The origins of American history in the early modern English Atlantic world

Ian J. Aebel
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THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH ATLANTIC WORLD

BY

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DISSERTATION

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History

December, 2011
This dissertation has been examined and approved

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Date
To my family—Susan, Aemilia, and Sabrina—for without you there is no reason to write.

"These late-night studies of mine—such as they are—I have decided to dedicate to you alone, the best choice of all that I might make . . . your brilliance will illuminate my little labors as the rest of the stars take light from the sun." Polydore Vergil, *De inventoribus rerum* (1499)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As Margaret MacMillan recently articulated in The Uses and Abuses of History, “history is something we all do, even if, like the man who discovered he was writing prose, we do not always realize it.”¹ My journey to the summit of historical education has been both a strange and exciting passage. Like Petrarch as he ascended Mount Ventoux, my road has been long and winding. Yet at each moment when I was tempted to wander from the path, there were friends, advisors, and patrons who directed my gaze back towards the goal. I received financial support from a number of generous institutions as I worked to complete this dissertation. The University of New Hampshire Department of History supported me for four years with a Teaching Assistant Fellowship, and allowed an uninterrupted year of research and writing through an Atlantic History Dissertation Fellowship. In addition, they provided research and travel funding on numerous occasions through the Gunst-Wilcox Travel Fund. Maris Madden from the University of New Hampshire Financial Aid office was an excellent ally at critical times. The University of New Hampshire Graduate School was also instrumental in providing funds for conference travel and research, awarding me several travel grants and two Summer Teaching Assistant Fellowships. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History provided funding to spend six

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As all historians understand, our work is only as good as the sources we have access to. I have had the privilege to work at many fine institutions over the past six years that have played a crucial role the production of this dissertation. The University of New Hampshire Dimond Library has been a wonderful home for both research and writing. I have spend many happy hours wandering its plentiful stacks, and when a book was not available, the Interlibrary Loan and Boston Library Consortium Departments came to my rescue with surprising
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provided invaluable assistance and recommendations during the research process.

Historical writing is at many times a solitary pursuit. Luckily, I had the opportunity to share both the successes and roadblocks of this project with others along the way. My colleagues Erika Briesacher, Ryan Clasby, James Findley, Carrie Hill, Summer Little, and Kate Stewart from the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville History M.A. program have been great support as we finish our studies at separate ports of call across the globe. Mike Hill has been a particularly good friend in lending an ear in the evenings to listen to my ruminations and wonderings. My fellow graduate students in the University of New Hampshire History Department have been excellent companions during these past several years, sharing conversations, advice, and the occasional Diet Pepsi. Ted Andrews, Sarah Batterson, Jordan Fansler, Jeff Fortin, Mary Fuhrer, Aykut Kilinc, Alison Mann, Deena Parmelee, Chris Pastore, Brice Pearce, Lesley Rains, Katie Simpson, and Emily Steltzer exemplify the wonderful scholars that are quickly making UNH one of the premier history graduate programs in the country. I am especially grateful for the solidarity of the two students who arrived with me in 2005, Jess Parr and Erica Seifert.

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The mentorship and guidance of my professors has been instrumental in helping me become an historian. Many years ago, John Roy helped me realize that history was more than simply names and dates, while Rick Manwaring showed me how to make writing fun. The world is a much sadder place without
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At the University of New Hampshire, I was blessed to study with and learn
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Ian J Aebel
Kinderhook, Illinois
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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES ON THE TEXT

I have left the original texts as written or published most of the time in regards to spelling and punctuation. However, I have modernized the spelling of the early modern i, j, and s. I have also silently expanded any early modern contractions as they appear. Dates have been left as they were presented in the records.

AHR: *The American Historical Review*

CJCD: *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*


DNB: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*


EAS: *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*

EEBO: Early English Books Online


JAH: *The Journal of American History*

JCBL: The John Carter Brown Library

NA: British National Archives, Kew, England

OED: Oxford English Dictionary Online


RAH: Reviews in American History

WMQ: The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series
ABSTRACT

THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN HISTORY IN THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH ATLANTIC WORLD

by

Ian J Aebel

University of New Hampshire, December, 2011

This dissertation is the story of how the English wrote the history of America between c. 1500 and c. 1700. Utilizing printed and manuscript sources, it argues that writing American history allowed English writers to navigate, negotiate, and contest the terms of a developing Atlantic empire. In doing so, the English created a vision of America to compete with the dominant Spanish narrative by the end of the seventeenth century.

The existence of America gave the English an opportunity to explore the prospect of overseas empire. After the Columbian encounter, English thinkers and writers transformed their historical methodology to accommodate the existence of America and write its history in a distinctive English fashion. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Anglo-American histories imagined an English America in a Spanish Atlantic world. Translating Spanish-American texts and verifying them using humanist principles allowed the English to metaphysically construct the New World on their own terms. During the reign of Elizabeth, English writers began to carve their own space in America outside the dominion
of the Spanish, both physically and textually, as they invented an English America. In the seventeenth century, the historical methods crafted by English scholars to deal with America began to clash with the experience English colonists were gaining in the Anglo-American colonies. The narratives they created stressed English authority to settle the New World and the importance of establishing a permanent presence in America. By the end of the century, a new imperial history developed in England in response to anti-American sentiments at home. Their arguments, which stressed the economic benefits of American empire to the detriment of colonists' agency in creating those benefits, pushed colonial writers to construct their own histories of America in an attempt to define more favorable terms of empire. The American histories they crafted on both sides of the Atlantic began to find a continental readership, competing directly with the dominant Spanish-American narrative.
INTRODUCTION

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND EMPIRE

Thinking and Writing about Anglo-American Historiography

"It is not always easy to discover how a historian develops his approach to history. A historian ... is a subtle compound resulting from the fusion of various ingredients such as his natural temperament, intellectual capacity and education, experience in life, and consequent views on the world and on mankind." Lewis Hanke (1952)¹

“So when I think of the individual, I am always inclined to see him imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distance both behind him and before. In historical analysis as I see it, rightly or wrongly, the long run always wins in the end." Fernand Braudel (1965)²

Prologue: Barlow’s America

Writing from his home in Hartford, Connecticut in 1787, Joel Barlow put the finishing touches on a manuscript he hoped would be would one day be considered an American Homerian epic. The Vision of Columbus, revised and republished two decades later as The Columbiad, presented a pre-Constitutional


vision of American history in the United States. Barlow described Columbus as a tragic hero, conflicted with the knowledge of both the glory of his discovery and the fate of millions of Americans who would soon meet an unpleasant end.

"Columbus, with a sigh, Cast o'er the hapless climes his moisten'd eye, And thus return'd: Oh, hide me in the tomb; Why should I live to view the impending doom?" In spite of the evils of conquest that came initially, it was Columbus' voyages that led to a rise in the ambition of the English to create an empire to rival the Spanish Empire. It was, therefore, in a Columbian context that Barlow narrated the English victory two hundred years prior in the English Channel, extolling the virtue of Albion's seed. "High on the tallest deck, majestie shone Great Raleigh, pointing tow'rd the western sun; His eye, bent forward, ardent and sublime, Seem'd piercing nature and evolving time; Beside him stood a globe, whose figures traced A future empire in each wilder'd waste." From the perch of hindsight, he allowed Columbus to witness the growth of an Anglo-American empire, its triumph in the Seven Years' War, and the birth of the United States. Indeed, Columbus' vision extended onward beyond Barlow's own time in

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4 Barlow, The Vision of Columbus (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin for Barlow, 1787), p. 130.

5 Ibid., p. 140.
Figure 1. Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus*, manuscript title page. Image courtesy of the Collection of the New-York Historical Society.  

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a late eighteenth century version of Manifest Destiny, as he foresaw a fire of
freedom born in the United States spreading across the globe, leading towards
world peace and harmony. The United States of America was the culmination of
Columbus’ initial encounter; in Barlow’s estimation, the formation of this new
country would be the beginning of a new era in the history of the world.

While introducing the work to his readers, Barlow touched upon a curious
historiographical trend. He noted that “the Spanish historians, who treat of the
discovery and settlement of South-America, are very little known in the United
States; and Doctor Robertson’s history of that country ... is not yet reprinted in
America.”

Although born in Connecticut, he held some of the British
assumptions about the backwardness of “colonial” intellectual culture while also
articulating a fresh beginning in U.S. historical writing. Heavily involved in the
new country’s burgeoning print culture, Barlow sought to establish a unique
literary tradition. He assumed that his readers would not be familiar with the
wider historical narrative of the Americas, given that he thought there were few
printed accounts of the entire Western Hemisphere originating in the United
States. He believed that “American readers” would not be able to understand the
complex allusions within his text because they had neither access nor the
inclination to study such things.

We now know the error in Barlow’s argument; his subscribers would have had access to a large number of American histories,

7 Barlow, The Vision of Columbus, p. vii.

8 Ibid.
both North and South, including Robertson's. Barlow's statement, however, belies a not-so-subtle shift in the meaning of America. Robertson and his British counterparts used the term “Americans” interchangeably to refer to any of the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. Barlow differentiated between those outside the United States and those within. Americans were citizens of the United States of America and were different than those outside its borders. Harkening back to the providential nature of its origins expressed by earlier writers such as Thomas More, Richard Hakluyt, and John Winthrop, Barlow believed the United States was a special nation, set apart by God for a higher purpose in leading humanity towards a better future.

Barlow was hardly unique in his argument for American Exceptionalism; his contemporaries also seized upon this thread, and generations of U.S. historians would continue it well into the twentieth century. However, he does illustrate an important dialectic. According to Barlow, Columbus was a British hero as well as a Spanish one, and the events he set in motion were most fully seized upon by the English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the British in the eighteenth. The Anglo-American colonial past was essential in understanding the developing character of the new nation. Nonetheless, there

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was also a profound disconnect with the past in Barlow's work. The United States of America was a new nation; indeed, it was a new type of nation, both singular and plural in construction. Unlike its counterparts in Europe, Barlow argued, this nation would not be bound by the past. The United States was open to chart its own history free from the burden of historical precedent; its empire would be one of its citizens own making. Barlow believed his argument was a statement on the future of the United States, but subconsciously he was channeling an Anglo-American historical culture nearly three centuries in the making. The Columbian encounter gave English thinkers and writers the opportunity to imagine an idealized English society and empire; the histories of America that they wrote portrayed the New World as a conduit to a new beginning and better future for England. A century later as English colonial society began to develop in North America and the Caribbean basin, this theme continued in the histories written on both sides of the Atlantic. The history of America for these English Atlantic writers was not only the story of what and why things happened, but also contained historians' hopes for what might happen and arguments for what should happen. By the early eighteenth century, historians in a larger British Atlantic world would use their histories to negotiate the terms of a developing empire and advocate the proper course for the future. *The Vision of Columbus*, while written in the early days of a new republic, was a creature of the not so distant Anglo-American past.
Historiography and Empire

Historiography is the basis of historical writing. At its most essential level, history is crafted when individuals study the words of the past and contextualize them within the world they were created to form an interpretation of what happened. Over time, competing narratives are constructed on a single topic, each in conversation with each other. Those conversations are the historiography, the history of historical interpretations of a topic, spanning the temporal spectrum involved. Modern historical study is grounded in a firm understanding of relevant historiography; our arguments can be made because we understand who and what it is we are arguing against. However, inherent to historiography is the act of writing; the Oxford English Dictionary defines historiography as “the writing of history; written history.”¹¹ Without written accounts, historiography cannot exist; it is exceedingly difficult to understand what past societies thought about a topic if the people within them did not write about it. Indeed, beyond what the physical remnants of the past can tell us about a topic, if it was not written about, we rarely know of its existence.

The Columbian encounter and the subsequent introduction of America into the collective global consciousness left early modern European scholars with a serious intellectual problem: how do we account for the historical existence of America?¹² Turning first to their oldest written sources, Europeans could find

¹¹ OED.

¹² There were, of course, many other problems; see J. H. Elliott, The Old World and the New, 1492-1650, Canto Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University
very little to substantiate the reality of an entity that many began calling the “New World.” It was apparent to many observers, however, that the New World was very old; perhaps as old or older than their own societies. As such, Europeans needed to construct frameworks in which to intellectually grapple with America. The history of America written by Europeans would be new; the American historiography they created would be unique. But how could they write a history of America if there was not a written record to base their accounts upon? They would turn to their own traditions to shape the narratives they constructed and understand the accounts of America that they read. Reading the histories of ancient Greece and Rome, Europeans found clues to suggest that perhaps the New World was not as novel as they might have first imagined. Passages placed in the context of America made more sense than they might have a century before. But more than antecedents to the Columbian encounter, the experiences of Greek and Roman conquest gave Europeans the opportunity to think about America in the context of empire. The subsequent Iberian activity in the New World in the sixteenth century cemented America’s place as a proving ground for European empires; the histories of America that would follow would be written in this context, whether justifying the activity or criticizing it.

The European expansion into the Western Hemisphere occurred during a period of enormous change; the fall of Constantinople forced societies hungry for Asian commodities to search for new routes to the east, and the proliferation of

Press, 1992, orig. 1970), for a good introduction to those issue. A more thorough account of Elliott’s work can be found below.
the printing press made knowledge more accessible than it had ever been before. It is logical that a society consumed with printed texts would begin to privilege the written word over testimony and experience. Humanism, as we will see shortly, allowed early modern scholars to authenticate American knowledge and write American histories that readers could trust. This dissertation is the story of how the English began to write their own history of America, and the historiographical tools they created to construct those Anglo-American narratives. The historical language they produced allowed the English to begin to consider what an American empire might mean to their own national development; after successfully establishing colonies in the New World, their histories considered the past, present, and future ramifications of an English empire in America.

Over the course of the following five chapters, we will explore two related questions: why did the English begin writing the history of America, and how did Anglo-American history develop over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? The impetus behind these questions originated in the pages of a David Armitage essay. Celebrating the magisterial *European Americana* catalogue in 1991 at the John Carter Brown Library, Armitage examined the role the New World played in British historical thought by comparing the works of late sixteenth century writer Richard Hakluyt and late eighteenth century historian William Robertson, demonstrating how each incorporated America into the British historical consciousness.\(^\text{13}\) Armitage’s essay pointed out a curious congruency between

\(^{13}\) David Armitage, “The New World and British Historical Thought: From Richard Hakluyt to William Robertson,” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-*
sixteenth century and contemporary historiography: scholarship on Spanish American historiography dwarfed material that focused on Anglo-American historiography. Just as Hakluyt noted that the Spanish had the "best philosophers, historiographers and geographers" focused on the production on American history, so too did Armitage allude to a modern historiographical gap, noting "there is as yet no study comparable to [David] Brading, *The First America*, for British America."\(^{14}\) Brading's study, spanning five centuries, argues that creole patriotism emerged early in the seventeenth century, rooted in the Spanish historical narratives of the sixteenth century.\(^{15}\)

Brading's argument is superbly crafted and presented. He notes that "no matter how much Spanish America depended on Europe for its art forms, literature and general culture, its chroniclers and patriots succeeded in creating an intellectual tradition that, by reason of its engagement with the historical experience and contemporary reality of America, was original, idiosyncratic, complex, and quite distinct from any European model."\(^{16}\) For Brading, American identity was created through the intellectual output of a group of individuals who

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\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 53, quoting Richard Hakluyt.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., pp. 5.
saw Spanish America as being a unique social and cultural area. His work is successful because he puts the histories he examines within the social, political, and intellectual context in which they were produced. Other studies of Spanish and Spanish-American historiography and print culture that have followed in its wake have also yielded fruitful results.

Having chosen to examine Anglo-American historiography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the justification of this choice is discussed below), it was probable that the work would not replicate Brading’s findings about Spanish America; the research for this study has borne that assumption out. While Brading was the methodological inspiration for this dissertation, the work has


been in conversation with several other texts. More than four decades ago, John H. Elliott broadly sketched out the intellectual assimilation of America into the European consciousness in *The Old World and the New*, a collection of the 1969 Wiles Lectures given at The Queen's University of Belfast.\(^{20}\) Elliott's lectures have shaped the development of early modern European and American history, as he demonstrated that both approaches needed to be viewed through the lens of Atlantic history to be completely understood. Specifically focusing on the impact of America on Europe rather than Europe on America, Elliott argued that although "the initial excitement of discovery" profoundly affected Europeans, the image of "America tended to recede from the consciousness of many Europeans," at least until the middle of the seventeenth-century.\(^{21}\) A generation of students took to filling in Elliott's broad outline of early modern Atlantic history, culminating in Elliott's own comparison of the British and Spanish Atlantic worlds.\(^{22}\)

In spite of the fact that nearly four decades of scholarship have followed Elliott's lectures, the enormity of the questions posed in *The Old World and the New*...
New means there is still much work to be done. In particular, Elliott recently identified three major areas of inquiry that remained unanswered in the wake of *The Old World and the New*: “the degree of interest generated by news from the newfound world, . . . the assimilation of this world into the European consciousness, and . . . the transforming effect of America on that consciousness.” As he later noted, “we should perhaps be seeking to explain the degree of European interest, rather than lack of interest, in America.” In the shadow of Brading’s and Elliott’s work, this project began as an attempt to ascertain how the English assimilated knowledge of America during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, focusing on the production of the history of America within the English Atlantic world. The fact that the English did not write as much about America in the sixteenth century as other Europeans was particularly intriguing. The work of David Beers Quinn on early sixteenth century Anglo-American voyages reveals that the English had as much interest in the New World as other competing states during this period, but waited nearly a century to establish a permanent colonial presence.


24 Ibid., pp. 396.

Why did the English take so long to begin writing about America in earnest? In *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, David Armitage points out "it is notable that those European countries that accumulated the earliest overseas empires were also those that earliest consolidated their states." The relationship between empire and state, using this example, was inseparable. After discussing the tendency of British people to separate Britain from its empire, Armitage argues "that it is essential to integrate the history of state and empire if British history, not least in the early modern period, is to be properly

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understood." It was "ideology," Armitage demonstrates, that "provided just such a link between the processes of empire-building and state-formation in the early-modern period." 

