so as the hot beames of the Sunne might pearce into the earth and stones.” This would create “a reflection of heate, that it would much lessen these Fogs, and also make the Countrey much the hotter Winter and Summer.” This would turn the land “to good perfection” and transform the Newfoundland coast into something comparable to Spain, Italy, and North Africa.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, he anticipated people countering his desire to settle Newfoundland with remarks about the cold weather. He discredited the detractors

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 55-58.

by accusing them of being “much accustomed to drinke Tobacco, stonge Ale, double Beere...or touched with the French disease” which would cause them to “feeles the cold more extremely then otherwise they would.”<sup>44</sup> Newfoundland’s climate was tolerable for clean, industrious, and sober people.

Two years later in 1622, Whitbourne wrote a letter to Henry Cary, Lord Falkland advising him on future colonization plans. Whitbourne recommended Falkland read his *Discourse* but also provided more exact advice. For example, the first wave of colonists should be no less than 12 in number, and they should include two house carpenters, one brick mason with the ability to lay brick, one stone mason, one tile maker, one shipwright with the ability to sail a fishing boat, one seaman or pilot, one lime burner, and one cooper. Furthermore, supplies should be bought in both England and Ireland: England would supply beer, biscuits, and manufactured goods; Ireland would supply corn, beef and pork. The ship should begin its journey in London, then to Galloway instead of Dublin to save time, and finally to Renews “where I thinke best for your Lordship first to settle your Colony.”<sup>45</sup> The rest of the letter discusses anticipated fishing numbers, the amount and price of salt needed to preserve the cargo, and how bills of exchange could be utilized in Newfoundland. The letter to Falkland echoed the advice listed in the *Discourse*.

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<sup>44</sup> Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Whitbourne to Henry Cary Lord Falkland, December 24, 1622, British Library, Sloane MS 3827, ff. 17.

Whitbourne proffered advice on how to successfully settle Newfoundland as a fishing colony. He based his advice on his past experiences as a fisherman, colony participant, and representative of the crown. He tried to paint a more realistic picture of conditions of the island in opposition to the overly optimistic perceptions of America coming out of Spanish and some English sources. He specifically targeted his advice to Henry Cary, Lord Falkland. Falkland later planted a colony called South Falkland in 1623 on the site of the failed Renew's colony on Newfoundland. The colony failed by 1630. Whitbourne failed to create successful and new theories of colonization based upon his experiences with colonial failure. It is as if almost Whitbourne failed to learn the "right" lessons, or, he failed to learn anything at all.

### **William Vaughan**

Another colonial projector who presented a colonizing scheme for Newfoundland was William Vaughn. In 1618, he financially backed an attempt to colonize Newfoundland and in 1619 hired Richard Whitbourne to oversee the project. He based his theories of colonization upon autoptic evidence collected by others who had engaged in prior colonization efforts on Newfoundland. A Welshman from Carmarthenshire, Vaughan was born into a reputable family. He received his BA and MA from Oxford and his doctorate in law from the University of Vienna. He authored several works about religion, politics, and health including *The Golden Grove*, *The Church Militant*, and *The*

*Newlanders Cure*, and translated the Italian satirist Trajano Boccalini into English.<sup>46</sup> To Americanists, Vaughan was an unsuccessful promoter, architect, and investor in the colonization of Newfoundland. Vaughan differed from Whitbourne in that Vaughan had only been to America metaphysically via travel accounts written by others. However, the information Vaughan used was based on autoptic, lived experience. As a result, Vaughan reaffirmed knowledge and constructed new realities about lands he never experienced firsthand.

Vaughan wrote several works supporting colonization in America including *The Golden Fleece*.<sup>47</sup> The book is a fictional work using factual information and many of the characters were based on and named after historical people and contemporaries of William Vaughan. Vaughan positioned himself as the narrator named Orpheus Junior, the son and inheritor to the ancient Greek poet and prophet, Orpheus. Vaughan introduced the Greek god Apollo, who held court, heard complaints, and dispensed justice on issues pertaining to virtue, family, and civility in seventeenth century Britain. Orpheus Junior served Apollo and assisted in the legal proceedings. The text was liberally painted with classical and biblical references, and divided into three parts. The first part attacked the Roman Church, and the second examined the ills facing Britain in

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<sup>46</sup> William Vaughan, *The golden-groue moralized in three bookes* (London, 1600); *The Church militant* (London, 1640); *Approved directions for health* (London, 1612); *The Newlanders cure* (London, 1630); Traiano Boccalini, *The new-found politicke* (London, 1626).

<sup>47</sup> William Vaughan, *The golden fleece diuided into three parts, vnder which are discoursed the errours of religion, the vices and decayes of the kingdome, and lastly the wayes to get wealth, and to restore trading so much complayned of, Transported from Cambrioll Colchos, out of the southermost part of the iland, commonly called the Newfoundland, by Orpheus Iunior, for the general and perpetuall good of Great Britaine* (London, 1626).

the 1620s. The third part argued that Britain's social and economic woes could be solved by colonizing Newfoundland. According to Vaughan, Newfoundland "is our Colchos," the wealthy land from Greek mythology, "where the Golden Fleece flourisheth on the backes of Neptunes sheepe, continually to be shorne." This was a land of fabulous wealth, a new Asia, which Vaughan proclaimed, just as Whitbourne had, as "Great Britaines Indies, neuer to be exhausted dry."<sup>48</sup>

The information Vaughan used in his description of Newfoundland's geography and length of day must have come from someone who had physically been to the island. Vaughan contended that Newfoundland's geography was ideal for planting. He adhered to the seventeenth century belief described by Karen Ordahl Kupperman that "climate is constant in any latitude around the globe," therefore, "Newfoundland...was expected to have a moderate climate."<sup>49</sup> Vaughan situated Newfoundland between 51° and 46° northerly latitude, which is roughly one degree more southerly than it really lies, and professed, "Where England ends, there this blessed Land beginnes, and extends it selfe almost as farre as the degree of 46. iust in a manner as the climate lieth from Caleis to Rochell."<sup>50</sup> The direct comparison to Calais and Rochelle, and therefore also to the productive agricultural region of northern France was important to Vaughan's argument. By virtue of latitude, Newfoundland was like parts of France capable of growing staple

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<sup>48</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period, *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 5 (Dec. 1982), 1262.