Yet for Armitage, the English did not begin to create an ideology of empire in earnest, at least in an American sense, until Richard Hakluyt became an active advocate for American empire in the 1580s, which corresponded with the first serious attempts by Walter Raleigh to establish a permanent English presence in the New World. Why did it take nearly a century for the English to demonstrate their interest in America textually when other European nations such as the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian and German speaking peoples wrote continuously throughout the sixteenth century? Although the physical reality of the Iberian presence played a role in their written Americana, American dominion played no role in other areas. And while the consolidation of the Iberian kingdoms in the fifteenth century might explain their success in establishing overseas empires in the sixteenth century, it does not explain the interest in

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30 On the German speaking example, see Christine Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World: Renaissance Encounters with the Strange and Marvelous* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008).
America by other fractured European territories.\textsuperscript{31} Given the amount of American activity, though modest by Iberian standards, by English fishermen, merchants, and adventurers, we do not have a very good explanation for the lack of Anglo-Americana in the sixteenth century.

What if the discovery and proliferation of knowledge of America was related to changing methods of historical thought in Renaissance Europe and sixteenth century England? Humanism, the scholarly language and soul of the Renaissance, arrived later in England than it did into other European states and kingdoms.\textsuperscript{32} Humanism itself is a difficult concept to grapple with. As a scholarly movement, it was multifaceted and schizophrenic; between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, humanism meant many different things to various groups. But there is a single element that was shared by humanists across the temporal spectrum: a return to original sources.\textsuperscript{33} Around the beginning of the second millennium, scholars began to rediscover the works of ancient Greek and Roman writers, and what they found in those works profoundly disturbed them. The political order ancient writers such as Aristotle espoused was far outside the Christian worldview held by medieval thinkers. In order to unify ancient


philosophies with medieval Christianity, thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas
developed scholasticism, a system of learning based on the proof of a concept
through the examination of opposing viewpoints. But in the process of
reconciling ancient and contemporary wisdom, scholastic thinkers moved away
from the original sources and more towards commentary on those sources.
Textual authority gravitated away from primary texts and more towards
secondary works. In the historical context of medieval England, scholastic
thought meant that writers focused much more on testimony, experience, and
tradition in their sources; history was written to both confirm the attitudes of the
present and anachronistically link the past with contemporary times. As such,
foreign sources and ideas outside the contemporary intellectual milieu were not
trusted.

Humanism, then, was a response to scholasticism in that it strove to
understand the ancient texts for what they were, not relying on commentary and
tradition for an understanding of the text. “For the humanists,” Léon-E. Halkin
has argued, “it was a matter of adapting the language without falsifying it to a
new framework, a new situation. The mental universe of the humanists was not
that of Aristotle and Cicero, Plato and Augustine: it was the contemporary world
of Francis I and Leo X, of Michelangelo and Christopher Columbus.”

Humanism allowed early modern thinkers and writers to intellectually grapple

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with their changing world. For sixteenth century English historians, humanism allowed them to move beyond the scholastic inhibitions and trust the foreign sources needed to write a history of America.

Armitage has argued that the Reformation was really the end of the Renaissance, and any link between “the age of reconnaissance [and] the era of renaissance is one of the enduring myths of modernity.”36 However, when humanism arrived in England during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, so too came the Renaissance. And with humanism came the need to travel, which was an essential component in the journey of life so many humanists espoused.37 Like Homer’s Odysseus, humanists believed that exiling one’s self away from the familiar through travel, whether by an actual physical journey or by metaphysically experiencing another land through a text, would help them better understand the world that they lived in. It was in this intellectual environment that the Columbian encounter was made. Andrew Fitzmaurice has examined the role humanism played in English colonial philosophy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, coming to the conclusion that “the early period of English interest in New World colonisation is better understood from the perspective of the preceding centuries of the European Renaissance than from the following


centuries of British Empire. As Anthony Grafton argued in *New Worlds*, *Ancient Texts*, the discovery of America turned humanistic knowledge on its head, as infallible ancient authority was proven erroneous. The Columbian encounter revitalized the Renaissance throughout Europe, as George Hugo Tucker has persuasively demonstrated.

The influx of humanistic culture and scholarship in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century brought the Renaissance into England. And as humanist thought slowly replaced scholastic learning, the English began to write more about America. The first European American historian, Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (or Peter Martyr, as he was known in England), was an Italian humanist in service to Queen Isabella of Spain. Martire’s work paved the way for other Spanish American histories that followed. It was humanists who spread the work of Hernán Cortés and other Spanish actors in the New World. The successor

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of Martire and predecessor to Richard Eden and Richard Hakluyt, Giovanni Battista Ramusio, collected tales of American voyages so continental bound humanists could travel to America vicariously. Columbus' ability to articulate what he had encountered, to write the first history of America, made further exploration and the creation of an overseas empire possible.

Humanism was textually based; ideas, first written and then printed, circulated through Europe and formed the basis of the scholarly movement. The problem lies in understanding the relationship between empire building and writing; Tucker notes poignantly that “readers and scholars of Renaissance literature and culture have not failed to note in that age of geographic and textual discovery the fundamental link that demands to be made between the phenomenon, or the idea, of travel, on the one hand, and the very process of reading or writing, on the other hand.” One could travel to the New World many times, but if that person could not textually relate the experience, the events in question lacked credibility. We have a rich textual archive of fifteenth century Spanish American voyages because the actors involved and the people surrounding them wrote about their experiences. We only have snippets of evidence from people such as late fifteenth century Bristol fisherman, the Cabots,

Also see Angel Delgado-Gomez, Spanish Historical Writing About the New World, 1493-1700 (Providence, RI: John Carter Brown Library, 1994); Kagan, Clio and the Crown; and Maria M. Portuondo, Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

44 Tucker, Homo Viator, pp. 9-11.

or any of the English voyages in the first half of the sixteenth century because they did not write about their experiences. Why were the Spanish writing about their experiences in the New World and the English were not? To answer that question, we need to examine how and why the English first began to write about America; in particular, how and why they began to write the history of America. The development of an Anglo-American historical enterprise and its relationship to the creation of an Anglo-American empire will be explored in the chapters ahead.

**Constructing a Theoretical Vision of Anglo-American Historiography**

The ways in which we organize history have as much to do with the outcome as the evidence we use. Good history requires a solid theoretical approach in order to explore all of the possibilities within an evidentiary base. As Thomas L. Haskell argued over a decade ago, “we historians weave words into explanatory schemes and throw them like fishermen’s nets into the unfathomable depths of the past. What we catch depends as much on the shape, weave, and texture of our conceptual nets as on what the sea contains.”

In her study of twentieth century United States historiographical development, Ellen Fitzpatrick noted that “few seem to doubt that, whatever its merits, the new history is a product of relatively recent events. However, there is ample reason to think otherwise.” The history of English historians of America is not a new subject.

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In the past two centuries, Anglo-American historiography has been approached numerous times by historians, but typically the evidence has been viewed in temporal isolation from the whole, an examination of a single or group of texts within a limited time span. Furthermore, the evidence has been viewed through a nationalistic framework that has been narrowly geographically focused, ignoring early modern English historiographical developments. Hence, early

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49 To be fair, however, historiographical studies focusing on early modern England have also ignored Anglo-American historical writing. See Herbert Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944); Thomas N. Corns, “Literature and History,” in *A Companion to Stuart Britain*, edited by Barry Coward (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), pp. 166-186; Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and
modern Anglo-American historiography has been defined by contemporary historians as histories written about Anglo-American colonies. Indeed, the factual credulity of the sources have often determined their use in evaluating the historiography. In doing so, early modern meanings are sacrificed for contemporary sensibilities. In this attempt to understand the development of the early modern Anglo-American historical enterprise, the creation of a theoretical and “conceptual net” has been necessary to address these issues, emulating Haskell’s maxim that “the best history has always been that which combines

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empirical rigor with deep and adventurous thinking about the best way to conceptualize and frame the events being related.⁵⁰

That is not to say that historians have completely ignored the relationship between early modern English and American historiographical traditions. In the past century, historians have confronted the complexities of Anglo-American historiography with increasing frequency.⁵¹ Anglo-American historical literature

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⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

has captured the imagination of readers since its inception in the early sixteenth-century, but in the past several decades scholars have begun to analyze its function within the larger early modern textual world. Most recently, Catherine Armstrong has explored the role of texts in the creation of an American mentalité in the early modern English Atlantic world. Armstrong argues that the creation of a body of Anglo-American literature in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century English Atlantic world helped to produce a "concept of empire, with America at its cornerstone," which "was implanted in English minds." In developing America in the English imagination, she concludes that these texts were instrumental in the creation of an English Atlantic world; she notes that "this awakening of belief that America could be an area where the English might trade and settle led to the establishment of a lasting colony in the Chesapeake, and the migration of thousands of willing, enthusiastic people to Virginia and New England."
The English thinkers and writers who wrote the history of America in the sixteenth and seventeenth century shared some common goals. Nearly without exception, this dissertation will demonstrate, Anglo-American historians were advocates of an English empire in America. In writing about first the Spanish experiences in America, and then the English activities there, they pressed for both private and governmental support of American colonies as a means of increasing England’s power. They used their histories to attempt to shape the course of the developing Anglo-American empire, developing colonial strategies aimed at both personal and national gain. Although assessing the success of their attempts is difficult, the fact that they attempted to exert some control over the larger forces of empire demonstrates that the writers of Anglo-American histories believed their works could be influential. But most importantly, they constructed an historical language through which they could understand America and England’s place within it. From their first tentative attempts after the Columbian encounter to the beginning of the eighteenth century and beyond, English writers on both sides of the Atlantic create a uniquely English version of American history that would compete with the dominant Spanish version by the end of the seventeenth century.

Building upon the work of previous scholars on the subject, “The Origins of American History in the Early Modern English Atlantic World” is the story of how the English developed and constructed an American historical culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is important that we understand the term “America” in an early modern sense; only after the independence of the United
States was achieved did “America” and “Americans” begin to be appropriated by U.S. writers and was transformed to mean the United States and citizens of the United States.\textsuperscript{55} Just as much in sixteenth century London as in seventeenth century Boston or Jamestown, when an individual talked or wrote about America, he or she was referring to the entire New World. Specificity was used to describe individual locations and colonial entities. America itself was thought to have some common elements that held the disparate portions together, typically in a positive manner; this idea would only begin to change in the eighteenth century as European Enlightenment figures began to highlight America as a degenerative place and creole elements in colonial societies began to display patriotic

sentiments. Consequently, when discussing America, this dissertation will be referring to the entirety of the New World. For similar reasons, when referring to "Americans," this dissertation is using the term in the early modern sense to mean the indigenous people of America. The semantics involved in calling one's self an American amongst English colonists and metropolitan observers would begin to change by the end of the seventeenth century, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Five. However, during the majority of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Americans were Indians to the English.

It is also vital to understand what history meant to early modern English thinkers and writers. Since the professionalization of history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, our understanding of what history is has remained constant, although the meaning of and approach to writing history has been anything but static. But during the early modern period, history and


historical thought were in flux. Just as Andrew Hadfield has observed about
literature in sixteenth century England, history too “was not a clear and distinctly
identifiable category of writing which would be employed to deal with certain
themes in a particular way.”58 History in sixteenth and seventeenth century
England was an experimental genre, as writers used numerous devices to relate
the past.59 Renaissance humanists began to look beyond the medieval chronicle
and design texts with purposes beyond merely noting what happened in the
past.60 In doing so, as Gianna Pomota and Nancy G. Siraisi have argued,
“disciplinary boundaries were largely permeable.”61 Known as the ars historica,
history encompassed the ecclesiastical, geographical, and literary arts, as well as


59 For a general discussion of early modern history and historiography, see
Breisach, Historiography; Eric Cochrane, Historians and Historiography in the
Italian Renaissance (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981);
Margaret Meserve, Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Arnaldo Momigliano, The
Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 1990); Jacob Soll, Publishing the Prince: History, Reading, and
the Birth of Political Criticism (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press,
2005); and Woolf, A Global History of History.

60 E. B. Fryde, Humanism and Renaissance Historiography (London: The
Hambledon Press, 1983); and Kelley, Foundations of Modern Historical
Scholarship.

61 Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi, “Introduction,” in Historia: Empiricism
and Erudition in Early Modern Europe, edited by Pomata and Siraisi (Cambridge,
the natural world and the record of the past. An individual living in sixteenth or seventeenth century England or English America might write the history of America in a letter to friend, a short treatise describing an event, a geographical description of the New World, a physical account of plants and animals, a poem, or a text that included all of the above. In short, there was no fixed definition in early modern England as to what a history might be or how it might be constructed. This dissertation factors in the multifarious nature of early modern historical thought, defining American history as any text, printed or manuscript, that described the American past in any way, regardless of the disciplinary boundaries. While this definition broadens the spectrum of Anglo-American historical literature considerably, it is more true to what early modern English thinkers and writers believed American history was.

The source material to draw from for this dissertation is especially rich and diverse. In addition to published histories, there is a vast amount of archival evidence to draw from. From unpublished manuscripts to colonial correspondence to diaries, Anglo-American historical thought has been well preserved, especially for the period after 1585. This dissertation will utilize a

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63 Several fires over the intervening centuries have destroyed a great deal of the material from the early Tudor period, which may account for the dearth of archival evidence from this period. However, it is important to note that the nineteenth century organizers of the Colonial Series at the Public Records Office were much more concerned with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thus the earlier material is scattered throughout the collections and exceedingly
wide variety of materials to analyze and understand the development of the Anglo-American historical enterprise. Nonetheless, the study will not be exhaustive. From the sixteenth century onward, each era studied could warrant an entire dissertation unto its own; such is the volume of material present. An all-inclusive survey would be unwieldy, and it would draw away from the major questions this dissertation attempts to answer. Consequently, each chapter will focus on the key texts, mostly printed and published, that highlight the larger historical issues at hand.

Nonetheless, the major sources discussed will be contextualized within the larger body of literature from whence they came. This work has been heavily influenced by the Cambridge school of historical thought, which seeks to properly place ideas firmly within the larger societies that they came from. Instead of mere texts, as Quentin Skinner has advocated, we will deal with ideologies within the texts; indeed, Skinner notes that by studying "the context of any major work of political philosophy is ... to equip ourselves ... with a way of gaining a greater insight into its author's meaning than we can ever hope to achieve simply from reading the text itself 'over and over again.'" Like political philosophy, history itself is filled with authorial background noise. By understanding how the ideas within were developed, where their origins were, and why they gained primacy difficult to find. Historians since World War II have mined the P.R.O. and now the British National Archives to scratch the surface of sixteenth century archival Anglo-Americana, a great deal of concerted effort is still needed. See Chapter One, note 80.

over other ideas, we can begin to tease out the contours of the developing
historiographies.

Temporally, our focus will be in the Tudor and Stuart periods, roughly the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This Braudelian span of more than two
centuries serves several different purposes. Only an examination of the
development of Anglo-American historiography in the longue durée can reveal
the patterns and conjunctures necessary to understand its meaning. Historians
have studied many of these literatures in isolation; contextualizing each period
within the whole allows the work to draw conclusions it might not otherwise be
able to make. Additionally, examining American historiography in the Tudor and
Stuart eras allows us to contrast divergent eras. Sixteenth century histories
focused more on foreign sources and imagined outcomes, while seventeenth
century histories had the experience of English colonies to draw upon.

The study ends at the beginning of the eighteenth century for several
critical reasons. First of all, the available literature multiplies significantly in the
eighteenth century. British Americana in this period is conservatively three to
four times as much as the entirety of English Americana in the sixteenth and
seventeenth century. But more importantly, the focus of the historical literature
shifts dramatically in the eighteenth century. If the sixteenth century was about
envisioning an Anglo-American empire and the seventeenth century was about
constructing it, the eighteenth century becomes much more about grappling with
an existing and evolving empire and the dramatic changes that occur in the
second half of the period. The ideal temporal framework for this dissertation is
the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the eighteenth century is fodder for a future study.

Equally significant in my analysis is the Annales school of thought, especially developed through the work of Fernand Braudel. Braudel sought historical understanding through a *histoire total*, an attempt to analyze all available evidence from a multitude of different fields. In *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, he contextualized the period broadly through geographic, social, and political history. Even though Braudel himself characterized it as an “incomplete study,” it is as complete of an historical work as can be written. Of particular importance to this dissertation is his work on space and time. Braudel wrote of the importance of boundaries, noting “to draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyze, and reconstruct it, in this case select, indeed adopt, a philosophy of history.” The histories we analyze will be English, as well as what English writers adopted as being English. Geographically, we will stay within England, but then push our gaze towards America as a whole. The way Anglo-American historians understood the similarities and differences in the physical and cultural geography between England and America will prove crucial in the analysis in the last half of this dissertation. Topically, we will study the histories in the context of empire. The

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67 Ibid.
transformation of Anglo-America from an empire of the mind to an empire on the ground serve as a contextual boundary to the analysis.

Two centuries is a short span of time in a Braudelian sense, but it does allow for the sort of longue durée analysis he advocated. “History,” Braudel wrote, “accepts and discovers multidimensional explanations, reaching, as it were, vertically from one temporal plane to another. And on every plane there are also horizontal relationships and connections.” As we chart a course through two centuries of Anglo-American historical writing, we will be able to connect our analysis across the temporal spans vertically and horizontally; how did ideas in Richard Eden’s work find their way into John Ogilby’s narrative, or where did John Oldmixon’s and Robert Beverley’s quarrel begin? Indeed, this is crucial to understanding the social circulation of historical knowledge as it traveled through space and time in the early modern English Atlantic. Just as we scrutinize the movement of ideas vertically and horizontally, we must understand how they circulated and evolved. Ideas here should be viewed a commodities; in a classic Marxian sense, the idea as a commodity circulates until it “has arrived at a situation in which it can serve as a use-value, [where] it falls out of the sphere of exchange into that of consumption.” As we will see, our historians took and borrowed what they needed from each other quite liberally. But in consuming the ideas, they often transformed them to suit their needs and their

68 Ibid., p. 16.

agendas. The subtlety of these transformations is especially evident in the seventeenth century, as ideas crisscrossed the Atlantic to serve different uses.