<sup>50</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 23.

crops in yields high enough to sustain a large population. The land was so rich that it "may in short time," according to Vaughan, "supply vs with Corne here in England...That land hauing the vegetatiue salt and vertue of it vnwearied, entire, and fresh, cannot but beare a world of corne."<sup>51</sup> This flawed view of the consistency of climate in relation to latitude resulted in overestimating the length of the growing season and the agricultural productivity of Newfoundland, today an area not known as a farmer's paradise. Vaughan's assertions about the length of daylight in Newfoundland revealed that while he was in error in reporting latitude, the error was marginal. Given that the length of the day is determined by latitude, Vaughan claimed the sun shines almost half an hour longer on the shortest day of the year in Newfoundland than it does in England.<sup>52</sup> Using data provided by the United States Navy, St. John's on Newfoundland has 26 minutes more daylight than London on the winter solstice.<sup>53</sup> Vaughan was accurate to within four minutes -- quite an accomplishment for someone who had never been to the New World. He must have received this information from someone who had been to Newfoundland and measured the length of the day.

There is evidence that the knowledge of Newfoundland that Vaughan presented in *The Golden Fleece* came from John Mason, a Norfolkian who spent considerable time in Newfoundland. This is seen in the way Vaughan cleverly had the literary character of

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<sup>51</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 14.

<sup>53</sup> Astronomical Applications Department of the US Naval Observatory, 'Complete Sun and Moon Date for One Day,' [http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS\\_OneDay.php](http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/RS_OneDay.php), accessed 6 May 2013.

‘John Mason’ in *The Golden Fleece* use nearly identical language as the historical John Mason did in his short book entitled *A Briefe Discourse of the Newfoundland*.<sup>54</sup>

Table 4. Comparison of Mason and Vaughan.

<p>John Mason A Briefe Discourse of the Newfoundland Edinburgh, 1620</p>	<p>William Vaughan The Golden Fleece London, 1626</p>
<p>John Mason wrote:</p> <p>Of these, three men to Sea in a Boate with some on Shoare to dresse and dry them In 30, dayes will kill commonlie betwixt 25. and thirty thousand worth with the Oyle arising from them 100 or 120. pound.<sup>55</sup></p>	<p>The character John Mason said:</p> <p>Of these, three men at Sea in a Boat, with some on shoare to dresse and dry them, in thirty days will kill commonly betwixt fiue and twenty and thirty thousand, worth with the Traine oyle arising from them, one hundred or six score pounds.<sup>56</sup></p>

The influence of Mason on Vaughan was not just literary, but also geographical. Vaughan published the first complete map of the island drawn by Mason, in his 1625 *Cambrensiū Caroleia*, a long Latin poem honoring Charles I's marriage to Henrietta Maria of France. The map was republished in the *Golden Fleece* the following year.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> John Mason, *A briefe discourse of the Nevv-found-land with the situation, temperature, and commodities thereof, inciting our nation to goe forward in that hopefull plantation begunne* (Edinburgh: 1620).

<sup>55</sup> Mason, *A briefe discourse*, no page number, Image 5 on EEBO.

<sup>56</sup> William Vaughan, *The Golden Fleece*, part III, 24.

<sup>57</sup> William Vaughan, *Cambrensiū Caroleia* (Londini: Excudebat Gulielmus Stansbeius, 1625). Ceri Davies in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography's entry for William Vaughan claims "In 1625 he published a Latin poem, 'Cambrensiū Caroleia,' in honour of the marriage of Charles I, and included with it John Mason's map of Newfoundland." Gillian T. Cell in the Canadian Dictionary of National Biography's entry for William Vaughan claims, "In 1625 he published John Mason's map of the island in his book *Cambrensiū Caroleia*, written to celebrate the accession of Charles I.

The map is relatively accurate in its depiction of the coastline, with some parts more exact than others. The English settlements at St. John's, Ferryland, Renew's, Cuppers Cove, Bristol's Hope, and Trepassy are marked. The French presence on the island is seen in toponyms like Cape de Pene, Ile Ruge, Ile Espere, and Pettit Harbor. The map also shows the large tracts of land owned by the two Peers of the Realm invested in Newfoundland, George Calvert, Lord Baltimore; and Henry Cary, Viscount Falkland. Not surprisingly, the Avalon Peninsula is the most detailed, probably due to several attempts at settlement over the course of the early seventeenth century. Vaughan contended that Newfoundland "is altogether as large as England, without Scotland."<sup>58</sup> He misjudged the measurement of the island by 20% or roughly 8,000 square miles. This missing area approximately translates to the size of New Jersey. The use of the map revealed Vaughan's reliance on other's personal experiences as the basis of the knowledge.

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<sup>58</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 22.

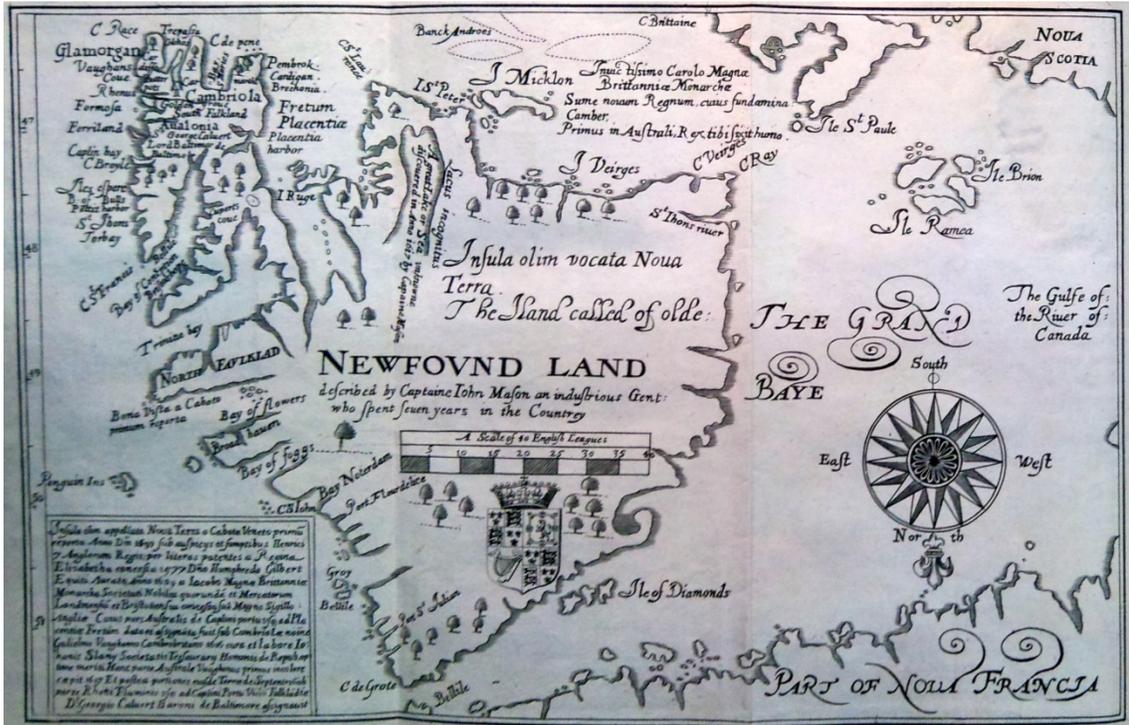


Figure 6. Map of Newfoundland created by John Mason, this version published in William Vaughan's *The Golden Fleece* (1626).

By publishing the map in both *Cambrensiu[m] Caroleia* (1625) and *The Golden Fleece* (1626), Vaughan attached himself to the geography and landscape of Newfoundland. His name marked the waterway of Vaughan's Cove. Golden Grove was named after Vaughan's estate in Wales. There were other traces of Vaughan's motherland of Wales. The settlement of Cambriol, a failed colony funded and backed by Vaughan, shared its name with the Latin word for Wales. Welsh names dotted the landscape, like Pembroke, Cardiff, and Glamorgan. Even the name of the Avalon Peninsula harkened back to ancient Wales and the mythical Dark Ages when the Isle of Avalon was ruled by Morgan le Fey and served as the final resting place of King Arthur.

Echoing the Book of Genesis, “whatsoever Vaughan and Mason called the landscape that was the name thereof.”<sup>59</sup>

The map even marked the spot where *The Golden Fleece* was supposedly written. The long title of the work claimed it was “transported from Cambrioll Colchos, out of the southernmost part of the island, commonly called the Newfoundland.” In doing so, Vaughan not only attached himself to the geography of Newfoundland through place names on a map, but also by claiming to have written the book in Newfoundland.<sup>60</sup> The combination of a genuine map in a work of fiction helps to, as Roger Chartier contended (in reference to Don Quixote) “Confuse the world of the text and the world of the reader” in order to help convince the reader that Vaughan’s work “deserved a full suspension of disbelief.”<sup>61</sup> Gods and men collaborated to bring greatness to Britain through the colonization of Newfoundland.

In *The Golden Fleece*, Vaughan contemplated other places to plant a colony besides Newfoundland, including Bermuda and Virginia in the North Atlantic; and St.

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<sup>59</sup> Genesis 2:19.

<sup>60</sup> David Woodley Prowse claimed Vaughan lived in Newfoundland for several years, D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 111-112. Prowse does not cite where he received this information. The only evidence I can find supporting the notion that Vaughan traveled to Newfoundland is from the long title of *The Golden Fleece* which states the work was “transported from Cambrioll Colchos, out of the Southernmost Part of the Island.” Gillian T. Cell argues this phrase is “merely a poetic formula not to be taken literally,” Gillian T. Cell, “William Vaughan,” *Canadian Dictionary of National Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1966-2013). Peter E. Pope claims “it is doubtful that he himself was ever there,” Peter E. Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 52. To the best of my knowledge, there is no corroborating evidence from other primary sources that can place Vaughan in Newfoundland.

<sup>61</sup> Roger Chartier, “Geographies of the Book / Geographies in Books,” Plenary Speech, SHARP 2013 Conference, 18 July 2013.

Helena and Soldana in the South Atlantic. He settled on Newfoundland, however; he must have been deterred from Virginia by the fear of Spanish aggression, the First and Second Anglo-Powhatan Wars, the collapse of the Virginia Company, and the added cost of time and money of the longer voyage. These costs, plus the four colonial failures in New England up to this point (Sagadahoc, Maine, and Cuttyhunk, Wessagusset/York, and Cape Anne Massachusetts) must have also turned Vaughan off the northeastern coastline and spurred him to write something that today seems misguided, but made great sense in 1626. He wrote: “For some contended on the behalfe of Virginia; others contested for New England. Euery man had his opinion according to his imaginary obiect, wherein most preferred priuate fantasies, before the intellectual facultie.”<sup>62</sup> For Vaughan, his intellectual faculty directed him to plant on Newfoundland, and to do so in light of autoptic evidence from colonial failure.

Scurvy plagued many of these early colonies, and Vaughan argued in *The Golden Fleece* argued that the scurvy issue could be solved by learning from failed colonies in North Carolina and Canada. Scurvy is caused by a deficiency of Vitamin C that afflicted early-modern sailors and colonial settlers and it contributed to mortality rates upward of 50% in northeastern North America. Scurvy was documented in textual sources and skeletal remains from earlier excursions, including Jacques Cartier’s expedition of 1535-1536 in modern-day Quebec; a Basque whaling station in Red Bay, Labrador; the Champlain and de Mons expedition of 1604-1605 on Saint Croix Island, ME; Jamestown, VA during the winter of 1609-1610; Cuper’s Cove, NF during the winter of 1612-1613,

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<sup>62</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 22.

and Plymouth, MA during the winter of 1620-1621.<sup>63</sup> Vaughan suggested scurvy was contracted in two ways, through idleness and a cold climate. He argued lazy colonists were more likely to contract scurvy than industrious ones, and a partial solution to the link between laziness and scurvy lay in keeping lazy colonists occupied by fishing. According to his estimations, the fishing season for permanent settlers on Newfoundland was four months longer than it was for the transitory workforce. These extra four months of labor would prevent indolence, and therefore scurvy.

Vaughan continued to advise on scurvy by commenting that the disease appeared to be contracted in colder areas; however, he noted that the settlers at Roanoke contracted scurvy despite North Carolina being "a hotter Country." Despite Roanoke's experiences, Vaughan, thought warmer temperatures would inhibit the disease. Knowing that settlements in Newfoundland often hugged the coastline, he suggested that the future planters of Newfoundland settle inland where "the weather is farre hotter" than the colder coastline, and where the hills and woods will protect plants from "raging Easterly windes." The settlers should also "sleepe in boarded roomes" to protect themselves from cold weather and scurvy.<sup>64</sup> This implied that settlers were not sleeping in boarded rooms. He was probably referencing the experience of the failed colony he previously funded at New Cambriol, Newfoundland. The governor of this colony, Richard Whitbourne, remarked that some of the settlers never built proper houses and instead chose to live in

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<sup>63</sup> Steven R. Pendery and Hannah E.C. Koon, "Scuvy's Impact on European Colonization in Northeastern North America," in *Exploring Atlantic Transitions*, 57-65.