This brings us to the question of agency. Braudel openly questioned the agency of man when placed against the backdrop of the longue durée. “In historical analysis as I see it,” he argued, “rightly or wrongly, the long run always wins in the end.”\textsuperscript{70} If we are to take the Braudelian approach to agency, man may struggle against the forces of historical progress and change, but often these forces are out of his control, and he is powerless to stop them. Marx, on the other hand, saw in man the capacity for agency, although as he would write, “men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.”\textsuperscript{71} For both, larger historical forces were in many cases too much to overcome. Yet this study will argue that historians used the American histories they wrote to attempt to gain some agency over, to affect some change in direction to, the course of a developing Anglo-American empire. Some of their ideas were influential, while others were not consequential in the larger scheme of empire. Nonetheless, if we limit agency to the immediate world of the living, “the tradition of all the dead


generations weighs” less like a “nightmare” and more like a challenge. The historians we will encounter were certainly limited by the social, political, economic, religious, and historical circumstances in which they lived. Nonetheless, the histories they wrote gave them a voice in a world seemingly out of their control and they were able to attempt to exert some agency over their own lives, those around them, and in some cases, the larger world in which they lived. This study sees ideas as powerful forces, but only in the context of the individuals who created and used them.

Finally, this is dissertation is an intellectual history within an English Atlantic world. Atlantic history is in vogue in academia; histories deemed colonial a generation ago are now Atlantic. The overuse of the term itself has lent to a number of criticisms being leveled at it. Nonetheless, it is important to

72 Ibid.


74 For a thorough accounting of the criticisms of Atlantic history, see Greene and Morgan, eds., Atlantic History. Also see Alison Games, “Atlantic History:
understand this work in an Atlantic context. The Atlantic was the conduit through which information traveled from America to English historians. The ideas they expressed and created were influential in the construction of colonies in the seventeenth century. Those ideas traveled back and forth across the Atlantic as historians competed for a voice in the developing empire. Analyzing the historiographies in simply an English or American context fails to place both in the world that they belonged.

“The Origins of American History in the Early Modern English Atlantic World” takes some of its uniqueness from the proliferation of the idea of Atlantic history over the past several decades. As Bernard Bailyn has argued, it is important to understand that England and English America were part of a larger Atlantic world during the early modern period; “Britain was part, and an increasingly important part, of the entire Atlantic system that involved the interaction of the peoples of the four continents that frame the Atlantic basin.”

Intellectually, he points out, English writers can only be understood within the Atlantic context that they lived and wrote. The writers and thinkers we will examine in this dissertation saw themselves as part of a larger world than their current place of existence. Inherent in Anglo-American histories was the assumption that England was more than an island nation, but an empire whose

Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” in AHR, Vol. 111:3 (Jun., 2006), pp. 741-757


76 Ibid.
reach was destined to, and in by seventeenth century did in fact, spread across the Atlantic to America.

**The Origins of American History in the Early Modern English Atlantic World**

We begin the story of American history in the early modern English Atlantic world in Chapter One, “Recovering Empire: Writing American History in Early Tudor England,” in the decades prior to the Columbian encounter. As Henry Tudor assumed the throne in the final decades of the fifteenth century, English historiography was based on scholastic learning, with scholars skeptical of foreign sources. When news of the Columbian encounter reached the Tudor court and English thinkers, they began to try to make sense of an unexpected antipodes. However, they lacked the fundamental scholarly tools to grapple historically with America. First seeking answers in English historical chronicles and travel narratives, their reliance on local sources and firsthand testimony made early attempts at an Anglo-American history tentative and awkward. The influx of humanism into England provided the solution to the problem, particularly among a group of Oxford educated scholars highlighted by Thomas More. Interviewing the text like a living source, More was able to construct a unique Anglo-American history in *Utopia* that at once provided both an idealized version of the English state and a vision of an English empire in America.

In Chapter Two, “Imagining Empire: Writing an English America in an Iberian Atlantic,” we find that the growth of humanistic culture at Oxford and Cambridge, combined with the circulation of Spanish accounts of New World exploration and conquest, gave writers and thinkers in England an opportunity to
contemplate an English America. In particular, it was the ideas and scholarship of Desiderius Erasmus that helped the English articulate the role America might play in the creation of an English Empire. Building upon More’s *Utopia*, English writers began to construct a tentative Anglo-American historical narrative, utilizing textual sources but claiming ultimate authority in experience and testimony. Richard Eden would prove to be the crucial link in establishing the text as a trusted source through the translation of some of the most important continental American texts. At a time when most scholars were comfortable working in Latin and other European languages, the act of translation was a conscious attempt at colonizing American textual space. Eden searched contemporary American historiography to present his readers with what he judged to be the best and most trustworthy accounts. Rather than relying on testimony to establish textual authority, Eden verified the authenticity of the accounts by metaphysically traveling to America through the texts he was translating. Reading several different accounts in conjunction allowed him to compare stories and separate fiction from reality, creating trust in documents whose creators could not be questioned. Authenticity established, Eden could then present a vision of Spanish America that included England and a willing and ready partner.

Following the publication of Richard Eden’s *Decades of the Newe World* in 1555, the political situation in England and Europe changed to such a degree that the English America Eden imagined in a Spanish Atlantic world was no longer a possibility. Chapter Three, “Inventing Empire: Historiography and
Tradition in an Emerging English Atlantic," follows a group of writers and thinkers led by Richard Hakluyt who, seizing upon a rising national sentiment during the Elizabethan era, began to invent an entirely English narrative of American history that was thesis driven and heavily influenced by the work of Bartolomé de las Casas. By the end of the century, American history in England had been transformed; humanism had given the English the tools to understand America historically and sketch the parameters of what an English empire in America would look like.

The first half of the seventeenth century was a period of transition for English historians of America, as we see in Chapter Four, "Constructing Empire: The Historical Processes of the Anglo-American Colonial Enterprise." An Anglo-American historical culture more than a century in the making was forced to readjust itself as the English began the process of building their own permanent colonies in the New World. In order to support and build interest in the developing settlements, writers mixed the established historiographical traditions with newly crafted narratives to entice their readers. The early Anglo-American experiences became especially important, as historians utilized the stories of Madoc, Columbus, Henry VII, and the Cabots to their advantage. While methodologies of historians writing on both sides of the Atlantic began to shift the sixteenth century established protocol of textual authority, the use and utility of Spanish American historiography changed as well. By mid-century, individuals started to explore the potential of history in shaping the course of Anglo-American empire.
The nature of Anglo-American history changed in the last half of the seventeenth century. In Chapter Five, "Writing Empire: Producing the Anglo-American Narrative in the Late Seventeenth Century," a metropolitan centered Imperial American history began to emerge that viewed the importance of the colonies in the commodities they could produce. A response to criticism from opponents of American colonization, these histories saw the colonies as both peripheral and subservient. Additionally, the Imperial American histories looked at Spanish America as an opportunity for conquest, a process that the English had a duty to fulfill. Anglo-American colonists contested the Imperial vision by stressing the development and sophistication of the colonies, contextualized against their rough beginnings in the early seventeenth century. In particular, they focused on the agency of colonists as participants in empire rather than producers of commodities. This amalgamation of views played out in the larger Anglo-American narratives, creating a unique English version of American history.
CHAPTER ONE

RECOVERING EMPIRE

Writing American History in Early Tudor England

“Therefore, if we have no sources at all that we may follow, no one should be surprised if we have passed over certain things in silence . . .” Polydore Vergil (1499)

“These same English, his companions, say that they could bring so many fish that this kingdom would have no further need of Iceland ... But Messer Zoane has his mind set upon even greater things ... Before very long they say that his Majesty will equip some ships, and in addition he will give them all the malefactors, and they will go to that country and form a colony. By means of this they hope to make London a more important mart for spices than Alexandria.” Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino (1497)

Prologue: On Discovery and England

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, an educated English reader might have challenged Polydore Vergil’s statement on sources at the end of On Discovery. Vergil, an educated Italian and adopted Englishman who remained in service to the Tudor court over several decades, represented the progress of

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humanism into England and the changes that it brought to English society.\(^3\)

Humanism was a return to the literary culture of ancient Greece and Rome.\(^4\)

Beginning with Petrarch and set against the fourteenth-century Avignon Papacy, humanism quickly fused with Italian culture to form an intellectual tradition and educational methodology that would position itself directly in contrast to scholasticism, the major mode of late medieval thought and learning. Whereas tradition and commentary played an important role in scholastic authority, humanists sought verification through original textual sources. The fact that Vergil would not accept tradition and precedent as a means of validating a source might have encountered some objection from readers of the English chronicles, whose authority rested on trusting in known or living authors. The reason behind an English objection to textual authority is clear; late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century England had not yet completely assimilated humanism into its intellectual culture. Surrounded by sea and separated from the continent, the English were somewhat slower to accept the changes that Renaissance humanism had brought to other European states and kingdoms.

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\(^4\) “Humanism – the literary and moral expression of the Renaissance – was inconceivable without the study of literature. It clamoured for a return to the sources, direct contact with the texts, the personal experience of knowledge, and cared not a fig for verbal wrangling, subtle distinctions and quintessential abstractions. Humanism sought the study of ‘the languages’, that is to say, Latin and Greek in the best authors – the ancients – and in the best texts of those authors.” Halkin, *Erasmus*, p. 13.
As Henry Tudor’s forces put an end to Richard III on Bosworth Field in August 1485, England lay on the fringes of the known world, both geographically and politically. Late fifteenth-century editions of Ptolemy’s *Cosmographia* illustrate this point. In a map of the world produced in 1482 (Figure 2), England was relegated to the upper left hand corner, pressed against the unknown. Indeed, comparing Ptolemaic Britain with other European areas, it is clear that other Europeans believed England was a socially backwards state.

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6 When examining the presentations of the world, Britain, and Iberia in late fifteenth-century editions of Ptolemy, several important points avail themselves immediately. Both Britain and Iberia are relegated to the outer edge of the world. However, Iberia occupies a more prominent position at the entrance to the
By the end of the fifteenth century, however, European observers began to comment on changes that were taking place in English society. Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino, Milanese ambassador to the Tudor court, wrote to his Duke in 1497 describing the arrival of John Cabot, who had just returned from a voyage of discovery. Only several months before, word had reached the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, that “a Venetian ... mariner ... has also discovered the Seven Cities, 400 leagues from England, on the western passage.” Sforza, in the middle of an international political mess of his own making that would lead to warfare, was seeking wealthy allies against the French and perhaps thought that England might be willing to join him. It seems that Sforza did not believe the initial reports, for while his reply is not extent, Raimondo wrote to him in 1497 with proof of Cabot’s success.

Mediterranean, while Britain is in the Northwest corner of the map, surrounded by seas. Inspecting the detail maps of each, the contrast between both grows. Britain, the first map presented, is portrayed as being sparsely populated. There is a great deal of space between each town represented on the map; it is almost as though Britain is a frontier area. Iberia, on the other hand, is described in great detail. Portrayed in a highly developed state, Iberia is the known while Britain is unknown. See Ptolemy, Cosmographia, trans. by Jacopo D'Angelo, ed. et al by Philippus Beroaldus (Bologna: Dominicus de Lapis, 23 June 1462 [i.e. 1477]); JCBL 2-SIZE Z P975 1477.


The English, he noted, trusted Cabot's tale, for "this Messer Zoane [Cabot], as a foreigner and a poor man, would not have obtained credence, had it not been that his companions, who are practically all English and from Bristol, testified that he spoke the truth." 10 Indeed, he took the extra step of speaking personally with a non-English member of the crew to ensure the trustworthiness of the account. 11 The evidence was conclusive, in Raimondo's estimation, that the English hoped "to make London a more important mart for spices than Alexandria," making them ideal allies for the Milanese. 12

The diplomatic correspondence regarding John Cabot's initial voyage to the New World is important not only because of the credibility a foreign duchy was giving the Tudor court, but also because it demonstrates the lack of trust the English placed in foreign sources. Henry VII could send Cabot across the Atlantic, emulating the journey Columbus had made a few years before, but would not believe his success until it was corroborated by the testimony of the English sailors that went with him. Unlike Columbus' accounts of his voyages, no firsthand accounts of Cabot's voyages have survived. Perhaps Henry destroyed any correspondence about the journey, Cabot and his crew were only functionally literate, or such accounts were lost. However, given the tenacious


11 "I have also spoken with a Burgundian, one of Messer Zoane's companions, who corroborates everything." Ibid., p. 31.

12 Ibid.
intensity that Richard Hakluyt and his successors engaged in amidst their search for English accounts of overseas voyages, the most likely scenario is that they simply did not write about their voyages. Why did the English not write about their early sixteenth century experiences in America?

Like their aforementioned counterparts, modern scholars of the early modern English Atlantic world have generally avoided the first half of the sixteenth century. As one prominent historian has noted, “it was only after the power of the Tudor monarchy had been consolidated and the religious situation stabilized under Queen Elizabeth I ... that the English turned their attention to America.”13 Based on the lack of any formal or informal colonial attempts, the inclination that Anglo-American history begins with Richard Hakluyt’s *Discourse of Western Planting* permeates contemporary historiography.14 In spite of the foundational work done chiefly by David Beers Quinn, the fertile ground of Elizabethan England has proven too tempting for historians when cast against the comparative bareness of the earlier Tudor period.15 Yet in order to fully understand the vigor with which Elizabethan adventurers and academics took to the physical and intellectual colonization of America, it is important to examine


14 Richard Hakluyt, *A particulier discourse concerninge the greate necessitie and manifolde commodityes that are like to growe to this realme of Englane by the westerne discoveries lately attempted*, ed. by David Beers Quinn and Alison Quinn (London: Hakluyt Society, 1993, orig. 1584).

15 In particular, see Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620*; and Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies*. 

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early English responses to the Columbian encounter. The next two chapters will scrutinize the period from roughly the ascension of Henry Tudor to the English throne in 1485 to the end of Mary Tudor’s reign in 1558, focusing on the initial attempts in England at writing the history of America.\footnote{16}

It is important to understand why the English wanted to write the history of America and how they initially went about constructing a particularly English vision of America. As news of Columbus’ successful voyage reached England in 1493, politicians and intellectuals alike began to imagine of the possibilities of another land to the west. On the wrong end of a French territorial victory in the Hundred Years’ War, the English had nearly lost all of a continental empire that had remained in place over four hundred years. The existence of America offered an opportunity to contemplate an English empire beyond its traditional European and British context. As Quinn has rightly demonstrated, the last decade of the fifteenth and first decade of the sixteenth century saw a flurry of American activity, highlighted by the Tudor sponsored voyages of John Cabot.\footnote{17}

Yet historical writing about America in England lagged behind their continental counterparts. At the end of the fifteenth century, most of the histories in England were dominated by English actors. Except in the case of universal histories, which utilized a great deal of Biblical history in their contents, the English

\footnote{16}Over the course of the remaining chapters, histories of America written in England will be referred to as Anglo-American histories. As discussed in the Introduction, sixteenth and seventeenth century English writers referred to the entire Western Hemisphere as America, and not just the English possessions once they established colonies.

\footnote{17}See note 15 above.
primarily wrote about themselves and the things that they did, typically on the political stage. Firsthand knowledge and authoritative texts with a verifiable tradition were the most important sources for English historians. Furthermore, foreign sources were distrusted for the most part. They were still influenced by the scholastic methodology that valued tradition and precedent more than abstract textual sources. Even within the Bible, the ultimate textual authority in the early modern European world, power lay within the words of the speaker more than a text which few of the English laity could read. Indeed, a culture of

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tradition and precedent lay at the heart of the English ancient constitution.\textsuperscript{20} Simply put, the English lacked the intellectual tools necessary to write historically about America.

In order to grapple historically with America, the English turned to travel literature from their own past. Editions of John Mandeville’s travels, as well as the voyages of St. Brendan, became extremely popular in the years following America’s introduction into the English consciousness. Through these texts, English readers were able to place America within a mental world they could understand, making the New World more accessible. But it was the introduction of humanist educational methodology into England that transformed the way the English would think about America. Recent scholarship on the English Atlantic world has only begun to examine the humanist influence on English thought, although it has been more thoroughly scrutinized on an insularly English basis.\textsuperscript{21} However, when written about, humanism seems to have suffered the same fate as early twentieth century U.S. progressivism; the multi-faceted and schizophrenic early modern humanist impulses have too often been blended


\textsuperscript{21} The intellectual history of early Tudor American activities, especially pre-1550, is relatively barren ground. Andrew Fitzmaurice, whose focus is the impact of humanism on English colonial attempts, spends very little time in pre-Elizabethan England. Ken MacMillan’s recent work on the legal foundations of Anglo-American empire is similar. See Fitzmaurice, \textit{Humanism and America}; and MacMillan, \textit{Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World}. For more on the humanist experience in England, see note 25 below.
together in what can deceptively seem like a single humanist movement.\textsuperscript{22}

Andrew Fitzmaurice's brief examination of early Tudor Anglo-American writing finds humanism to be the driving force behind sixteenth century colonial endeavors, aiming for "honour and glory" over profit.\textsuperscript{23} America, he argues, gave English adventures the means to pursue an active and virtuous life.\textsuperscript{24}

Humanism often differed from region to region within Europe; ideas and philosophies were rarely temporally bound for more than a generation. The single thing that characterized humanism across philosophical and geographical boundaries was the quest for the best possible textual sources; indeed, humanists refused to rely on secondary scholarship.\textsuperscript{25} Humanist culture in any form was slow to infiltrate the English mentalité, but through Henry VII's emulation of continental intellectual culture, humanists from across the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{23} Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, p. 57. Also see pp. 20-57.
\bibitem{24} Ibid., p. 20.
\end{thebibliography}
ideological spectrum began to arrive in England and spread their ideas. Desiderius Erasmus was particularly influential. His educational methodology, exemplified by first rate scholarship based on the best possible sources, proved to be the key for the English to begin accepting the growing base of foreign scholarship on America. Thomas More’s *Utopia*, more than simply a critique on kingship and power, should be read as an initial English attempt to write the history of America. While stylistically holding true to the English reliance on testimony, More utilized a foreign text to inform his discussion of the fictional commonwealth of Utopia located somewhere amidst the newly encountered lands of the Western Hemisphere. Yet he longed for much more than an idealized government; his utopian vision carries forth to an English empire in America, a trope we will see become highly influential in both English and continental American historical ideology. The English chose to write the history of America because it allowed them to consider the possibilities of an overseas empire; humanist scholarly techniques gave them the tools to begin their journey.