<sup>64</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 28-29.

the temporary fish processing shacks left behind by migratory workers.<sup>65</sup> For Vaughan, the combination of both idleness and cold weather caused the Newfoundland colonists to contract scurvy.

It was believed a cure for scurvy was found roughly a century earlier during Jacques Cartier's disastrous expedition and temporary settlement of the interior of Canada. As the French were dying in droves from scurvy, the Iroquois introduced something called 'anneda' which cured the interlopers of the disease. Vaughan argued that anneda could be transported from the interior of the mainland to Newfoundland and modern practitioners of physic could use it to "beginne their Cure with the Scuruy, and with the cleansing of the Bloud...as it were by miracle."<sup>66</sup> By looking at failure in the past, Vaughan laid out future plans to combat scurvy by keeping workers busy, settling inland, and importing anneda.

Vaughan continued *The Golden Fleece* by having Apollo calling forth the "four famous Knights" of Francis Drake, Martin Frobisher, Henry Middleton, and Thomas Button. The knights, experienced in navigation, exploration, and colonization, had to respond to a petition brought against them by the poor widows of the sailors who died in their service. Apollo questioned the knights to determine the best route to the East Indies to prevent future sailors from dying in the "Tropickes, and the burning zones."<sup>67</sup> Each of the men put forth different solutions. Drake, the famous privateer and the first

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Whitbourne, *A Discovrse and Discovery of Nevv-Fovnd-Land*, (London: 1620).

<sup>66</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 48-49.

<sup>67</sup> Vaughan, *The Golden Fleece*, Part III, 40.

Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, argued for the Southwest Passage through the Straights of Magellan. Henry Middleton, a captain engaged in the East India trade, promoted the oft traveled Southeast Passage around the Cape of Good Hope. Martin Frobisher, explorer and failed colonizer, advocated for the yet to be discovered Northwest Passage. Explorer Thomas Button claimed the route would be found via Hudson Bay. Apollo sided with Frobisher and ordered London merchants to join together to find the Northwest Passage. Apollo's order promoted Vaughan's interest in Newfoundland as the island could act as a middle point and a locus for repairing and victualing the vessels traveling to and from Asia in much the same way Humphrey Gilbert envisioned Newfoundland's role fifty years earlier.

Curiously, Vaughan praised Thomas Button, the man promoting Hudson Bay passage, to a length that leaves the reader scratching his/her head. Button led an expedition of two ships into the Bay in 1612. After losing one ship and barely surviving the Canadian winter, the expedition crept home. Button's name was further tarnished by allegations of misconduct and financial ruin. Nevertheless, Vaughan had Apollo order a frontpiece to be engraved at the palace at Delphi to include the lines "Not onely Wales, but England rings his name / And with great Drake compares our Buttons fame."<sup>68</sup> Why would he do this? Was this simply a nod to a good friend and fellow Welshmen? Or perhaps, the failure of Button resonated in the mind of a metaphysical traveler who never journeyed to America, a man who lived in the world of ideas and not experienced reality. Perhaps Vaughan's solid, yet imperfect, knowledge of the geography of Newfoundland

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<sup>68</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 50.

coupled with his experiences and acquaintance with colonial failure made Button a more sympathetic and attractive character. While knowledge of colonial failure in regard to what region to settle, medical information, and travel routes shaped Vaughan's ideas, his affinity to Button and continued efforts to colonize Newfoundland despite past failure revealed that something else was driving Vaughan: the hope and belief in being vindicated by finally capturing the Golden Fleece so that his fellow Britons may "depart into a remoter place to liue in perpetuall plenty."<sup>69</sup>

### John Smith

Another colonial projector who promoted the north was John Smith. Smith stressed the value of advice, and particularly the value of his advice based on his experiences in North America. Smith claimed he knew what would make a colony a success. He emphasized learning from past mistakes in the poem appearing in the beginning of his 1631 book *Advertisements*. The poem read:

Aloofe, aloofe, and come no neare,  
the dangers doe appeare;  
Which if my ruine had not beene  
you had not seene:  
I only lie upon this shelve  
to be a marke to all  
which on the same might fall,  
That none may perish but my selfe.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, Part III, 8.

<sup>70</sup> John Smith (anon?), "The Sea Marke," in Smith, *Advertisements* in Smith and Barbour, vol. 3, 265. Originally published as *Advertisements for the unexperienced planters of New-England, or any where* (London, 1631).

Like Whitbourne, Smith presented his colonial experiences and future plans for North America based on autoptic evidence, and published his finding to engender the trust and faith of a wealthy backer.

Smith is best known in American popular culture as the love interest of Pocahontas (a claim that bears no resemblance to actual events), and for being the military leader of the young Virginia colony. Smith painted himself as someone worth listening to because of the breadth of his experiences. What is known about Smith comes primarily from his autobiography *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith*.<sup>71</sup> Smith was a soldier and explorer during the first half of his life, and he took advantage of the growing English appetite for colonization and adventuring to reposition himself during the second half of his life as an educated man, experienced soldier, and tenacious survivor. He claimed to have been educated as a child by Francis Marbury, the father of Ann Hutchinson of the Antinomian Controversy; and as an adult studied Machiavelli under Theodore Paleologue, one of the last living descendants of the Byzantine royal family. He toured Europe visiting Spain, France, Italy, and Germany; survived a shipwreck and fought pirates off the coast of Egypt; fought for his faith in the Low Countries against Catholics, and in Central Europe against Muslims. It was while fighting the Ottomans and their Tatar allies that he was awarded a coat of arms from Prince Szigmond Báthory for killing three Turks in three duels. He was wounded and left for dead in Crimea, rescued by pillagers who sold him as a slave, and sent to Istanbul

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<sup>71</sup> John Smith, *The true travels, adventures, and observations of Captaine Iohn Smith, in Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, from anno Domini 1593. To 1629* (London, 1630).

where he worked as a house slave. He charmed his master's daughter and she fell in love with him, much to the chagrin of her brother. The brother sent Smith away to work as a field slave near the Black Sea where Smith snapped and killed his overseer. He escaped on foot and ran toward the Don River. He was rescued by a group of Muscovites and from there Smith eventually returned home and signed up with the Virginia Company after a grand tour of Europe and a visit to the Barbary Coast.

In Virginia he became the de facto political and military leader of the colony after the initial appointed leadership imploded, and he guided the fledgling colony through difficult times including war and famine. He traveled throughout Virginia and later New England, even giving the name "New England" to the region that hitherto had been known as Norumbega and Northern Virginia. Later in life, Smith went on several ventures to New England to fish (see chapter 2), and spent several decades trying to persuade his readers to invest in a colony he would oversee in the region. He was a self-proclaimed survivor when he noted he spent 37 years "in the midst of wars, pestilence, and famine; by which many an hundred thousand have died about mee."<sup>72</sup> Smith led an amazing life, though his description of it was, according to Bernard Bailyn, "boastful and fancifully embroidered," though "largely accurate."<sup>73</sup> He stressed the importance of his experiences in developing his theories on the practice of colonization.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 285.

<sup>73</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 48.

<sup>74</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 125.

Smith stressed his personal experiences in his writings, including in his dedicatories. Smith dedicated various copies of his *Generall Historie of Virginia* to various people. In the dedication to the “Double Duchess” Frances Howard, ie, the Duchess of Richmond and Lenox, Smith emphasized his experiences when he stated “I am no Compiler by hearsay, but have beene a reall Actor.”<sup>75</sup> Smith was a direct player in the North American schemes of the seventeenth century, and that distinction allowed him to speak with authority what made money and what did not. In the tailored dedicatory of the *Generall Historie of Virginia* he presented to the Cordwainers Company in London, Smith emphasized that despite a history of a lack of returns from investing America, he knew what would generate profit and revealed his secrets “at Large in this Booke for your better Satisfaction.”<sup>76</sup>

Smith believed that autoptic evidence trumped arm chair strategists, writing that he wished to “distinguish between experiences in the field and learning that came from academic exercises.”<sup>77</sup> His monograph *Advertisements for the unexperienced planters of New England, or any where* (1631) stressed his personal experiences in America.<sup>78</sup> He wrote *Advertisements* immediately after John Winthrop led the Puritan migration to

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<sup>75</sup> John Smith, “To the Illustrious and Most Noble Princesse, the Lady Francis, Duchesse of Richmand and Lenox,” in *The General Historie*, in Smith and Barbour, vol. 2, 41.

<sup>76</sup> John Smith, “To the Worshipfull the Master Wardens and Societie of the Cordwayners of the Cittie of London,” in *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* in Smith and Barbour, *The Complete Works of John Smith*, vol 2 (Chapel Hill: NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 37.

<sup>77</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Captain John Smith* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 250.

<sup>78</sup> John Smith, *Advertisements for the unexperienced plants of New-England, or any where* (London, 1631).

Massachusetts, a location which at the time was the home of one successful and four failed colonies. Like any good colonial projector, Smith hoped to cash in on the recent interest in New England and wrote *Advertisements* to give a history of the region, and to articulate his theories on the practice of colonization, in the hopes of getting funded to establish a new colony. This was a tough feat to accomplish since few colonial investors had a return on investment except when their money was used to fund privateering activities.<sup>79</sup> Karen Kupperman claimed *Advertisements* “presented a thoughtful and coherent picture of the future British Empire, the only such plan written at the time by an actor.”<sup>80</sup> Smith argued that every settler should hold a stake in their settlement. This lent credence to the idea “that the promise of America was bourgeois society.”<sup>81</sup> He envisioned a commonwealth of smallholders and their families working to enhance the wealth and security of England.

Smith stressed the importance of his personal experience, in addition to studying the experience of others in the past, for “who would not thinke but that all those trials had bene sufficient to lay a foundation for planation.”<sup>82</sup> Part of this required the choosing of good people suitable for colonization, which Smith claimed did not happen in early Virginia, and therefore “Now in New-England they have all our examples to teach them how to beware, and choice men.” However, a knowledge of the past was not a guarantee

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<sup>79</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 250.

<sup>80</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, v.

<sup>81</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 238.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 292.

that problems would not arise in a new colony because “wee most ignorant in all things, or little better, therefore presage not the event of all actions by our defailments.” Smith stressed that one could prepare for but not predict the future.<sup>83</sup> He also stressed that the Pilgrims failed to listen to his warnings or take his advice, and that is why they encountered so many problems during their first years of colonization in Massachusetts. Smith claimed to have instructed the Pilgrims, but, “thinking to find all things better than I advised, [they] spent six or seven weekes in wandring up and downe in frost and snowe, wind and raine, among the woods, cricks, and swamps, forty of them died.” They were “in want of experience” and the hardships they underwent caused the Pilgrims, according to Smith, to break into factions - and Smith knew from his time in Virginia that factions were deadly and could destroy a colony.<sup>84</sup> Smith believed following his advice would have saved the lives of 40 Pilgrims, and prevented internal dissension.<sup>85</sup>

Smith began *Advertisements* by laying out the key events of the history of Virginia and New England from 1614 to 1630, accompanied by his commentary. He railed against Virginia Company men in London expecting the impossible from the Virginia landscape including the production of silk, wine, olive oil and iron. Smith also complained about the company sending skilled tradesmen like goldsmiths, jewelers, and

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<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 296.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 283.

<sup>85</sup> Smith stressed the need to prevent factionalism. Probably a lesson he learned from watching the factions of the Virginia Company squabble for decades. Historian Benjamin Wooley suggests that a now lost letter from John Ratcliffe to Robert Cecil described how Ratcliffe developed a plan enlist supporters to break off from Jamestown and found a separate settlement, Benjamin Wooley, *Savage Kingdom: The True Story of Jamestown, 1607, and the Settlement of America* (Harper: New York, 2007), 144.

lapidaries to create items from raw materials that did not exist in the region. These company men who had never seen America, were “so doating of Mines of gold, and the South Sea, that all the world could not have devised better courses,” according to Smith, “to bring us to ruine than they did themselves.”<sup>86</sup> Company men, Smith continued had never and were never going to see North America, and would neither maintain or defend the plantation “but with Countenances, Councells, and advice, which any reasonable man there may better advise himselfe, that one thousand of them here who were never there.”<sup>87</sup> Being on the ground and experiencing the conditions mattered in decision making, a notion Smith lamented his handlers in London never could grasp. This situation was exacerbated by undersupplying the colonists, and sending people who could not fend for themselves because they had no idea how to hunt and fish. In Smith’s estimations, many of the colonists were lazy and did not want to help themselves, as he noted in the now famous phrase, “most of them would rather starve than worke.”<sup>88</sup>

Smith looked to the ancient past and found examples of good colonization practices that he believed should be applied in North America. Drawing on the Hebrews, Spartans, Goths, and Romans who all enlarged their holdings, he saw “their vertues, were no silvered idle golden Pharisies, but industrious honest hearted Publicans, they regarded more provisions and necessaries for their people, than jewels, ease and delight for themselves; riches was their servants, not their masters; they ruled as fathers, not as

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<sup>86</sup> John Smith, *Advertisements*, 272.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 299.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 273.

tyrants; their people as children, not as slaves.”<sup>89</sup> The founders of these great monarchies did the opposite of the Virginia Company - they put their people and not their money first.