The Foundations of Historical Thought in Early Tudor England

We can take stock of the intellectual context of early Tudor England by exploring the evolving medieval English historiographical traditions that carried through to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. During the medieval period, historical literature transitioned from narratives that stressed the role of the divine in human history to more secularized versions by

26 A more thorough discussion of Erasmian humanism in England will take place in Chapter Two.
the fifteenth-century. Medieval English historical writing was used to teach moral
lessons, promote civic pride, convey current events, or simply to entertain. The
limits of available sources combined with the needs of medieval audiences
meant that most histories were local in their scope. Historians, while mostly free
from political pressure, tended to focus on the contemporary. Historical authority
was placed on inherent knowledge, eye-witness testimony, and current events.
These authors relied on past historiography to inform their knowledge of events
prior to their own lifetimes. While medieval historians were beginning to
understand the concept of anachronism, or the contextualization of past historical
information within the present, enough to avoid it, its presence was still common
in historical writing during this period. Monastic communities had been, for the
most part, responsible for chronicling English events, but by the fifteenth-century
more private citizens became involved in historical writing. Driven by a growing
sense of antiquarianism, these secular historians looked to use the past for
patriotic or knowledge driven pursuits much more than their counterparts in the
clergy.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} My discussion of medieval historiography has been informed by the most
important work on medieval English historical thought, Antonia Gransden's
Gransden's nearly all-encompassing narrative and important conclusions should
be the starting point for any research on medieval English history. In particular,
see "Epilogue," Vol. II, pp. 454-479. In addition, see Patrick Collinson, "History"
in \textit{A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture}, pp. 58-70;
Michael J. Curley, \textit{Geoffrey of Monmouth} (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994);
R. R. Davies, \textit{The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles,
1093-1343} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Chris Given-Wilson,
and London, 2004); Robert W. Hanning, \textit{The Vision of History in Early Britain:}
By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries, there were several important developments in English historiography that must be noted. First of all, despite the influence of humanism on Italian and French historiography, English historical writing had not yet been completely infiltrated by the new learning. Indeed, as Antonia Gransden argues, English “historians turned to the medieval rather than to the classical historiographical tradition in order to equip themselves to meet the challenges of the times.”

Humanism centered authority directly in the classical historical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. Humanist historians would necessarily look towards such classical writers as Cicero, Herodotus, Livy, Polybius, and Thucydides for their inspiration. As Jean Bodin noted in his treatise on historical methodology, only through careful study of the ancient historians could a contemporary historian begin to understand how to...
write history. In contrast, the English historical tradition was heavily influenced by scholastic methodology, which used Aristotelian dialectical reasoning to seek truth and orthodoxy within the confines of a single text. Thus, instead of emulating the ancient historians as humanists did, English historians sought to emulate the truth and authority that they found in the medieval English histories; indeed, authority emanated from testimony and precedent.

The effect scholasticism had on medieval English histories can be understood better if we explore the philosophy more closely. Scholasticism itself was a response to the rediscovery of ancient texts that seemed to contradict the Christian political life, especially the works of Aristotle. Over the course of the thirteenth century, culminating with the work of Thomas Aquinas, medieval scholars reconciled ancient philosophies with Christianity through the process of scholasticism. Presenting a series of questions and answers in the form of a dialogue, Aquinas and other medieval scholars dealt with the objections to their arguments in a logical manner to prove their theses. The scholastic method


became the dominant way of learning in medieval universities. Focused on the study of single works, educators would lecture by reading the text, taking time along the way to explain key passages. Later, arguments would be drawn up in opposition to the text, whereupon the professor would refute them in logical order one by one. In this manner, scholastic teaching emphasized logical thought and orthodoxy.  

This logical method of authenticity, proving a text’s authority dialectically through argument and counterargument, was influential throughout Europe; this was true in English historical writing as well. In post-conquest England, as Andrew Galloway has observed, an increased use of documentary evidence led to “an increase in manipulation and forgery.”  

Scholasticism offered a way around the problem of textual inaccuracy by allowing works to be logically authenticated. Historians that were known and trusted, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, were used and reused. The employment of these masters works lent

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new histories “a pervasive sense of [their] authority.”\textsuperscript{34} Other medieval English historians, like Matthew Paris, augmented the authenticity of their works by inserting themselves into the narrative.\textsuperscript{35} Testimony, especially when it corresponded with known works, proved critical in gaining a sense of trust in their readers. The testimony could be trusted because it came from an English source. Additionally, medieval English historians, such as Robert Mannyng, came to believe in the importance of physically authenticating history by visiting the sites where it took place and interviewing the participants in an Herodotian fashion.\textsuperscript{36} By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, English histories mainly focused on contemporary political events and moved more towards the vernacular and away from Latin text.\textsuperscript{37}

Nonetheless, by the fifteenth century, the scholastic method of learning began to present “a particularly dreary picture,” as E. J. Ashworth has noted.\textsuperscript{38} Over time, instead of relying on the trusted texts, scholars began to rely on the commentaries of those texts. For example, Aquinas’ commentary on Aristotle,

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 269.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 271.


Summa Theologica, would be commented on and explained numerous times over until the reader was several generations removed from the original source, Aristotle. Ashworth found that the major logic textbook at Oxford was merely a collection of a number of earlier secondary sources. Nonetheless, given the fact that humanism was late to arrive in England, the scholastic method of learning and an historical culture focused on the familiar, testimony, and tradition was entrenched in the late fifteenth century.

The rise of the Tudor dynasty both served to exacerbate medieval historiographical trends and create new tendencies within English historians. Henry Tudor was similar to the model made famous by Machiavelli in the mid-sixteenth century; he ruled through fear rather than love. Tudor era historians understood this and consciously sought to correlate the past with the present in order to convey the legitimacy of Henry’s reign. The religious upheaval effected by his son saw the same tendency, as historians began to seek Protestant precedents in the English historiography and return towards the providential role of God in affecting human history. Yet the fear that Henry instilled within the public meant that historical writing was tied much more to an

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43 Ibid., pp. 472-473, 476.
expressed state purpose of propaganda. As patriotism began to play a larger role in historical writing, the distant past was revised in order to suit the needs of the present. Unlike during the medieval period, when historians felt little pressure to deviate from their own course of writing, historians in Tudor England were expected to serve the propaganda needs of the state or pay the consequences. Indeed, patronage in early fifteenth century Tudor England meant historians both acquiesced to Tudor policies and helped to promote them.

In early Tudor England, there was a marked continuation of local historical writing combined with a movement to write patriotic national histories. English historians rarely ventured outside the realm of the English nation, save when dealing with lost English possessions in France or writing Biblical history. Given their reliance on personal knowledge as an ultimate source of authority, historians in late-fifteenth and early sixteenth century England did not have the historiographical tools to deal with the sources necessary to write a foreign history. Nonetheless, the religious turmoil in Reformation England and the closing of the monasteries offered English historians the opportunity to expand the sources available for their use. Collectors began to obtain and catalogue manuscripts in libraries at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, allowing

44 Ibid., p. 469.

45 Ibid.


47 Ibid., 468, 470-472.
more historians the opportunity to move away from local history and towards a
more comprehensive history of England.\textsuperscript{48} Indeed, a consequence of the
transition from scholastic to humanistic education in England was that libraries
began to reassess their mission, moving away from their spatially and
intellectually limited collections to more comprehensive ones.\textsuperscript{49}

In order to comprehend the processes underlying late medieval English
historical writing, it is critical to analyze its theoretical underpinning. In particular,
the influence of Isidore of Seville in late medieval and early modern English
historiography should not be understated. Isidore was an early medieval
Spanish bishop and writer whose works touched on many fields of knowledge,

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 476-479.

\textsuperscript{49} For an overview of the changes that took place in English education during the
early modern period, see Michael Van Cleave Alexander, \textit{The Growth of English
Education, 1348-1648} (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University
Press, 1990); Kenneth Charlton, \textit{Education in Renaissance England} (Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 1965); A. B. Cobban, \textit{The Medieval Universities:
Their Development and Organization} (London: Methuen & Co., 1975); David
Cressy, \textit{Education in Tudor and Stuart England} (New York: St. Martin's Press,
1975); Eugene R. Kintgen, \textit{Reading in Tudor England} (Pittsburgh, PA: University
of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); Michael E. Moore, "Prologue: Teaching and Learning
History in the School of Reims, c. 800-950," in \textit{Teaching and Learning in
Northern Europe, 1000-1200}, ed. by Sally Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein
(Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006), pp. 19-51; Nicholas Orme,
\textit{Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England} (London: The
Hambledon Press, 1989); Orme, \textit{Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to
Renaissance England} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); A. W. Parry,
\textit{Education in England in the Middle Ages} (London: W. B. Clive, 1920); Hilde De
Ridder-Symoens, ed., \textit{A History of the University in Europe: Vol. I, Universities in
the Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Ridder-
Symoens, \textit{A History of the University in Europe: Vol. II, Universities in Early
Modern Europe (1500-1800)} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003,
orig. 1996).
including history. Isidore’s works date from the early seventh-century, and include *Etymologiae*, *Chronica maiora*, and *Historia Gothorum Wandalorum Sueborum*. It was *Etymologiae*, an encyclopedic compendium of knowledge, that concerned medieval and early modern English historians. Indeed, the fact that over one thousand medieval manuscripts survive attests to the popularity of Isidore’s text. In the first half of the sixteenth-century, at least two editions and five printings of *Etymologiae* were produced. The influence of Isidore on


54 Isidore of Seville, *Here be the gathered counsailes of synct Isodorie to informe man, howe he shuld flee vices and folowe vertues*, translated by Thomas Lupset (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1534); Isidore of Seville, *Here be the gathered counsailes of Saincte Isidorie to informe man howe he shulde flee vices and folowe vertues*, translated by Thomas Lupset (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1539); Isidore of Seville, *Here followeth dyvers holy instrucyons and teachynges very necessarye for the helth of mannes soule, newly made and set forth by a late brother of Syon Rychard whithforde*, translated by Richard Whitford (London: William Middleton, 1541); and Isidore of Seville, *Here be the gathered counsailes
English historians was most heavily felt in the subject matter they chose to address. According to Gransden, medieval English historians were keen to take particular care when writing history about events that they had not specifically experienced.\textsuperscript{55} Authority was derived from experience and eyewitness testimony, while textual authority was to be used only when it could be trusted. Early sixteenth-century English editions of Isidore reflect the personal nature of authority and knowledge. Concerning teaching and learning, a 1534 edition of Isidore instructed “Lerne that thou canste not, lest thou be founde an unprofitable techer, the good that thou haste harde, sey it: the good that thou hast lerned teche hit. . . . but yet let dedes go before the worde.”\textsuperscript{56} Sharing knowledge was important, but it was necessary to privilege experience over text.

Isidore specifically addressed the important tenants of medieval historical thought in chapters 41 through 44 of Book 1 (l.xli-l.xliv) of \textit{The Etymologies}.\textsuperscript{57} To produce a true history, Isidore argued that the writer needed to experience the events being written about. He noted that the word “history” was derived from

\begin{center}
\textit{of sainct Isidorie to informe man, howe he shuldle flee vices and folowe vertues},
\end{center}

translated by Thomas Lupset (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1544; two distinct printings this year).

\textsuperscript{55} “In accordance with the dictates of Isidore of Seville they regarded history which they had not themselves experienced, as a vast expanse of time to be filled with a patchwork of extracts from the works of earlier and respected authorities.” Gransden, \textit{Historical Writing in England}, Vol. II, p. 461.

\textsuperscript{56} Isidore of Seville, “Teachynge,” in \textit{Here be the gathered counsailes of synct Isodorie to informe man} (1534).

\textsuperscript{57} See Isidore of Seville, \textit{The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville}, chs. l.xli-l.xliv, p. 67.
the Greek term meaning to “inquire” or “observe”; “indeed, among the ancients no one would write a history unless he had been present and had seen what was to be written down, for we grasp with our eyes things that occur better than what we gather with our hearing.” The reliance on absolute testimony for Isidore was unconditional. Without experiencing and seeing an event, the narrative produced by the historian would be unreliable. In fact, he differentiated between contemporary history and the unlived past, noting “there is a difference between history and annals, namely, that history is of those times that we have seen, but annals are of those years that our age has not known.” Thus, while unlived history could be written, Isidore firmly believed that this type of history could not be “known,” becoming something less than true history; “a plausible narration” of events that might not have happened, but could have happened.

Isidore pointed to Herodotus as an example of an original historian that contemporary scholars should pay attention to. Herodotus was heavily influential in Isidore’s historical thought, and as a result The Etymologies would become important in late medieval and early modern England. Herodotus’ historical process valued experience as an important quality in historical writing. If the historian wrote as a witness, it was more likely that the narrative would be trustworthy. However, unlike Isidore, Herodotus understood that the historian

58 Ibid, ch. I.xli.
59 Ibid., ch. I.xliv.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
needed to sometimes rely on unseen evidence. Whether textual or testimonial, the element of bias played a large role in determining the quality of a story for Herodotus. He understood that personal motivations influenced whether a narrative was true or fiction. Therefore, he found it important for historians to personally visit the areas they were studying, becoming familiar with the physical terrain, interviewing witnesses, and discovering new evidence. For example, seeking to understand the origins of Heracles in Greek culture, Herodotus noted that “I wanted to understand these matters as clearly as I could, so I also sailed to Tyre in Phoenicia . . . I talked with the priests . . . these enquiries of mine, then, clearly show that Heracles is an ancient god.”

Herodotus believed that by going to the source of a tradition, he could examine the evidence and varying points of view to discover the truth.

In order to establish authenticity with this audience, Herodotus believed that he needed to present not only the evidence he found persuasive, but also the material that he found to be erroneous. Returning to his examination of the origins of Heracles, Herodotus wrote “the Greek account of Heracles’ birth is far from being the only thoughtless thing they say. Here is another silly story of theirs about Heracles.” Presenting all sides of the story allowed the reader to judge for his or her self whether Herodotus had the best interpretation of events.

In assessing the importance of Isidore of Seville and Herodotus in medieval


63 Ibid., II:45, p. 113.
English historical thought, it is significant that Isidore proved much more consequential. Certainly both were optimistic in their historical methodology; holding true to their historical tenets in practice was difficult for the historians who put stock in them. However, the value of testimony and precedent, especially in regards to the local and the known, proved to be most useful for English historians.

Isidore developed his historical philosophy not only from the work of Herodotus, but also from the Roman philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero. However, a comparison of Isidore’s reading of Cicero with the actual texts from which it came reveals that a fundamental misreading took place when Isidore was putting together The Etymologies. For Cicero, history was “an account of actual occurrences remote from the recollection of our own age.” Differentiated from history were fables, narratives “in which the events are not true and have no verisimilitude,” and arguments, which were “fictitious narrative[s] which nevertheless could have occurred.” As “an account of exploits actually

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64 I am indebted to Peter S. Bietenholz’ work for connecting Isidore with Cicero, as well as an excellent introduction to Ciceronian historical thought. See Bietenholz, Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 56-60. For more on Cicero, see Anthony Everitt, Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome’s Greatest Politician (New York: Random House, 2001).


66 “Fabula est in qua nec verae nec veri similes res continetur . . . Argumentum est ficta res, qua tamen fieri potuit.” Ibid.
performed, but removed in time from the recollection of our age," history could not be merely written by those who had witnessed events.\footnote{The original Latin was translated by Harry Caplan; “Historia est gesta res, sed ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota.” See Cicero, \textit{Ad C. Herennium: De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)}, trans. by Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 24-25 (Book I:8.13).} The historian’s job was to establish an authoritative narrative that the reader could trust. Cicero argued “the narrative will be plausible if it seems to embody characteristics which are accustomed to appear in real life . . . if the story fits in with the nature of the actors in it, the habits of ordinary people and the beliefs of the audience.”\footnote{“Probabilis erit narratio, si in ea videbuntur inesse ea quae solent apparere in veritate . . . si res et ad eorum qui agent naturam et ad vulgi morem et ad eorum qui audient opinionem accommodabitur.” Cicero, \textit{De Inventione}, pp. 60-61 (Book I:21.29).} Factual fidelity was not completely important for Cicero; as Peter G. Bietenholz points out, “by the end of classical Antiquity \textit{historia} and \textit{fabula} still were a team; harnessed together they would go further than each could do alone.”\footnote{Bietenholz, \textit{Historia and Fabula}, p. 59.} Nonetheless, Cicero’s brand of historical narrative proved extremely influential to medieval writers, who could use his example as a method to recreate the past.

The problem in Isidore’s reading of Cicero was that he disregarded Cicero’s view of the past as history. In Isidore’s estimation, history had to be witnessed by the writer; non-contemporary versions of the past could not be considered history, but were characterized as “annals.”\footnote{See note 59 above.} This fundamental misreading was accentuated by medieval scholastic methodology. Instead of
reading Cicero for themselves to interpret what he meant, medieval readers
turned to Isidore of Seville to learn about Cicero. Without the historiographical
tools to rely on foreign textual sources or eye-witness testimony, English
historians in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century would have problems
grappling with the project of writing a history of America.

Now as Gransden and C. H. Williams point out, the fifteenth-century saw a
secularization of historical writing in England, or a movement towards more
private citizens writing history.\textsuperscript{71} This change should not only be viewed as a
lessening of the authority of monastic culture in England, but as part of a growing
trend towards a larger literate class in England. As significant numbers of
educated people began to live closer to historical sources, more people outside
of the clergy began to write history. In addition, the rapid growth of the printing
industry, starting with William Caxton (c. 1475), meant that metropolitan London
quickly became the center of historical culture in England.\textsuperscript{72} Manuscript
chronicles simply could not compete with the printed texts, especially in terms of
expense and production time.\textsuperscript{73} Caxton was extremely influential in transforming

\textsuperscript{71} Gransden, \textit{Historical Writing in England}, Vol. II, p. 466; and Williams, ed.,

\textsuperscript{72} For more on William Caxton, see N. F. Blake, \textit{William Caxton and English
Literary Culture} (London: Hambledon Press, 1991); Blake, “Caxton, William
accessed 19 April 2009]; Valerie Hotchkiss and Fred C. Robinson, \textit{English in
Print from Caxton to Shakespeare to Milton} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,
2008); and William Kuskin, \textit{Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print
Capitalism} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

\textsuperscript{73} The best statement on the importance of the printing press can be found in
Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, \textit{The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe}, Second
London into the center of English historical culture. Two of his London chronicle continuations, *The Chronicle of England or Brut* (1480) and Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (1482), give us a good sense of the properties of popular English historical literature at the end of the fifteenth-century.\(^7^4\)

Both works were popular medieval chronicles that had been continued over hundreds of years. Examining the available manuscripts, Caxton combined portions of several editions and added to the existing chronicle of events, taking the story in both *The Chronicle of England* and *Polychronicon* into the early 1460s.\(^7^5\) In printing the manuscripts, Caxton's texts were a list of events that occurred. Often the line between the past and present was blurred, and although the material was chronological in nature, tense allowed the reader to stay in the present while reading. Thus, the reader journeyed horizontally through the text, experiencing events as they happened, as opposed to vertically, which would have historicized the journey. Caxton placed the authority for the text squarely on the manuscript, which although trustworthy, could not be completely verified according the historical precepts he held. The ultimate veracity of the text was placed within the familiar, as the author's statements were based on tradition and

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Figure 3. Recto of a Leaf from Ranulf Higden and William Caxton, *Polychronicon* (1482). Image courtesy of The Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies.

a common English knowledge. There is some change though when Caxton continued the chronicle. He demonstrated a better sense of authority here, as his commentary was based on personal knowledge and experience. More than shared community tradition, Caxton produced his own authority based on age, stature, and reputation. Caxton lived the events he wrote, and could thusly claim authenticity for the chronicles’ continuation.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1493, as Columbus’ letter announcing his findings began to circulate, the English started to grapple with the existence of an unknown western land like many other Europeans. However, as other Europeans began to textually ponder the historical nature of America, the English were left to consider how they would write a history of America. Without the tools necessary create an Anglo-American history, historians turned to English examples in order to try to contemplate America.

\textbf{Pre-Columbian Anglo-American Traditions}

There was not an immediate movement in England following the Columbian encounter to grapple with America textually, although the English demonstrated an American interest in other areas. Both Henry VII and his son

sought to define an English space in the Western Hemisphere, sponsoring a series of voyages by the Cabots and other various adventurers. The record of voyages documented first by Richard Hakluyt, and most recently by David Beers Quinn, demonstrates that the English made a consistent effort to explore the northeastern portion of North America. While a substantial portion of the voyages were devoted towards exploiting American cod fisheries, others sailed with the goals of finding an increasingly elusive northwestern corridor to Asian markets or discovering areas conducive to establishing colonies. Nonetheless, in spite of the physical interaction with America in the first half of the sixteenth century, pre-Elizabethan American manuscript and printed evidence is substantially less than what was being produced elsewhere in continental Europe. While the fire that destroyed some of the early Tudor records in the seventeenth-century might play a role in the lack of manuscript evidence, the majority of modern early American historians interpret the lack of documentary materials as a lack of interest, beginning their accounts of the Anglo-American enterprise during the Elizabethan period. They translate the small amount of

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78 For the history and documentation of the Cabot and other early Tudor voyages, see NAW, Vol. 1; and Williamson, ed., *The Voyages of the Cabots and the Discovery of North America*. For a comprehensive look on America in English literature in the sixteenth-century, see McCann, *English Discovery of America to 1585*; and Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*.


80 See note 83 below.

81 Ken MacMillan notes that “privy council records prior to this time [1613] have been destroyed by fire.” See, MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the*
evidence, especially in the vernacular, as a lack of English interest in America in the first half of the sixteenth-century.\footnote{82}

There is evidence to suggest that English interest in America was far greater than we have previously imagined. English scholars had a small but growing series of continental writings on America that could supply their need for information about America. Between the first publication of Columbus' letter to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1493 and the appearance of Eden's \textit{Decades of the Newe Worlde} in 1555 (which is discussed in detail during Chapter Two), at least 113 distinct texts of American historical value (meaning they discussed the American past in one way or another) were printed in Europe, with hundreds of other volumes printed with limited American information in circulation by this time.\footnote{83} Literate English individuals of means and with interest in America would have had had access to many of these works in the first half of the sixteenth-century,


\footnote{82} McCann, although writing an entire book about the Anglo-American enterprise in the sixteenth-century, points out that there was a definite lack of English activity in regards to America in the sixteenth-century in comparison with other European states. See McCann, \textit{English Discovery of America to 1585}.

\footnote{83} The \textit{European Americana} catalogue identifies at least 113 separate texts, encompassing hundreds of different editions, printed in Europe that circulated and had American historical value up to 1555. There are also 27 separate printed examples of Americana in English or originating in England before 1555. See \textit{EA}, Vol. I: 1493-1600, pp. 1-82.
either through booksellers, continental libraries, or the growing English centers of learning in Cambridge and Oxford. A census of the European-Americana circulating in sixteenth century England has proven exceedingly difficult given the paucity and wide distribution of available records. Nonetheless, given our understanding of the ways in which the early printed book circulated in early modern Europe, it is highly probable that many of the major continental works on America were present in early Tudor England. Access to the works of Pietro Martire de Anghiera (known in England as Peter Martyr), Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Francisco López de Gómara, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, and Amerigo Vespucci, with a whole host of other continental writers, gave the English who had access to them a great deal of material with which to grapple with the existence and history of America.

At this point, we should consider why the English did not translate much of this material for over six decades. The growing English press completed a number of translations in the first half of the sixteenth-century, mostly focusing on literature and philosophy. If the English were interested in America, why did

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84 See note 49 above.

85 See note 83 above.

86 I will argue in Chapter Two that the act of translating European American historical texts was conscious attempt to textually colonize American space.

they not spend time committing some of this growing body of literature into the vernacular? There are two divergent trends that shed some light on the decision not to translate these works. First of all, most literate individuals in early sixteenth-century England were not only capable of reading in English, but also Latin, the language of scholarship in early modern Europe. The great majority of American historical works available were written in Latin, with a small percentage of them in either Spanish or Italian. English readers interested in America were capable of reading in any of these languages. However, of greater importance was the problem of grappling with the idea of America in English. The history of America was fantastic and exotic, but also unverifiable. Translating these texts into English required scholars to fit America into an English mentalité, which in turn required them to transition away from a scholastic mode of thinking. Focused on the historical tenets laid down by Isidore of Seville, they simply lacked the historiographical tools to grapple with the history of America. Indeed, even Cicero acknowledged that in order for a narrative to be successful, it needed to be believable, fitting in to the readers’ corpus of experience. Early English attempts to write and translate the history of America illustrates the difficulty of this enterprise early in the sixteenth-century.

(Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2001); and Massimiliano Morini, Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

88 See note 49 above.


90 See note 68 above.
Initially, the English sought to incorporate America into an existing corpus of exploration literature. Three travel texts that circulated in manuscript form in late medieval England involved the tales of fourteenth century English traveler John Mandeville, thirteenth century Italian merchant Marco Polo, and sixth century Irish monk St. Brendan. While continental translators such as Giovanni Ramusio released editions of Marco Polo's travels by the middle of the sixteenth century, only in 1579 did John Frampton issue an English edition.\(^91\) John Mandeville and St. Brendan, however, proved much more popular. In particular, the voyages of St. Brendan made for an ideal script for the English to explore the possibilities of an Anglo-American history.\(^92\) The tale of St. Brendan was quite popular throughout the medieval British Isles. Indeed, the manuscript version, _Navigatio Sancti Brendani_, circulated in manuscript form throughout the medieval and into the early modern period.\(^93\) Jacobus de Voragine, a thirteenth-century

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\(^92\) _NAW_, Vol. I, pp. 54-66. Also see _Here begynneth the legende named in latyn legenda aurea / that is to say in englysshe the golden legende: For lyke as passeth golde in valewe al other metallys / soo thys Legende excedeth all other bokes_ (Caxton, 1493); _JCBL 1-SIZE E493 J17g_; and Carl Selmer, ed., _Navigatio Sancti Brandani abbati_ (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959). For German and Latin editions, see Carl Schröder, _Sanct Brandan: Ein Lateinischer und Drei Deutsche Texte_ (Erlangen: Verlag Von Eduard Besold, 1871). Also see Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, eds., _The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions_ (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006); W. J. R. Barron and Burgess, eds., _The Voyage of St. Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation_ (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002); and Burgess and Strijbosch, _The Legend of St. Brendan: A Critical Bibliography_ (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2000).

\(^93\) The large amount of times it was reprinted speaks to its popularity. See note 114 below. See also _NAW_, Vol. I, p. 54.
Italian proto-humanist, included the life of St. Brendan in his *Legenda Aurea*, a compendium of the lives of the most important Christian saints. 94 Extremely popular, the *Legenda Aurea* had found a home in print by 1471, and by 1483 William Caxton had translated it into English and printed it. 95 By 1527, at least a dozen separate printed editions of the *Legenda Aurea* appeared in England, including a distinct edition that utilized only the life of St. Brendan printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1520. 96 Presaged only by a German edition of the life of St. Brendan printed in 1511, Worde's volume, *Here begynneth the lyfe of Saynt Brandon*, gives us an early sixteenth-century reading of how the English grappled with the history of America. 97

St. Brendan's life took on added significance after the Columbian encounter because readers may have surmised that his Atlantic voyage resulted in an American landfall. 98 Brendan was an Irish monk who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries. 99 Taking sixty adventurers with him, Brendan undertook a journey in search of the lost paradise on Earth, the Garden of Eden. Most likely


98 Ibid.

a story modeled on Homer's *Odyssey* and Irish sea travel narratives, Brendan and his companions sailed far into the Atlantic Ocean, encountering adversity and adventure, along with many new lands.¹⁰⁰ English readers saw in Brendan's life an American discovery that preempted Columbus' voyages, and the Wynkyn de Worde separate edition outside of the *Legenda Aurea* testifies to the popularity following the entry of America into the European consciousness. Reading the life of St. Brendan as a late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century attempt to write an English history of America reveals several important problems in creating an Anglo-American historiography.

In writing Brendan's life, authority is derived from two separate sources: personal testimony and the Bible. Early in the account, the reader is confronted by an individual who introduces the tale as a conversation between a narrator and Brendan himself. He states "come hyther for to be joyfull with me / & therfore for goddes love leve your moumynge & tel me what mervayles ye have seen in the great see occean."¹⁰¹ The reader could trust Brendan's story because the narrator knew him; the testimony was verified as being trustworthy through personal knowledge. The reader is then warned that the journey into the Atlantic Ocean might be difficult to believe; the experiences are characterized by "mervayles," meaning his story was such to "excite wonder or excitement."¹⁰²


¹⁰² *OED*. 

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Figure 4. *Manuscriptum translationis germanicae* (1460), St. Brendan and his crew. Image courtesy of the University of Heidelberg Library.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{103} *Manuscriptum translationis germanicae* (Southwestern Germany, 1460). Codex Palatini germanici 60, p. 179v.
But these marvelous experiences, as Stephen Greenblatt has argued, could help to authenticate the testimony. Indeed, the nature of the miracle itself required a witness, which in turn provided more authority. The marvelous was synonymous with the miraculous in early modern England, and Brendan’s life is made believable not only by the presence of a textual narrator who can verify the truth for himself, but also a witness who experienced the adventure.

The use of Biblical allusions in Brendan’s life also lend authenticity to the tale. In the midst of several adventures, Brendan and his companions came across a pitiful figure from the New Testament, Judas, who sat upon a rocky outcropping in the ocean to serve his punishment for the betrayal of Jesus. The author wrote, “than they came to grete a rocke stondynge in the see / & theron sate a naked man in full great myserye and payne. For the waves of the see had so beten his body that all the flesshe was gone of / and no thynge lefte but synewes & bare bones.” No matter how ridiculous it might seem to encounter a live skeleton of Judas Iscariot in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the miraculous nature of the life of a saint made it more realistic because the Bible was the ultimate symbol of textual authority. While Judas never skeletally appeared in an Atlantic context in the Bible, his character was familiar to the readers, who would imagine this was a part of his gruesome punishment.

With authority established, late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century English readers could begin to imagine Brendan’s voyage in an American

104 Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions, p. 30.
105 NAW I, p. 60.
context. The journey began as “saynt Brandon bad the shypmen to wynde up the sayle & forth they sayled in goddes name so that on the morowe they were out of syght of ony londe and forty dayes & forty nightes after they sayled playne [platte] eest. And than they sawe an ylond e ferre fro them.” The geography and directionality can be confusing here, given that the author noted that Brendan sailed east for at least forty days, which from Ireland would make little sense. The author likely wrote metaphorically here, drawing on the Biblical tale of Noah to relate Brendan’s voyage. However, in a post-Columbian context, the meaning could easily turn quite literal for readers. Understanding that the crew sailed towards the east, with contemporary readers understanding of the east as Asia, the directionality of the voyage is much more comprehensible. Being familiar with the work of Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci, readers would have surmised, beyond the Biblical allusion, that forty days sailing on the Atlantic Ocean might have led Brendan and his companions to America, or at least an undiscovered landmass in the Atlantic. Columbus took merely thirty-three days to complete his own voyage.

Brendan’s voyage does not end there, but continues on and on in an Odyssian fashion. After discovering land the first time, Brendan and his crew sail

106 NAW I, p. 56.

107 Numerous versions of Columbus and Vespucci were in circulation by 1510. Indeed, as we shall see below, the English had access to a version of Vespucci in the vernacular by 1515. See EA, Vol. I.

Figure 5. Christopher Columbus, *Et De insulis in Mari Indico nuper inventis* (1494). Columbus' initial exploration of the Caribbean. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress. ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Christopher Columbus, *De Insulis nuper in Mari Indico nuper inventis*, in Carlo Verardi *In laudem Serenissimi Ferdinandi* (Basel: Johann Bergman de Olpe, 1494). Jay I. Kislak collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress, Incun. 1494 .V45 DP121.
on, first for “thre dayes & thre nyghtes,” then “it was .xl. [forty] dayes after or they came thyder,” after which they “sayled forth contynually tyll saynt Peters daye,” another “seven dayes contynually,” and finally “to an ylone whiche is forty dayes saylynge hens” before they could return home. After each of these travels they found more islands filled with various commodities that Brendan and his crew personally explored. The fact that they found the expected “floures herbes & trees” and physically verified their existence by going “on londe,” served to authenticate the text even more. Four months sailing into the Atlantic led readers to believe that Brendon had found America, and their imaginations were more open to these possibilities following the Columbian encounter.

Beyond the massive amount of sailing that had taken place, English readers had other evidence to suggest that Brendan’s voyage resulted in an American encounter. Observe Columbus’ description of America in his famous letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. He writes, “I found many islands ... its lands are lofty and in it there are many sierras ... all are most beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all accessible and filled with trees of a thousand kinds.”

\[111\] Ibid., p. 57.
\[112\] As I argued earlier, the shear volume of printed volumes on St. Brendan in the early sixteenth century makes it highly probably that English readers were experiencing the text in an American context. The earliest physical evidence we have so far regarding this specific reading is from John Dee in 1578: “Brandan, the learned man, discovered much of the western parts ...” See NAW, Vol. I, p. 55.
\[113\] Columbus, A New and Fresh English Translation . . . , pp. 7-8.
Columbus described a veritable cornucopia of natural abundance, describing “palm trees of six or eight kings, which are a wonder to behold on account of their beautiful variety, and so are the other trees and fruits and herbs; therein are marvelous pine groves, and extensive champaign country; and there is honey, and there are many kinds of birds and a great variety of fruits.”

Brendan's letter uses similar language to describe the islands he encounters. In one instance after a long time at sea, they “soone after as god wolde they sawe a fayre ylonde full of floures herbes & trees.” Later, after more sailing, “they founde by the purveaunce of god an ylonde whiche was ferre fro theym.” While inexact, it is not difficult to understand why English readers could believe that Brendan had found America, especially after such a long journey finding such abundant islands. Indeed, a comparison of images of Brendan’s and Columbus’ voyage (see figures 4 and 5 above) reveals a similarity in how both vessels were portrayed; indeed, the ships are nearly exactly alike. These connections were convincing evidence of a pre-Columbian Anglo-American encounter. Publishing Brendan’s life, either as part of a compendium of other saints’ lives or individually, may have been a way for the English to grapple with the history of America using the extant body of knowledge, a knowledge whose authority was already judged to be truthful.

\[114\] Ibid., p. 9.


\[116\] Ibid.
John Mandeville's travels also proved to be a popular text in early
sixteenth century England, although not to the extent of St. Brendan's
voyages.\footnote{117} While Caxton ignored Mandeville, competing printers took
advantage of the lack of English printed editions, and by 1496, Richard Pynson
issued at least two printings of a single edition of Mandeville's works.\footnote{118}
By 1510, Wynken de Worde would issue a minimum of four separate editions of at
least two printings each from his press in Westminster.\footnote{119} Stephen Greenblatt
has explored Mandeville in a pre-Columbian and early Tudor English context,
and rightly demonstrates that the text had lost its authority by the Elizabethan
period.\footnote{120} However, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, John
Mandeville was a source that English readers took seriously. Mandeville built his
authenticity on eyewitness testimony and prior knowledge; not only did he

\footnote{117} While it is almost certain that an individual named John Mandeville did not
exist and the travels attributed to him are a literary creation, readers in early
Tudor England believed that he and his travels were real, and this fact is
important to the rest of my discussion on Mandeville.

\footnote{118} John Mandeville, \textit{Here endeth the boke of John Maundvyle knyght of wayes
to Jerusalem [and] of marveylys of y5xx} (London: Richard Pynson, 1496). Malcolm
Letts provides an excellent survey of known English manuscripts and
their printed derivations which is quite helpful in understanding the early modern
English textual circulation of Mandeville. See Letts, \textit{Sir John Mandeville: The
Man and His Book} (London: The Batchworth Press, 1949), esp. pp. 120-134,
178-179.

\footnote{119} John Mandeville, \textit{Here begynneth a lytell treatyse or booke named Johan
Mau[n]devyll knyght born in Englonde in the towne of saynt Albone [and] speketh
of the wayes of the holy Ionde towards Iherusalem, [and] of marveyles of Ynde
[and] of other dyverse cou[n]trees} (Westminster: Wynken de Worde, 1499, 1503,
1510, 1510).

witness the marvelous acts, which as we have explored previously was an authenticating activity in itself, but his testimony also reinforced previously accepted knowledge.\textsuperscript{121} The text fit nicely into the mental world of early Tudor readers, and thus makes for an intriguing text in a post-Columbian context.