Smith presented himself as the foremost expert on New England’s geography, demography, and climate. He provided river names and locations; the type of stone in the region; where and how to grow grass for hay; the location of Indians tribes and their territories; and the basics of native political organization and religion, He described how to clear woods for pasture and crops; and how to fertilize corn the Indian way “bysticking at every plant of corne, a herring or two, which commeth in that season in such abundance, they may take more than they know what to doe with.”<sup>90</sup> Like Whitbourne, Smith anticipated detractors criticizing the climate. He countered with the argument that the weather was no worse than what people experienced in Canada, Russia, Sweden, Poland, Germany, and the Netherlands - furthermore noting that these were rich countries where the people lived well. Additionally, he offered a list of New England commodities to fight the cold including wood, train oil, and fir trees. Smith’s expert knowledge turned the region from an amorphous blob into a distinct, livable, known territory.

Smith also offered practical advice. He recommended not to load ships with either too much cattle or too many passengers, and to make sure to pay attention to diet at sea because there were sea captains who would cheat their passengers of food to save money because they “care not much whether the passengers live or die...as I have scene

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<sup>89</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 277

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Advertisements*, 291

too oft approved by lamentable experience.”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, investors and colonists must face the fact that there is a cost of doing business because “mischanges, misprisions, or accidents may befall them.” He also warned them to be careful with whom they did business because “imcomparably connivency is in the Devils most punctuall cheaters, they will hazard a joint.”<sup>92</sup> Smith meant that when good people do business with bad people, infighting will arise and tear the venture apart. Smith ended *Advertisements* with one final warning: “Lastly remember as faction, pride, and security produces nothing but confusion, miserie and dissolution.”<sup>93</sup> He was probably referring to the intense factionalism that divided the Virginia Company and contributed to the crown investigating the firm, ultimately seizing the company in 1624, and transforming the private enterprise into the first royal colony in America.

Smith’s extensive experience in Virginia and New England and the advice he proffered in *Advertisements* yielded no funding. Smith died at age 51 the same year that *Advertisements* was published. Smith’s colonial dreams were never realized nor his was advice ever fully implemented in America.

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Readers of colonial projectors’ published works were oftentimes deeply involved in colonial projects. A list of books purchased by the Virginia Company in 1623

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<sup>91</sup> John Smith, *Advertisements*, 292.

<sup>92</sup> John Smith, *Advertisements*, 294, see also fn. 5, 294.

<sup>93</sup> John Smith, *Advertisements*, 302.

included “1 Hackluite Voyadges whole,” “3 Smithes New England,” and “02 Captaine Smithes booke of Virginia” along with several books on the history of the colonization of Virginia, Ulster, and Florida.<sup>94</sup> Projectors who had never been to America, like Vaughan, relied on the testimony of those who had. Projectors who had been to North America, like Whitbourne and Smith, claimed to have learned valuable lessons from their time in New World, and offered these lessons as the advice necessary to establish a successful and profitable colony. They covered topics including infrastructure development, climate, geography, better business practices, and defense.

They offered sophisticated and practical advice based on autoptic evidence as a result of the publication and circulation of works like the three studied in this chapter. The efforts and visions outlined on their pages was an attempt to recreate new theories on colonization in order to avoid the colonial failure of the past. All three men intimately tied to colonial failure, and they hoped to learn from it and not repeat the same mistakes. However, the lessons they drew out of the past were not enough to develop a successful theory of colonization despite being steeped in experience.

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<sup>94</sup> David B. Quinn, “A List of Books Purchased for the Virginia Company,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 77, no. 3 (Jul., 1969): 358-360.

## CHAPTER VI

### “WENT TO BUILD CASTLES IN THE AIRE”

In 1623, colonial projector Christopher Levett bought 6,000 acres of land in North America from Ferdinando Gorges' Council of New England. With the permission and encouragement of the Abenaki Indians, Levett planted his colony of York at the Abenaki village of Quack. The area is now Portland, Maine. Levett built a fortified stone house and manned it with ten colonists before returning home to England in order to recruit more colonists. The colony failed and the ten settlers were “lost” and never heard from again. After returning to England from York, Levett wrote a book to promote investment for his new colony entitled *A voyage in Nevv England begun in 1623*. The book was printed in two editions in 1624 and 1628.<sup>1</sup>

Levett was aware of the failed colonies that dotted the coastline of New England. As a member of the Council of New England, he probably knew of the past dealings of the council's president, Ferdinando Gorges, who was also a projector behind the failed Sagadahoc colony of 1607. Levett also knew about the short-lived colony of Wessagussett that was planted by Thomas Weston, and failed within the year. The following year, it was replanted by Robert Gorges, the son of the aforementioned Ferdinando. The second colony also failed shortly after being planted. Levett criticized

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Levett, *A voyage in Nevv England begun in 1623. and ended in 1624. Performed by Christopher Levett, his Maiesties woodward of Somerset-shire, and one of the Councill of New-England* (London, 1624, 1628).

the Wessagusset settlement, claiming that “vvhen they came there, they neither applied themseues to planting of corne nor taking of fish, more then for their present use, but vvent to build Castles in the Aire, and making of Forts, neglecting the plentifull time of fishing.”<sup>2</sup> Like John Smith and Richard Whitbourne, Levett imagined profit in North America lay in fishing. He also argued that one way to combat the “Castles in the Aire” was through hard work. He advised that New England was “a Countrey, where none can liue except he either labour himselfe, or be able to keepe others to labour for him.”<sup>3</sup> Levett inadvertently foreshadowed the forthcoming evolution of American labor – the transformation of labor ownership from white, European indentured servants, to black, African slaves.

Despite a coastline marred by colonial failure, ranging from failed settlements, failed fishing enterprises, and failed sassafras profits, Levett imagined New England to hold promise. But, he was careful to not exaggerate this promise in *A Voyage into New England*. Levett criticized authors who wrote about America while never traveling there, and reassured his readers “I will not doe therein as some haue done, to my knowledge speak more then is true.” He affirmed to the readers that corn did not grow on trees, the deer did not come when called, the fish did not leap into the kettle, and the fowl did not present themselves mounted on spits. However, Levett did assure his readers that there

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Levett, *A Voyage into Nevv England* in James Baxter Phinney, *Christopher Levett of York* (Portland ME: Ferdinando Gorges Society, 1893), 125.