Mandeville’s journey featured travel by both land and sea, including visits to a large number of islands around the known world. Wherever he traveled, though, the new areas were foreign and exotic, both known and unknown. In describing the first portion of his journey, a trip to Jerusalem, Mandeville noted that “for as moche as the londe over the see, that is to saye the holy londe that men calle the londe of hetynge.”\textsuperscript{122} Although specifically speaking about the area around Jerusalem in this instance, his argument throughout is that most lands foreign to England are not Christian but heathen. Traveling across the sea would put voyagers in contact with cultures very different than those the English were accustomed to; indeed, they should not even be surprised to find a group of people for whom “it is the custome there that men & wymen goo all naked, and they scorne all theym that are cladde.”\textsuperscript{123} This would resonate with readers who

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., pp. 34-35.


\textsuperscript{123} Mandeville, \textit{Here begynneth a lytell treatyse or booke named Johan Mau[n]devyll ...} (1499), p. lxvi front.
had experienced the Columbian epistle and Vespucci's *Mundus Novus*, both of which described heathen cultures that lived without clothing.

More importantly, though, as Mandeville continued his journey eastward, he reached the known ends of the earth in India, China, and the East Indian Islands. Writing about the island of Java, he described the abundant commodities; “in this yle groweth all maners of spyces more plenteuously than in other places, as gynger, clowes, canell, nutmygges, & other.”¹²⁴ The fact that islands full of wealth existed for the English made it easier to understand and accept the knowledge of new found lands. Indeed, as Mandeville implied, even he had not experienced all the world had offered. Beyond the limits of his travels were “many countrees unto the grete see Occean.”¹²⁵ If an individual had the ability to travel beyond Asia into the vast ocean to the east, one could certainly expect to encounter new and exotic lands. The reader could accept and trust these claims because Mandeville had “passed thrugh many londes & yles and countrees, & now am come to rest I have compyled this boke.”¹²⁶

English readers searched for and found a pre-Columbian history of American encounter that helped them grapple with the existence of the new found lands. In St. Brendan, they had a familiar and trusted individual of a Welsh nature who could have explored America centuries before Columbus’ journey. With Mandeville, they had an English explorer who verified that the strange and

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¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. lxvii front-back.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. lx back.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. cvii back.
marvelous not only existed, but should be expected in lands known and unknown outside of England.

**The Search for Authority**

In the first several decades after the Columbian encounter, the English began to grapple with the history of America informally in correspondence and depositions, relying on testimony to supply the facts. John Day, an English merchant who frequently dealt with the Spanish and found himself at times in the court of Henry VII, corresponded with Christopher Columbus, exchanging geographical and historical information with one another.\(^1\)\(^2\) Of particular interest to Columbus was the work of a rival, the Venetian John Cabot. Day was an important historical source to Columbus, as he was well placed to hear what Cabot had to say upon returning from his voyage. Day first gave him the pertinent information about the voyage, reporting that “your Lordship will know that he landed at only one spot of the mainland . . . and raised banners with the arms of the Holy Father and those of the King of England, my master.”\(^2\)\(^8\) He


was also certain to tell Columbus how long the voyage lasted; this information would help him to verify the validity of the information. As it took Cabot 35 days to cross the Atlantic, Columbus could be fairly certain that the information he was getting from Day was accurate.\(^{129}\) Day went to considerable lengths to assure Columbus that the English had a right to explore the American territory, and used historical precedent to prove his point. He argued that Cabot had sailed to “the Island of Brasil, and it is assumed and believed to be the mainland that the men from Bristol found.”\(^{130}\) Day was most certainly referring to Bristol fisherman who, as David Beers Quinn argued, had been sailing to the cod fisheries of northeastern North America since the early 1480s.\(^{131}\) Using the phrase, “as your Lordship knows” established authority for the historical statement; both Day and Columbus were privy to firsthand information that suggested Bristol fisherman had discovered an Island called “Brasil.” Although not primarily designed to convey historical content, Day’s letter used the history of the New World to support his claims. Written informally through correspondence, the history of America relied on firsthand knowledge and testimony to become authoritative.

Other correspondence during this period is similar to Day’s letter. Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino, Milanese Ambassador to England, was present at the court of Henry VII when Cabot arrived, as we discussed previously. He wrote, “I have also spoken with a Burgundian, one of Messer

\(^{129}\) Ibid., p. 99.

\(^{130}\) Ibid.

\(^{131}\) See note 16 above.
Zoane's [Cabot] companions, who corroborates everything. Soncino did not trust the events that Cabot described. In order to establish authority for the voyage, he had to find someone who sailed with Cabot that he could trust. Belief was suspended until it was verified from someone who witnessed the events. Thus we see the importance of corroboration and historical truth. But why not trust Cabot on his own account? The answer had to do with Cabot's Venetian heritage, for regardless of his mission for the duke of Milan and their close geographical proximity, he remained a foreigner, and therefore his testimony was suspect.

The account of Cabot's voyage began to show up in early sixteenth-century chronicles, but many of these had difficulty in portraying the event to their readers. An anonymous chronicle of London described the strange scene surrounding Cabot's journey. Phrased in the present tense, an element of distrust courses through the entire description. The writer portrayed Cabot as a "Straunger venisian," automatically casting a pall over the proceedings. Cabot was not English, and therefore his testimony was considered less trustworthy.

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English historical thought, as we saw previously, privileged English actors and regarded foreign actors and sources with skepticism. It is evident that the writer believed Cabot was untrustworthy, for he implied in his narration that the king was being conned. Cabot "by a Caart made hym self expert in knowyng of the world, caused the kyng to manne a ship with vytaill & other necessaries for to seche an Iland wheryn the said straunger surmysed to be grete comodities." While Cabot was able to win the trust of the king, the chronicler believed that the search for "an Iland [of] . . . grete comodities" would likely yield very little. A foreign actor relying on foreign textual evidence would not have inspired confidence in the chronicler. The narrative ends as the King's approval of Cabot causes numerous London merchants to invest in the scheme, only to lose their money when Cabot, who "departed from the west cuntrey in the begynnyng of somer, but to this present moneth came nevir knowlege of their exployt." The anonymous writer punctuated the entry by using the term "straunger" numerous times. Accentuating the foreignness, and hence the otherness, of Cabot, the unsubtle implication was that because Cabot was not a member of the community, he could not be trusted. The fact that he had not returned was confirmation that his story of an American island full of commodities was pure fiction. Curiously, although Cabot had returned by the time the writer composed the chronicle, the element of mistrust was so great that any more talk of the voyage could not be trusted. Indeed, the picture painted by the anonymous

135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
chronicler was so persuasive that several decades later, Polydore Vergil would discount any tales of Cabot’s success, noting “in the event he is believed to have found the new lands nowhere but on the very bottom of the ocean, to which he is thought to have descended together with his boat, the victim himself of that self-same ocean; since after that voyage he was never seen again anywhere.”\(^{137}\) In light of England’s reliance on the voyages of John Cabot to stake a territorial claim in North America during the Elizabethan period, Vergil’s statement seems rather odd. However; it is important to remember that without textual evidence, as discussed earlier, Vergil would have difficulty grappling with the existence of the voyage, which was confirmed as a failure in the historiography he relied upon. As we will see in Chapters Two and Three, the evolution in historical thinking and methodology over the course of the sixteenth century would allow the Elizabethan colonial promoters to view Cabot’s voyages in a much different light.

The tales from the Western Hemisphere were simply too marvelous and, in some cases, absurd for the printed historical sources to trust. The level of skepticism remained present in the Great Chronicle of London, which reported a successful English voyage at the beginning of the sixteenth-century. The voyagers, in order to offer the court of Henry VII proof that they had been to America, “browght unto the kyng iii men takyn In the Newe Found Ile land . . . clothid In bestys skynnys and ete Rawe Flesh and spak such spech that noo

man cowde undyrstand theym.”\textsuperscript{138} Even though the chronicler was able to witness three Americans in the court of Henry VII, neither the writer nor the king could believe what he saw. In the end, the ultimate foreignness of their actions and the fact “that noo man cowde undyrstand theym” made their presence as authentic Americans hard to trust. In the final analysis, the chronicler “cowde not dyscern From Inglysh men tyll I was lernyd what men they were, But as For spech I hard noon of theym uttyr oon word.”\textsuperscript{139} The writer heard his colleagues describe the Indians to him who were physically in their presence when they “spak such spech that noo man cowde undyrstand theym,” but in the end would not trust his own testimony, convincing himself that he heard “noon of theym uttyr oon word.”

\textit{Utopia as an Anglo-American History}

By the second decade of the sixteenth-century, English attempts to write the history of America were relatively unsuccessful. Grappling with America historically would allow the English to begin imagining what their own place in the New World might mean. While correspondents used firsthand knowledge and eyewitness testimony to create authenticity for their recipients, the printed accounts of the same events found in English chronicles could not trust the sources. The foreignness of both the actors and the stories led to credibility issues, in spite of contradictory textual evidence being available. Nonetheless,


\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
as humanist culture spread into England in the early sixteenth-century, an
unlikely Anglo-American history would appear. In 1516, Thomas More’s *Utopia*
was first printed in continental Europe.\(^{140}\) Easily the most popular and successful
piece of English Americana in the sixteenth-century, *Utopia* went through at least
twelve separate editions by 1560.\(^{141}\) *Utopia* was a veiled criticism for the
problems plaguing English society and government in the early sixteenth-century,
and as such has most often been read in the context of early modern English
political thought.\(^{142}\) Certainly the American aspects of *Utopia* have been
analyzed and explained by countless scholars over the past five centuries.
However, shifting our perspective and reading *Utopia* as an English attempt to

\(^{140}\) An English edition of Utopia would not appear until the middle of the century. See More, *A fruteful and pleasaunt worke of the beste state of a publyque weale, and of the newe yle called Utopia* (London: Abraham Vele [Paul’s Church Yard at the Sign of the Lamb], 1551).


write American history, several clues are revealed about the development of Anglo-American historical thought, demonstrating that the historiographical influence of Isidore of Seville was beginning to wane in England.

More was able to use a textual source, Vespucci’s letters and *Mundus Novus*, as his muse for some of the geographical and anthropological descriptions in *Utopia*. Vespucci’s work was widely circulated throughout Europe by the second decade of the sixteenth-century, and it formed the most easily accessible text for information on the New World. As a humanist, Vespucci was not foreign or strange to More, but a fellow scholar in an early modern republic of knowledge. Nonetheless, More went to great lengths to establish his authority and trustworthiness. Several important scholars, including Desiderius Erasmus, wrote letters touting the veracity of the information contained within *Utopia*. As More wrote to his friend Peter Giles, “for, as I’ve taken particular pains to avoid having anything false in the book, so, if anything is in doubt, I’d rather say something untrue than tell a lie. In short, I’d rather be honest than clever.”

As modern readers, we understand that *Utopia* is a fictional satire created by More to represent issues that were politically prudent to hide under the guise of another subject. But to the early modern reader, truth or fiction was only part of the story. More created the Ciceronian historical argument; a “fictitious

143 See note 83 above.

narrative[s] which nevertheless could have occurred." Another of More's friends, Gillaume Bude, pointed out in a prefatory letter that he had "discovered, after investigating the matter, that Utopia lies outside the bounds of the known world." Given that much of the New World was still shrouded in a veil of mystery, while Utopia found itself in the area of historical fiction, it nonetheless could exist and thus had to be taken as a possible American history by the reader.

After establishing his own integrity, More displayed the credentials of Utopia's main character, Rafael Hythloday. Hythloday was certainly no Venetian stranger, More's friend Peter Giles argued, but "a man with more knowledge of nations, peoples and business than even the famous Ulysses. . . . by comparison with him, Vespucci seems to have seen nothing at all." Hythloday's stature is confirmed with this statement; if he had done more than the most well known American explorer for whom the New World was named, then he perhaps could be considered trustworthy. More reiterated Giles' statement within the major text, noting Hythloday's "sailing has not been like that of Palinurus, but more that of Ulysses, or rather of Plato." Indeed, he learned his craft at Vespucci's side, being his "constant companion on the last three of his four voyages, accounts of

145 See note 81 above.
146 "Gillaume Bude to Thomas Lupset of England, Greetings," in More, Utopia, p. 15.
147 "Peter Giles to Jerome de Busleyden," in Ibid., p. 25.
148 More, Utopia, pp. 43, 45.
which are now common reading everywhere."  

Yet Hythloday went one step further by actually staying in America and living with the Utopians, learning their ways and becoming immersed in the Americans' culture. 

Hythloday was the ultimate American authority in Europe, a voice that English readers could trust. 

Moreover, while the Utopians had some strange customs, they were less marvelous and more familiar than the Native Americans who "invaded" the court of Henry VII in the *Great Chronicle of London*. Indeed, these Americans had their own chronicles; More notes that "According to their chronicles, they had heard nothing of Ultra-equatorials (that's their name for us) until we arrived, except that once, some twelve hundred years ago, a ship which a storm had blown towards Utopia was wrecked on their island." 

The Utopians were a mirror image, in many ways, to their English counterparts, as More undoubtedly designed them to be. Readers could empathize with these Americans much more than the strange and marvelous Indians who had accompanied explorers back to Europe. They even pursued a humanist educational program, as More explained that "in intellectual pursuits they are tireless. . . . Of the historians they possess Thucydides and Herodotus, as well as Herodian." By creating

\[149\] Ibid., p. 45.  
\[150\] Ibid.  
\[151\] Ibid., p. 107.  
Americans who were like their English counterparts, he was able to gain their trust and establish textual authority.

Yet More’s textual authority only went so far. He was able to incorporate Vespucci into a fictional narrative of the new world, but only so far as he was able to establish himself as an authoritative figure. The validity of *Utopia* lay not in the text, but the trustworthiness of More. As More established constantly in the text that he was the one who heard Hythloday’s story and verified it against numerous humanist authorities, he was able to pass his description of Utopia off to his readers as an event that while fictitious, very well might have happened. Thus, after several decades had past in the sixteenth-century, it was clear that while an Anglo-American history could exist, it only inhabited private correspondence and the fictive narrative. A breakthrough in historical methodology would have to occur in order to write a history of America based on textual sources.

**Epilogue: Utopia and Empire**

Thomas More’s *Utopia* solved one of the major problems in writing an English history of America: establishing textual authority in a foreign source. However, it was a unique text; its innovations were not immediately replicated. Furthermore, the textual authority was created through the personal testimony of More. While humanist principles held the ultimate solution for the creation of an Anglo-American history, such a history would have to wait until humanist thought was much more commonplace in England. As we will find in Chapter Two, Desiderius Erasmus’ humanist educational principles would become highly
influential during the reign of Henry VIII, paving the way for scholars such as Richard Eden to begin contemplating and creating English textual space in an Iberian Atlantic World.

More ends *Utopia* in a rather curious manner. Instead of confirming the authenticity of the story, More seemed to edge towards fantasy and fiction. After a long day of conversation and debate, More wrote, “while I can hardly agree with everything he said (though he is a man of unquestionable learning and enormous experience of human affairs), yet I freely confess that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our own societies I would wish rather than expect to see.” While Raphael was certainly trustworthy and wise, many of the things he described seemed fantastic and marvelous to More, almost outside the realm of believability. However, More did not suspend belief, but simply failed to “agree” with some of the Utopian principles. Most importantly, More saw an idealized form of English society in *Utopia*, one that he could hope for but not “expect to see” in his native land. Within the confines of America, More could imagine an idyllic English society, an empire solely within the mind but metaphysically located in the Western Hemisphere. Precedent established, thinkers like Eden could begin to sketch a more concrete picture of an English America several decades later.

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CHAPTER TWO

IMAGINING EMPIRE

Writing an English America in a Spanish Atlantic

“Someday we will publish special books about these discoveries, which, in my judgment, are more important and more extraordinary than those described by ancient cosmographers.” Pietro Martire d’Anghiera (1513)¹

“. . . no praise may be more admirable or too large . . . to overcome Hercules' works to the Ocean . . . the wealthy islands with limitless inhabitants have turned upside down to the faith of Christ . . . and you mark your boundaries beyond Antipodes . . .” Richard Eden (1555)²

Prologue: Coronation and Empire

Negotiating the political landscape of mid-sixteenth century England must have been a challenge, to say the least. Between the last days of Henry VIII in 1547 and the ascension of his daughter Elizabeth in 1558, five English monarchs held the throne of England, each of whom ruled according to different political and religious motivations. Richard Eden, a Cambridge educated humanist and


² Translation by Ian Aebel, from Richard Eden, “Latin Epistle to Philip II and Queen Mary Tudor,” in The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India (London: Guilhelmi Powell, 1555).
scholar, found himself in a quandary as he observed the marriage celebrations of Mary Tudor and Philip II of Spain in 1554. Eden’s first major work, a 1553 translation of Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia*, was dedicated to John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.\(^3\) Dudley’s ill-fated attempt to circumvent the 1544 Act of Succession and place his daughter, Jane Grey, upon the throne would result in his execution in 1544. Eden’s support of Dudley may have called his loyalties into question. It was no surprise, then, that he dedicated his new compilation, *The Decades of the Newe Worlde*, to Mary and Philip. Indeed, the prevailing thought amongst modern scholars on this new dedication is that Eden used it to smooth the political waters he may have upset with his support of Dudley.\(^4\) The fact that the primary textual focus was on Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s history of Spanish America could then be attributed, as one historian argued, to a motivated Eden seeking to curry favor with the future king of Spain, Philip II.\(^5\)

Eden’s interest in Spanish America should not be simply regarded as an act of contrition by a political outsider seeking to save his reputation and life. In

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\(^5\) McCann, *English Discovery of America to 1585*, pp. 115-117.
colonizing America, Spain conquered the prevailing knowledge of antiquity and, as Eden noted, could now mark its “boundaries beyond Antipodes.” As Alfred Hiatt has pointed out, “antipodal spaces ... were purely theoretical ... the antipodes and their peoples formed no part of the historical record.” The Spanish American Empire lay so far outside the boundaries of the imagination that it was scarcely believable, contextually entering the realm of Thomas More’s quasi-fictional Utopian America. Yet in the creation of an antipodal empire, the Spanish had developed a place where they could “escape from the sins and corruption of the known world.” The political and social turmoil that engulfed England during Eden’s life explains why he believed the Spanish were worthy of praise and admiration. The New World had given them an opportunity to create an ideal society in emulation with the innocence lost in the Biblical Eden, and Richard Eden saw a role for England in this new and better world.

At the end Eden’s translation of *Cosmographia*, he inserted a poem dedicated “To al adventurers, and suche as take in hande greate enterpryses.”

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7 Ibid., p. 266.

Understanding the difficulty of establishing an English presence in an America dominated by the Spanish and Portuguese, Eden wrote, "Who hath not of sowrenes felte the bitter tast, | Is not worthy of swetenes to take his repast. | To cracke the nutte, he must take the payne, | The which would eate the carnell fayne."\(^9\) It would be difficult for the English to muster the effort to create American colonies, but only through pain and hard work, Eden admonished, would the English raise their flag in the Western Hemisphere. Drawing on Herodotus and Homer to illustrate his message, Eden concluded by writing, "God giveth althinges, but not the bul by the horne | The plowman by travaile encreaseth his corne. | As fortune savereth thou mayst be riche or poore, | As Cresus or Irus that beggeth at the dore."\(^10\) Only by metaphysically imagining an English space in America and physically taking advantage of the opportunity to become an empire, Eden argued, would England fulfill God's promise for greatness. If they simply left success to chance, fortune would either forgive or punish, as Croesus (Cresus) was saved by fortune but Arnaeus (Irus) paid the price of fate by Odysseus' fists.\(^11\) Eden was interested in establishing an English presence in an Iberian Atlantic well before the marriage of Mary and Philip made

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\(^9\) Münster, *A treatyse of the newe India*, colophon page.

\(^10\) Ibid.

such a venture more realistic. An English empire in America would come not through conquest but cooperation.

The precedent of an Anglo-Iberian alliance had been more than half a century in the making. From the beginning of his reign, Henry VII sought union rather than conflict with Spain. Indeed, he believed that Spain could perhaps be a powerful ally against England’s enemy across the English Channel. Soon after Henry’s son was born, negotiations were undertaken in order to seek a marriage between Arthur and the young daughter of the King and Queen of Spain, Catherine of Aragon. By 1497, Ferdinand and Isabella would write to the Spanish Ambassador to England, Roderigo Gondesalvi de Puebla, noting “the King [Henry VII] will soon see, by experience, the advantage of his liberal measures. The Spanish people, who believed they had been treated with injustice in England, had hitherto entertained no friendly sentiments towards him. Henceforth all will be altered, and the Spaniards will be his stoutest supporters.”

The marriage of Arthur (and subsequently Henry VIII) and Catherine was meant to cement the bonds of friendship between two states in the midst of internal colonization, and perhaps give the two opportunity for cooperation in the future.

The events that led to the English Reformation would dampen any hope that the English had in establishing an Anglo-Iberian partnership in the Western Hemisphere. Henry VIII, in succeeding his father, ushered in an enormous

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period of social turmoil, culminating in a break with the Catholic Church and a liquidation of monastic lands.\textsuperscript{13} However, the societal upheaval did not stop the English curiosity for America, and during this period England undertook a series of exploratory ventures designed to gauge the potential for an English overseas enterprise.\textsuperscript{14} But in order to develop an Anglo-American colonial enterprise, the English first needed to fit the idea of an America into their current mentalité. For Europeans, taking advantage of the existence of America required as much of a mental discovery as a physical one. As Eviatar Zerubavel notes, “the discovery of America was not a single event that took place on a single day. Rather, it was a long process that actually lasted almost three hundred years.”\textsuperscript{15} Mental discovery was not a new idea for Europeans, but it was in fact an accepted


\textsuperscript{14} The work of David Beers Quinn is the best place to start exploring late fifteenth and early sixteenth century English exploration and colonial attempts. In particular, see Quinn, \textit{England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620}; and Quinn, \textit{Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625}. For primary sources, see \textit{NAW}, 5 Vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1979). Also see McCann, \textit{The English Discovery of America to 1585}.

humanist method for seeking the truth. The humanist reliance on textual evidence for authenticity allowed Renaissance individuals to experience the exotic and travel to distant lands metaphysically. George Hugo Tucker demonstrates that the Columbian encounter played a large role in this process.\(^{16}\) Humanists understood the journey of Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey* to mean that exile was important part of an individual's mental and spiritual development.\(^{17}\) Travel was an essential part of exile, but some people could not undertake a journey for any number of reasons. For those individuals, metaphysical exile through textual travel was the answer. The existence of an American component to the exile journey furthered the necessity for metaphysical travel and discovery, as the voyage across the Atlantic was a long and dangerous one. But for the humanist, there was an essential element to the process of exile: writing. In order to authenticate the metaphysical journey, it had to be quantified textually.

Eden's *The Decades of the Newe Worlde* is especially important in the context of mental discovery. England's failure to establish a lasting American presence by the middle of the sixteenth century was not due to a lack of ambition or effort, but because they had not adequately placed America into their mental world.\(^{18}\) Read in this light, Eden's translations were a conscious attempt to

\(^{16}\) Tucker, *Homo Viator*.

\(^{17}\) In addition to Tucker, see Charles Trinkaus, “Renaissance and Discovery” in *First Images of America*, Vol. I, pp. 3-9.

\(^{18}\) This argument has been developed from J. H. Elliott’s understanding of the assimilation of America into the European mentalité. I differ from Elliott in
colonize American textual space. Eden could not physically inhabit an English space in America. But by exploring Spanish America in the best historical accounts of the day, he was able to imagine the possibilities of an English colonial presence in America. Examining the construction of The Decades of the Newe Worlde allows us to understand Eden’s vision for an English empire in America, an empire within an Iberian Atlantic world.

Before continuing, we should briefly discuss what empire meant to mid-sixteenth century English intellectuals. Both David Armitage and Anthony Pagden have demonstrated with great erudition that the roots of British imperial ideology and construction lay in early modern English readings of the ancient Greek and Roman political figures. But it is also crucial to consider the development of the idea of empire within the context of early modern Europe. As the English contemplated empire in the first half of the sixteenth century, they did so both in the knowledge of what they had lost as well as what they might have to gain. It was a territorial empire of kingdoms that had been lost to England in its wars with France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Empire in this sense meant rule over a series of kingdoms led by a common monarch. When Cuthbert Tunstall counseled Henry VIII that England was “an Empire off hitselff” in 1517, his argument should be understood in the context of England’s own arguing that the smaller than average early sixteenth century English textual Americana came from the lack of the necessary intellectual tools rather than a lack of interest.

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19 See Armitage, The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, esp. pp. 24-60; and Pagden, Lords of all the World.
internal composition of kingdoms within the larger nation. In advising Henry of
the feasibility of becoming Holy Roman Emperor upon the death of Maximilian I,
he stressed the composite nature of empire, arguing against such a move
because "iff your Grace shuld accepte the said Election, therby ye must confesse
your realme to be under subjection off th'empire to the perpetual prejudice off
your successor." While the Holy Roman Empire would pass to Maximilian’s
grandson Charles V in 1519, it is clear that the territorial jurisdiction of composite
kingdoms was one way the English thought about empire in the early sixteenth
century.

But perhaps more importantly, they also looked at the empire in the
context of the development of the Holy Roman Empire, which by 1520 was
Iberian in nature and invested in securing a large colonial presence in America.
Increasingly after 1520, English intellectuals wrote about empire in an Iberian
context. With the merge of the Holy Roman Empire and the developing Iberian
American world, colonization took on a much more prominent role. Just as the
Romans had colonized new worlds in an African, Middle Eastern, and, perhaps
most importantly, British sense, so too was the Iberian colonization of America a
vital component in empire creation. In this framework, England’s own sixteenth
century colonial ventures both internally and in Ireland should be seen in an

20 “Dr. Cuthbert Tunstall to King Henry the Eighth concerning Maximilian’s
proposal to resign the Empire to Henry, 12 February 1517” in Henry Ellis, ed.,
and Lepard, 1824), pp. 134-138, esp. 136. Also see Tunstall quoted in Armitage,
The Ideological Origins of the British Empire, p. 34 and n. 23.

21 Ibid.
empire building light. American colonization played a role in sixteenth century empire creation as well; this chapter will demonstrate how English intellectuals fit the idea of American empire into the English mentalité through Anglo-American historical writing.

The influence of Erasmian humanism in England during the first half of the sixteenth century provided a bridge between More’s *Utopia* and an Anglo-American history based on textual sources. The work of John Rastell was the initial English intellectual to use Erasmus’ humanist principles in developing an Anglo-American history. But it was the translations of Richard Eden that would lead to a fully articulated vision of an English America within an Iberian Atlantic.

**Erasmian Humanism and American History**

Of all the voluminous writings of Desiderius Erasmus that have survived the intervening five centuries, none explicitly discuss America and very few can be argued to implicitly do so. Yet the humanist culture that Erasmus inspired during his two trips to England and subsequent correspondence led to conditions that would allow the development of an Anglo-American historical culture. In spite of the English Reformation, between 1519 and 1550 more than 100 separate editions of Erasmus were published in England, most coming from London presses. While Erasmus remained committed to reforming the Catholic Church peaceably until his death, the relationships he developed during this years in England would make him a beloved figure throughout the sixteenth century.

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22 At least 101 separate editions authored, commentated, or translated by Erasmus can be found in EEBO.
century. As one of the foremost authorities on Erasmus once noted, "one cannot ignore the presence of Erasmus and the centrality of Erasmian humanism [in

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England], and it would be difficult to overstate the importance of that influence." Modern historians have explored the connection between the development of humanism and an Anglo-American colonial enterprise, but the emphasis has been placed on Italian humanists exemplified by Niccolò Machiavelli, focusing on the active life and the pursuit of honor, glory, and profit in regards to American expansion. Henry VII’s sponsorship of Italian humanists such as Polydore Vergil may point towards the primacy of this line of thought, but the influence of Erasmus changed the course of English humanism. Instead of focusing on the physical aspects of the humanist experience, we will turn towards the metaphysical aspects of ideal scholarship.

At its most essential level, Erasmian humanism was a reaction against the scholastic nature of Christianity, which by the beginning of the sixteenth century had imposed dogma over primary Biblical study. Erasmus’ early education by Brethren of the Common Life monks at the Steyn monastery in the Low Country was heavily influenced by the Devotio Moderna of Geert Groote and exemplified in Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Kempis’ placed a great deal of emphasis on the need for the humble scholar; “the more thou knowest, and the better thou understandest, the more severe will be thy condemnation, unless thy

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life be proportionably more holy."\textsuperscript{26} Humility mixed with scholarship helped individuals bring glory to God all while deepening one’s understanding of Christianity. The development of the intellectual abilities of the individual was essential for Kempis, and this element would be immensely important for the transformation of historical culture in England. Authority could not be derived from experience or testimony. On the contrary, Kempis argued, “the perceptions of our senses are narrow and dull, and our reasoning on those perceptions frequently misleads us.”\textsuperscript{27} Kempis' reaction to the authenticity of the senses is understandable given the world he lived in; mainstream Christianity in the fifteenth century was transmitted to the masses through the lens of the clergy, with little to no access to the direct word of God as he understood it. When he wrote “let all teachers be silent, let the whole of creation be dumb before thee, and do thou only speak unto my soul,” he was exhorting readers to cut out the intermediary and access God on a personal level.\textsuperscript{28} Authenticity came from the word of God, and the word of God for Kempis was textual. The Brethren of the Common Life strove for an intense and personal relationship with God, and the methodology behind this experience was the intense and personal study of the Bible.

\textsuperscript{26} Thomas à Kempis, \textit{The Imitation of Christ: In Three Books}, ed. by Howard Malcom, trans. by John Payne (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1829), p. 28.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 29.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 30.
Erasmus used this model of textual study and explication he learned at Steyn and turned it towards the sources of antiquity. Certainly this was not a new development. From Petrarch onward, humanists were obsessed with reconstructing the best possible ancient texts. But Erasmus arguably went further than any other humanist to date in his devotion to this process. If textual authority derived from God in the Bible, as the Brethren of the Common Life would argue, Erasmus would contend that authority was inherent within the text itself. The motivations of man could be contested in regards to testimony based on experience. But the text itself could be used to verify and establish authenticity. In Erasmus’ world, the practicality of textual authority came in the creation of critical editions, both of the ancient authorities and of the Bible itself. His insistence at reading the sources in their original language led to the creation of a New Testament that superseded the Vulgate in its fidelity to the oldest texts available. As he would argue in a letter to theologian Maarten Van Dorp in 1515, “truth demands, what is plain even for the blind to see, that there are often passages where the Greek has been badly translated ... who is giving his support to a lie—the man who corrects and restores these texts or the man who would rather accept an error than remove it?”

Understanding the document in its original language and then translating it allowed him to then intellectually

29 Halkin, Erasmus, p. 13.

colonize the text; he was able to establish his own understanding of the text within his translation, taking ownership of the ideas contained within. While Erasmus’ fidelity to the original text should not be doubted, he relied on his own expertise to establish authorial intent.

The critical intellectual problem for English historical thinkers continued to lie with contemporary textual evidence. How could a text be trusted when it was based upon the primary experiences of an individual, especially if that individual was a foreigner? For Erasmus, the answer could be discovered through textual analysis. By scrutinizing and examining a text using all other available textual resources at hand, one could criticize a document and come to a rational understanding of the truthfulness of the text. Erasmus’ influence on English thinking in this regard is certain; by 1548, his *Paraphrases on the New Testament* could be found in every English church by royal decree.31 Erasmus spent some of his happiest and most productive years in England; during this time he tutored a young Henry VIII, engaged in academic debate and study at Oxford and Cambridge, and enjoyed friendship and intellectual solidarity in the home of Thomas More. His works were studied and scrutinized by the most powerful women in England during their developmental years; both Mary and

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Elizabeth would read and comment upon Erasmus’ work during their educations.\(^{32}\)

The most important element of Erasmus’ humanist philosophy that was transmitted to England, in the context of writing American history, was the ability to establish authenticity in a text, regardless of the source. We have already seen how Thomas More established his own textual authority in *Utopia*. He stopped short of placing complete trust on Vespucci’s text; it was More who established the ultimate veracity of the source. Erasmus could read the text in its original language and scrutinize it against known textual sources to establish truth. But where no such comparative sources existed, he was forced to rely on his own judgment to test whether a text could be trusted or not. Ultimately, his knowledge allowed him to examine the text metaphysically, travelling within his own mind and using his own reasoning ability to decide whether it was authoritative or not. The most important experience for Erasmus was both textual and scholarly; through an extensive knowledge, the reader could become an expert worthy of trust.

**America and Rastell**

A significant figure to explore in relation to Erasmian humanism is John Rastell, brother-in-law of Thomas More and an important English intellectual.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{33}\) See Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, p. 24. Rastell’s work has been analyzed several times in the twentieth century. In addition to Parker, pp. 24-25, see McCann, *English Discovery of America*, pp. 89-97; and Quinn, *Explorers and*
Educated at Oxford and present during the crucial period in which Erasmus was in England, his work demonstrates the effect Erasmus had on English historical thought. Rastell adopted the satirical voice often associated with Erasmus’ dialogues; indeed, one of his dialogues would be packaged in at least three 1557 editions of Erasmus’ colloquy on marriage. Rastell would spend most of career in the worlds of printing and humanist study, publishing and editing numerous texts, including some histories, such as Anthony Fitzherbert’s Great Abridgement. Rastell was an early English advocate of the colonization of America as well. During the period More was composing Utopia, Rastell was busy planning a voyage of exploration and possible colonization scheme. In 1517, he received permission from Henry VIII to undertake the project and proceeded to gather the necessary supplies and crew. However, his plans failed,

Colonies, pp. 99-102. For a recent reading, see Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, pp. 28-32.


35 Rastell’s Tale of a Dumb Wife was included with the text. The copy records for the edition present at the Houghton Library at Harvard University attribute the translation to Rastell, but this interpretation is problematic given the enormous potential for financial success if it had been published in his own lifetime instead of 1557. See Erasmus, A mery dialogue, declaring the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyves not onelie verie pleasaunte, but also not a lytle profitable (London: J. Cawood for Antony Kytson, 1557). Two other editions appeared in London in 1557 published by Abraham Vele and H. Wykes. Underscoring the significance of Erasmus in post-reformation England, Erika Rummel argues that the colloquy on marriage “may have inspired Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew.” See Erasmus, Erasmus on Women, ed. by Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 131.

36 Clough, “Rastell, John (d. 1536).”
evidenced by the fact his ship never left England. According to a lawsuit filed by Rastell against harbor master John Ravyn, he was subject to numerous inconveniences in his attempts to get underway. The purpose of the proposed voyage is clear from Rastell’s opening statement in the case. He noted that “he intendid a viage unto the New Land by your gracious mynd and assent to whom your grace grantyd your letters under your grete seal directed as wel to all your

Figure 7. The Printer’s Device of John Rastell. Image courtesy of the British Library.\textsuperscript{37}

subjects as to all other crestyn princes and theyr subjects for the fortherance of
the same."\(^{38}\) Rastell had gained permission to extend English authority across
the ocean to America, and this authority, represented by the letters patent,
carried forth wherever he went. It is important to point out that the authority
claimed by him is primarily textual, the King’s wishes represented in letter form.
Ultimately, this authority was not enough to convince others to help him. The
lawsuit argues that Ravyn did everything in his power to keep Rastell from
making the voyage, including putting holes in the ship, selling his victuals, and
trying to get him to take a Portuguese vessel.\(^{39}\) Indeed, Ravyn insinuated in his
defense that he did not believe the voyage would be successful and therefore
sought to avoid the loss of ship and crew. Clearly, textual authority was not able
to sway much of the English public in 1517 when the feasibility of Anglo-
American colonies was in question, even with the word of the King.