<sup>3</sup> Levett in Phinney, 138.

were plenty of fish and deer, as well as “holesome Earbes, both for profit and pleasure, with a great store of Saxifrage, Cersa-perilla, and Anni-Seeds.”<sup>4</sup>

Levett projected his wants and desires onto Maine’s geography. He wanted to find the commodities of the Mediterranean and Asia in North America. He did so by claiming to have found aniseed or anise, a plant that grows in the Mediterranean and Southwest Asian regions. Levett’s finding of aniseed in Maine harkens back to George Popham’s letters to James I. Popham wrote from Maine shores of the newly planted Sagadahoc colony in 1607 to reassure his sovereign that the Abenaki “affirm in these parts there are nutmegs, mace and cinnamon.”<sup>5</sup> Both Levett and Popham imagined they found Asian commodities in North America – echoing the predictions and promises of Richard Hakluyt made forty years earlier when he claimed the continent would “yelde unto us all the commodities of Europe, Affrica, and Asia...and supply the wantes of all our decayed trades.”<sup>6</sup>

Other profitable commodities were imagined to exist in America. Martin Frobisher’s failed mining colony of *Meta Incognita* was an exemplary case of the English belief that gold was just waiting to be found. The desire for gold was behind Walter Raleigh’s two Guiana ventures that ultimately led to his arrest, trial, and execution. The

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<sup>4</sup> Levett in Phinney, 120.

<sup>5</sup> George Popham to James I, December 13, 1607, in Quinn, *New American World* vol. 3, 439-440.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Hakluyt, “Discourse of Western Planting by Richard Hakluyt, 1584,” *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts* vol. 2, E.G.R. Taylor ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), 211.

belief in gold was so strong that Richard Whitbourne discussed with his readers the mistaken notion that gold could be gathered by the wheelbarrow full on American shores.

Projectors imagined fishing to be the next big profitable commodity. Colony after colony was founded and failed in Newfoundland and New England in the hopes of making money from the codfish. Eventually, Newfoundland and New England would become the hubs of permanent colonial settlements centered on fishing, but that process took centuries to develop. Meanwhile, fishing colonies like Renew's, Cuper's Cove, and Cape Anne were planted and failed, and projectors continued to insist that profit and colonial success would be attained with the right leadership. People like Christopher Levett, John Smith, Richard Whibourne, and William Vaughan imagined that they knew the solution to the failure of colonization. They were wrong.

The unicorn is an example of the power of imagination. The legends were real because ancient authorities confirmed the existence of the creature. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans knew about the animal, and medieval and early modern Europeans lived amongst their remains. Cathedrals in Venice and Paris owned large pieces of horn, church leaders used alicorn for their croziers, monarchs were crowned while holding unicorn remains, and the rich used the horn to cure the plague and purify water. European explorers, merchants, and bureaucrats claimed to have found unicorns in America including the waters of Nunavut, Canada, the forests of upstate New York, the coast of Georgia and Florida, and on the beaches of Haiti. The unicorn is an extreme example of the power and consequences of imagination. If people believed in something,

they would find it: whether it was unicorns, or Asian and African commodities in North America.

Working within the framework of natural philosophy, doctors and apothecaries imagined sassafras as a treatment and cure for syphilis, and colonial projectors sought out and exploited the commodity. Sassafras, alongside the other sudorific woods of guaiacum, sarsaparilla, and China root were harvested in North America and sold in England and mainland Europe. The desire for sassafras was linked to colonization in New England and the Chesapeake. However, the profits were unlike the sores and lesions caused by syphilis - they dried up and disappeared. Sustained profit from gold, sericulture, fish, and sassafras were as illusory as the unicorn.

After seventy years of failure, projectors continued to offer practical advice based on autoptic evidence to further their theories of colonization. While the advice indicated a shift in thinking and expectations from the previous century, the new advice demonstrated that projectors learned sluggishly and marginally. In some cases, projectors revealed that they did not learn anything at all.

Christopher Levett's York was another failed Anglo-North American colony involved with fishing and sassafras. The first ten colonists vanished much like the Roanoke settlers. Levett returned to North America after the York settlement, and visited Salem, Massachusetts. Salem was once called Naumkeag, and was the site where a group of refugees from the failed Cape Anne colony gathered after the colony's collapse. Levett, the failed projector of York, may have stood next to Roger Conant, the leader of the failed Cape Anne settlement, to welcome the first wave of Puritan migrants to Salem

in 1630. Levett died on his return voyage to England the same year, and the arrival of the Puritans changed the landscape of North America in ways projectors like Levett could never imagine.

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This study is important because it sheds light on the overlooked years of Anglo-American colonization where more colonies failed than succeeded. Projectors imagined an America that did not exist, and had to come to grips with the new realities they found on the ground with the vision of the ease and profitability of colonization. This project historicizes the imagined profitability of fish and sassafras, and uses the unicorn as an extreme example of the unlimited potential America had in the minds of projectors. It explores how projectors used their experience with past failed projects to refashion their vision and theory of colonization. Using the lenses of imagination and failure removed some of the foggiest during the roughly seventy years during which projectors were experimenting in North America. Furthermore, this study covers material not found in other studies of the period and region. The material on unicorns and sassafras in North America is largely unprecedented. Using the wide approach of colonial failure as opposed to the failure of individual colonies is a relatively new and unique approach.

## Suggestions for Further Research

This work raises new questions on the time period during which England searched for a useful way to exploit North America including: what impact colonial failure had on the way colonies were imagined, and how and why did efforts at colonization persist in a world where failure was the norm and success was the anomaly?

My conclusions on how colonial projectors imagined North America and her commodities, and how the theories on colonization held by projectors changed over seventy years based on autoptic evidence begs the question why and how did colonies become profitable? I suspect the success of North American colonies was tied to the English Civil War and the success of the Caribbean slave system. I suggest the link between the Civil War and Caribbean slavery needs to be explored.

The period encompassing the English Civil War, the War of the Three Kingdoms, the English Commonwealth, and the English Protectorate (1639-1659), radically altered domestic politics as well as changed the direction of England's overseas possessions. Prior to 1640, the crown had little influence over colonial expansion and governance, and the Stuarts favored granting colonies to individual noble proprietors. These trends changed during the English Civil War when the revolutionary government took an active and centralized role in governing colonies.<sup>7</sup>

A new model of English foreign policy emerged called the "Western Design."

The policy grew out of a series of reforms initiated by the revolutionary government

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<sup>7</sup> Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

including the Navigation Act of 1651 which attempted to restrict foreign competition but open the Atlantic to all English merchants.<sup>8</sup> After Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector in 1653, he turned his ambitions backward in time and revisited the Elizabethan notion of a financially and militarily strong Protestant England at the expense of Catholic Spain. The Protectorate targeted Spain's possessions in the Caribbean, notably Cuba and Jamaica. The implementation of the Western Design turned the Caribbean into a theater of European power politics for the next 150 years.<sup>9</sup> While the Caribbean was an important focus of England's foreign policy during the Interregnum, other territories across the globe were targeted including St. Helena, Pulo Run, Surinam, Dunkirk, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

Once Caribbean colonies were acquired by the English, the English quickly copied their European neighbors and adopted an African slave workforce to fulfill their labor needs. While English colonies in mainland North America did not become slave societies immediately after the English Civil War, the seeds were planted during the mid-seventeenth century to turn a society with a few slaves into a slave society by the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> This dependence on enslaved labor is a marked difference to the early colonial experience.

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<sup>8</sup> Pestana, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge Classics, 1980), 156.

<sup>10</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 146-150.

The sugar revolution in the English Caribbean began around 1640. Barbados produced no sugar in 1637 and just eight years later 40% of the island was planted in the crop. Growing sugar required huge amounts of labor that was met first by white European indentured servants and then by black African slaves. By 1650 the white population of whites leveled out around 20,000, and by 1680 the black slave population leveled out around 50,000. The population of Barbados was larger than Massachusetts or Virginia during the second half of the seventeenth century. The sugar revolution spread to other English possessions in the Caribbean including Jamaica in the 1670s and the Leeward Islands in 1680.<sup>11</sup>

It is not a coincidence that the economy of New England, a region dotted with failed colonies, did not grow until 1650 when the effects of the sugar revolution hit the North American shores - a full two generations after the first failed colonial attempts in the region. To that point, New England colonists, prior to the Sugar Revolution, had no real source of income outside of local markets for cereal agriculture and animal husbandry.<sup>12</sup> The Plymouth colony, the first successful colony in the region, never found or latched onto a source of wealth that made it desirable to immigrants.<sup>13</sup> It was not until after 1650 that the region experienced economic growth, and the growth was centered on the shipping and the carrying trade, and the Caribbean was a vital portion of that trade.

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<sup>11</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82-84.

<sup>12</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 19.

The Massachusetts Bay Company quickly found itself reliant on the West Indies after the sugar revolution. Nicholas Canny described how the leadership of the Massachusetts Bay Company was genuinely fearful that they would not be able to pay their debts because of a lack of markets for their products. Those involved in the New England fishery were in a similar position as the fishermen in Newfoundland: they were not profitable just selling to Europe. Despite Europe being protein hungry, American fishing did not produce the profits colonial projectors looked for.<sup>14</sup> It was the seemingly unrelated and “unexpected success of Barbados as a sugar-producing island,” according to Nicholas Canny, that “created the demand for food that assured the survival of agrarian and fishing communities in New England, and created the need for the commercial and administrative centres that were such a vital element of New England society at the close of the seventeenth century.”<sup>15</sup> Boston would have remained a backwater without Caribbean slavery.

The centralization of government and colonial decision making was another factor that may have altered the North American colonial path from failure to success. Attempts at centralization were first attempted with limited success under Charles I on the eve of the Civil War. Charles I tried to prevent merchant companies from running colonies, and instead preferred colonies to be run by the state. The Commission for Foreign Plantations (1634-1641), headed by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury,

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<sup>14</sup> Karen Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Canny, “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30.

began the process of moving British colonies in America out of the private and into royal hands,<sup>16</sup> and was a tool to enforce royal control over the colonies. The commission's power included the ability "to make laws and orders for the government of the English colonies in foreign parts; to impose penalties and imprisonment for offenses in ecclesiastical matters; to remove governors and require an account of their government; to appoint judges and magistrates, and to establish courts, both civil and ecclesiastical; to hear and determine all manner of complaints from the colonies; to have power over all charters and patents, and to revoke those surreptitiously or unduly obtained."<sup>17</sup> The Laud Commission began a centralizing program that looked to put decision making into the hands of a few and out of the realm of the colonists. Arguably the most famous example of the struggle between crown and corporation is under the Laud Commission was the attempt to recall the charter and seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company. However, the commission was functionally impotent and its power only existed on paper, however, the spirit in which the commission was created signaled a change in colonial theory.<sup>18</sup>

Despite, or maybe in spite of the Crown's failure at centralization, process expanded during the Interregnum when the government tried to turn the country's trade

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714* (Rutledge: London and New York: 2010 reprint, 1961 2nd ed.), 39. Hill called it the Committee for Plantations.

<sup>17</sup> Charles M. Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of Trade and Plantations, 1622-1675* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1908), 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> Charles M. Andrews argued that the Laud Commission "played a comparatively inconspicuous part during the seven years its existence and had gained prominence in the history of our subject out of all proportion to its importance." Andres called the commission "practically impotent." Charles M. Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of Trade and Plantation*, 17.

into a state monopoly.<sup>19</sup> After decades of little to no central government control over the colonies, the Council of State was founded in 1649 to handle trade and colonial matters. The Council of State continued with its duties until 1655, when a new and separate commission was created to handle only trade matters. With the restoration of royal rule under Charles II in 1660, the handling of colonial and trade affairs reverted back to a committee within the Privy Council, but colonial control was removed from the Privy Council within eight years.<sup>20</sup> Responding to the troubles of domestic politics and political crises, Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, and Charles II sought to centralize colonial control.

It was only after the establishment of the English Caribbean slave system, and the change in English domestic politics resulting from the English Civil War, that the bulk of Anglo-North American colonies became successful and profitable. The Caribbean plantation owners purchased North American products which were delivered by a carrying trade supplied by the mainland colonies. North American colonies became colonies of the Caribbean colonies, supplying them with the raw materials needed to feed the sugar factories powered by human slave labor. My conclusion calls for a new examining of the origins North American mainland colonies in regard to their reliance and need on slavery to establish successful settlements.

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<sup>19</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, 155.

<sup>20</sup> See Ian Kenneth Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration 1696-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

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