In the period between his failed voyage and the prosecution of his lawsuit,
Rastell ruminated on the reasons he undertook the voyage in the first place. He
believed that American colonization was an important step in creating a new
English empire. In Rastell’s opinion, the possibility of an Anglo-American
overseas empire was not too far outside the realm of possibility in 1520; the
Bristol fishing expeditions to the fertile waters off the coast of northern North
America prove that the English were not averse to traveling to America.
Nonetheless, as his failure to convince his colleagues at home and at sea to

\(^{39}\) Ibid., also in NAW, Vol. I, pp. 162-168.
undertake a colonial endeavor makes evident, the English mind was still not ready to entertain a permanent Anglo-American presence across the Atlantic. In the midst of his contemplation, Rastell decided to publish an argument for English settlement in America. *A new interlude and a mery of the nature of the element* was set up as a dialogue on the geographic knowledge of world between a number of characters, including “Nature” and “Humanye,” but more importantly, “Studyous desire” and “Experiens.” His choice of characters was not accidental. *A new interlude* should be read not only as a statement in favor of Anglo-American colonization, but also as a humanist attempt to reconcile text and experience in the battle over ultimate historical authenticity.

After explaining the four elements of the world (fire, water, wind, and earth), Rastell set the stage for textual reconciliation by arranging a conversation between “Studious desire,” representative of humanist learning, and “Humanye.” The major question that “Humanye” must answer regarded trust, but perhaps not as Rastell’s readers might have expected. “Those thynge to knowe for me be full expedient | But yet i those poynte whiche nature late shewyd me | My mynde in them as yet is not conntent | For I can no maner wyse parceyve nor see.”


“Humanyte” has seen many strange and marvelous things in nature, but is not able to trust what has been seen. Rastell understood the English reliance on testimony and experience, but argued that in many cases, experience was simply not enough to establish trust. For “Humanyte,” the mind is an imperfect recorder when past experience cannot verify the present. In order to trust what the eyes were seeing, another element was needed.

Rastell would provide the solution in a conversation “Studyous desire” has with “Experiens,” an individual who had just completed a tour of the entire world, including America. “Studyous desire” asks “Experiens” to describe his travels: “Syr I understande that ye have be | In many strannge countree | And have had grete fylycyte | Straunge causes to seke and fynde”42 Rastell insinuated here that “Studyous desire” already knows about the things “Experiens” is about to describe from studying texts that other travelers have written. “Experiens” then confirms this knowledge, noting “Ryght farr syr I have rydden & gone | And seen straunge thynges many one | In Affryk Europe and Ynde ... I know by experyens.”43 Textual authority here confirms the validity of experience. In historical writing then, text and experience are reliant upon each other, Rastell argued. The scholar could confirm the authenticity of texts through the experience of others, while the individual could account for their experiences by studying the textual testimony of those who had already experienced them. However, beyond trusting one’s own experiences, how could the English reader

43 Ibid.
trust the experiences of a foreigner? Rastell cast "Experiens" as a foreign traveler to address this very issue. Although he was not English and had been to many strange and marvelous places, "Experiens" could be trusted because "Studyous desire" could authenticate his experiences through textual knowledge and human contact. He notes that "Experiens" "Hym selfe not longe a gone | whiche was here personally | Declarynge hye phylosophy | And laste this fygure purposely | For humanytes instruccyon." "Experiens" was a known commodity; he had been to England before. He would give his testimony personally to the reader with "Studyous desire" present to verify its truth.

Authenticity established, Rastell could present his readers with an English view of American history. Unsurprisingly, Rastell's source was the same as More's: Amerigo Vespucci's letters and Mundus Novus. "Experiens" explains that Vespucci "Tyll now within this .xx. yere | westwarde be founde new landes | That we never harde tell of before this | By wrytynge nor other meanys | yet many nowe have ben there." Only at the beginning of the sixteenth century had Vespucci made his own encounter with the Western Hemisphere, "Experiens" argues, finding success in an ocean crossing despite a lack of textual sources to guide the way. Yet Vespucci's tale was suspect, as he next presents a precedent for the aforementioned voyage. "The moste wyse pryncce the .vii.

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44 Ibid.

45 See Chapter One.

Henry, “Experiens” notes, “Causyd furst for to be founde.” Rastell insinuated that Vespucci made his voyages with the knowledge of John Cabot’s successful exploration of the North American coast that was commissioned by Henry VII. He was critical of the naming of America as well, noting with a tongue-in-cheek that “this newe landes founde lately | Ben callyd America by cause only | Americus dyd furst them fynde.” The English were in a perfect position to both write and make the history of America because they had been there before.

Rastell’s subsequent discussion on the current state of English activity in the New World has been correctly analyzed by scholars in conjunction with More’s *Utopia* as a statement on the necessity of American colonization for England to become a great nation. However, this should also be read as an attempt to write the history of America from an English perspective. Rastell voyaged into the counterfactual as “Experiens” laments, “O what a thynge had be than | yf that they that be Englyshe men | Myght have ben the furst of all | That there shulde have take possessyon | And made furst buyldynge & habytacion | A memory perpetuall.” Rastell believed the English should have taken the momentum of the Cabot voyages, which he thought was the first American encounter, and created permanent settlements. Without establishing a colonial presence, the English were simply interlopers in a world beginning to be dominated by the Spanish at the time of Rastell’s treatise. Inherent with the

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., p. 171.
49 Ibid., p. 170.
construction of a colony was the construction of a history, “a memory perpetuall.” Building an empire would allow England to transcend national significance for world renown, and for Rastell, American colonization would be a critical element in the creation of this empire. Immediately after his mournful counterfactual, “Experiens” boldly stated, “and also what an honorable thynge | Bothe to the relme and to the kynge | To have had his domynyon extendynge | There into so farre a ground.” Rastell advocated America as the vital ingredient in an English empire. It was not too late, he argued, for them to begin a colonial enterprise and start settling in America.

The dialogue moves towards closure as both “Experiens” and “Studyous desire” discuss the difficulty in gaining public support for American colonization. While they understood both the development of a European America and the best path towards English involvement in it, the public still refused to accept this course as a successful one. The way forward then, “Experiens” points out, is for Studyous desire to continue his work in textual quantifying the New World. “Lo is not this a thynge woorderfull | How that | Et subito studyouse desire dicat.” In a play on the meaning of the names he used, Rastell argued that the way forward for the English was to continue to study and write the history of America in England. With textual knowledge supporting experience, the English would be prepared to undertake the colonization of America. Indeed, an Anglo-American

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 171.
textual element would help convince the English of the ultimate wisdom in such an enterprise.

Rastell's use of Erasmian humanism to give authenticity to the foreign textual evidence of America was successful to a degree. But his dialogue acknowledged that there was still much more work to be done if the English would begin to start relying on both textual and foreign evidence to support their conclusions. In the subsequent decades after Rastell's call for colonization, there were but a few English colonizing attempts. Only a year after he published the *Interlude*, several adventurers proposed a series of New World voyages to The Draper Company of London, a corporate guild focused on the wool and cloth trade. Their council approved the voyage, and remarked on the excellent experience and knowledge of the sailors. "And we thynk it were to sore aventour to joperd v shippes with men & goodes unto the said lland uppon the singuler trust of one man, callyd as we understond, Sebastyan, whiche Sabastyan, as we here say, was never in that land hym self, all if he makes reporte of many thinges as he hath hard his Father and other men speke in tymes past." In spite of the work of the Erasmian humanist circle to privilege textual sources, it was simply too early for the teaching to have taken hold in English society. The Draper Company executives admired the knowledge of the group seeking funding for their New World project, but would only agree to it if they involved Sebastian Cabot, whose father John Cabot had undertaken voyages of exploration for

The younger Cabot was an authority because he had a direct personal encounter with experience, and this knowledge trumped any textual knowledge the adventurers might have.

In a Durkheimian sense, it is understandable that it would take at least a generation or two for the Erasmian reforms to take hold in English society. Rastell’s call for a more textually based approach to the study of America was unsuccessful not because the English were uninterested in the New World; because they were not ready to grapple with America in a textual sense, the majority of English people could not see the benefit of a colonial venture. Nonetheless, Rastell’s innovation would prove useful by the middle of the sixteenth century. More and more Anglo-American expeditions were being organized, and English merchants and sailors found themselves in positions throughout the growing Spanish Atlantic world. Roger Barlowe, an English expatriate in Spain who had been to Spanish America in the 1520s with Sebastian Cabot, saw the increasing dominance of Spain throughout the Americas and sought to awaken the English mind to the opportunities the New World presented.\(^5\) In a 1541 translation of Martín Fernández de Enciso’s geographical treatise, Barlowe argued that there was room for the English in America. “Now by this your grace maie well apperceve what parte of the universal is doscovered and what ther resteth for to dycover. Hit is clerely sene by the cosmographia that of iii partes of the world the iii partes be discovered, for out of Spayne thei saile all the Indies and sees Occidentales, and from Portingale

thei saylle all the Indies and sees Orientalles, so that betwene the waie of the orient and the waie of the occydent thei have compassed all the world.⁵⁴

Although the Atlantic was dominated by an Iberian presence, the English could and should play a role. Barlowe hoped Henry VIII would help to sponsor a colonization attempt, but by the 1540s, the King's decision making was highly erratic. Barlowe's scheme would fail, but a decade later, Richard Eden would sketch the outline of an English America in an Iberian Atlantic.

Eden and Martire

It was through Richard Eden's efforts that American history finally found a place in the sixteenth-century English lexicon. As we have seen over the course of these first two chapters, America forced the English to rethink how they wrote history. Heavily influenced by the historical precepts set forth by Isidore of Seville in the seventh-century, English history was dominated by local testimony and tradition. Isidore's historical method was developed from a fundamental misreading of Cicero. Testimonial authority trumped textual validity in this scenario. By the late fifteenth-century, however, the introduction of America into the European consciousness caused some problems with this arrangement. The English simply could not write a history of America using sources that they could not trust. We have seen how the English first turned towards contemporary texts, particularly the life of Saint Brendan, to fit America into the existing textual tradition. English sailors who had made the voyage to the Western Hemisphere

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also attempted to record their experiences, but these stories did not find their way into print. The solution, as More's *Utopia* would demonstrate, involved the incorporation of humanist methodology into English intellectual society. Erasmian humanism provided the solution, exemplified in Barlowe's Anglo-American dialogue. However, it was an English humanist, Richard Eden, who finally solved the American historiographical problem and cleared the way for Richard Hakluyt, who would become a great promoter of an Anglo-American historiography in the later sixteenth-century.\(^5\)

Eden grew up as humanism was supplanting scholasticism as the dominant method of learning in England.\(^5\) Educated at the University of Cambridge in the 1530s and 1540s, Eden benefitted from the proclamations of Henry VIII, which outlawed the scholastic method of teaching and fixing a humanistic course of study.\(^5\) While at Cambridge, Eden became well versed in the classical learning of Greece and Rome, working especially with the Latin

\(^{55}\) A discussion of Hakluyt and his contemporaries will commence in Chapter Three.

\(^{56}\) See Chapter One.

texts, and had access to many of the newly produced continental histories of America.\(^{58}\) Texts of all persuasions circulated through Cambridge in the sixteenth-century, and Eden took advantage by learning all he could on a number of subjects.\(^{59}\) It was during this period that Eden first encountered the work of Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, or as he was known in England, Peter Martyr. Martire’s American history came to some very different conclusions than


Vespucci's work, which had been privileged in humanist circles since the first decades of the sixteenth century. It is, therefore, critical to gain an understanding of Martire and his historical method.

Martire, like his English colleague Polydore Vergil, was a prototypical Renaissance humanist. Born and raised on the Italian peninsula, he experienced an exemplary education, forging connections in both the government and the church.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, he was well positioned for an ecclesiastical career when a close friend of his, Adrian VI, became the Pope.\textsuperscript{61} Nonetheless, he sought patronage on the Iberian peninsula, traveling to the court of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile and Léon.\textsuperscript{62} It was in the young queen that Martire found his patron. Employed by the Spanish court, he was utilized as a diplomat, securing success on several very difficult missions.\textsuperscript{63} After seeking glory on the battlefield during the final stage of the Spanish Reconquista, he was at the temporary court in Grenada when Queen Isabella took a Venetian into her


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 439.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 436.

Witnessing the approval of Christopher Columbus' mission in 1492 and the news of his ultimate success in 1493, Martire spread the news of the New World throughout Europe during the late fifteenth-century in a massive campaign of correspondence. Writing to Diego de Sousa, the Archbishop of Braga, in 1493, Martire noted Columbus “has brought evidence of what he says and promises to make even greater discoveries. For us it is sufficient that the half of the world which lay hidden is coming to light.” For the remainder of his life, through correspondence and printed texts, he would publicize the New World; as late as 1519, Martire was writing about Hernán Cortés' conquest of the Mexica.

Fifteenth and sixteenth-century Iberia suffered from some of the same historiographical issues that plagued England. Indeed, many of Martire’s friends questioned his judgment in taking up residence in fifteenth-century Spain. By reputation, the Iberian peninsula was far removed from the new humanist

64 Maynard, “Peter Martyr of Anghiera, Humanist and Historian,” p. 437.
65 Ibid., p. 443.
66 Martyr, “To the Archbishop of Braga [Diego de Sousa], Barcelona, 1 October 1493,” in Lunardi, Magioncalda, and Mazzacane, eds., Nuova Raccolta Colombiana, pp. 43-45.
67 Martire, “To the Marquises [Pedro Fajardo and Luis (sic) Hurtado de Mendoza], 2 December 1519,” in ibid., p. 137.
68 “But Martyr was destined to move, to the consternation of his friends and advisers, from the old political center of Rome and Italy to a new world represented by Spain.” Eatough, Selections from Peter Martyr, p. 3.
learning emanating out of the Italian peninsula and the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{69} Like England, Spain was on the periphery of mainstream academic culture. Yet Martire knew that the barbarian image ascribed to Spain and its people by some of his contemporaries was not a fair assessment. In Ferdinand and Isabella, Martire saw a royal partnership that was highly receptive to humanist learning and methodology, and his experience with them proved that this judgment was correct.\textsuperscript{70}

Martire was in a perfect position in the early sixteenth-century to write the first secondary history of America. Indeed, Francis A. MacNutt noted he “was perhaps the first man in Spain to realise the importance of the discovery made by Columbus.”\textsuperscript{71} Having access to most of the key textual sources from the explorations of Columbus, Vespucci, and others, as well as the opportunity to interview key witnesses to the voyages, he set about writing a history of the New World.\textsuperscript{72} With the initial fruits of his labor appearing in 1511, Martire continued work on his history until his death in 1525.\textsuperscript{73} He constructed his history in a modern fashion, questioning sources and witnesses, deciding what was

\textsuperscript{69} Nonetheless, while Martire described Spain in frontier-like terms, it did have some major advantages to the Italian peninsula, including political stability. See ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{70} See ibid., p. 4-8.

\textsuperscript{71} MacNutt, \textit{De Orbe Novo}, Vol. I, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp. 43-48.

\textsuperscript{73} See Eatough, \textit{Selections from Peter Martyr}, p. 12-13.
trustworthy and what needed to be left on the cutting room floor.\textsuperscript{74} His work was met with jubilation in some quarters, and skepticism in others.\textsuperscript{75} The major problem that he faced from his critics was that he never traveled to America or witnessed the things that he wrote about.\textsuperscript{76} But as a humanist, Martire could answer his critics through metaphysically visiting the new world through the texts he extrapolated in his writings. Humanist principles allowed Martire to construct his history far from America while creating the authority through which it could be trusted.

While in Cambridge, Eden had access to many of the other important American texts of the day, in addition to his other studies. We should consider the ramifications of choosing Martire to trust over Vespucci, who was More’s and Rastell’s muse. Vespucci had been to America; indeed, Eden’s 1553 translation of Martin Cortés acknowledged Vespucci’s significant role in the early exploration of the Western Hemisphere.\textsuperscript{77} From Isidore’s perspective, if a history had to rely

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{74} Lunardi, Magioncalda, and Mazzacane, eds., \textit{Nuova Raccolta Colombiana}, pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{75} Eatough describes a number of his contemporary critics, and certainly Eatough should be considered a modern critic, as he is concerned with the factual veracity of Martire’s \textit{Decades}. See Eatough, \textit{Selections from Peter Martyr}. One area for future research would be the development of competing intellectual camps, one favoring Martire’s Columbian history, and the other favoring Vespuccian supremacy.

\textsuperscript{76} Given Herodotus’ influence in the late medieval and early modern world, it is understandable where some of this criticism came from. See Chapter One for more on this point.

\textsuperscript{77} There was still a movement by some to call the New World the “Indies,” and a small group insisted on calling it “Columbia.”
\end{quote}
on a textual source, it was better to choose one developed by an eyewitness than one written by an outsider. However, Eden found a kindred spirit in Martire, for Eden would also never visit America. In Spain, Martire had already dealt with one of the key issues that would certainly cause Eden some trouble. Martire scholar Ernesto Lunardi notes that “some writers of his time, especially Spanish, [denied] the reliability of Peter Martyr, arguing that he could not know the events of the New World because he had never been there.”  

Isidore’s historical precepts privileged Herodotian physical knowledge of an event and landscape over textual authority. Yet the humanist vision, as Lunardi demonstrates, allowed Martire to create a more authoritative text. Martire’s work fit well into the Erasmian humanist paradigm, and his texts would give Eden part of the blueprint necessary to create an English version of American history.

After Cambridge, Richard Eden began a career that would see him utilize his skills as both a chemist and alchemist, and enter into government service. The 1540s and 1550s were turbulent political times in England; they were even more tumultuous for a humanist seeking patronage amongst the nobility in English society. The legacy of the Wars of the Roses, even more than half a century removed, cast a shadow of uncertainty on the English political scene as

78 Lunardi, Magioncalda, and Mazzacane, eds., _Nuova Raccolta Colombiana_, p. 5.

79 Ibid.

Figure 8. Balthasar Springer, *Of the newe landes* (1508). Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.  

81 Balthasar Springer, *Of the newe landes of the people founde by the messengers of the kyngge of Portyngale named Emanuel* (1508), first page; from photostat of original at the Massachusetts Historical Society, ACH P49 v. 90.
Henry VIII passed away and his son, Edward VI, took the throne. By 1553, Edward had grown sick and it became certain to most English political insiders that Edward's reign would not be a long one; people across the political spectrum worked to place themselves on the side of his successor, although it was not certain who that might be. Eden gambled his reputation by supporting the newly created Duke of Northumberland, John Dudley. Dudley was a Protestant noble who sought to keep the throne out of the hands of Henry VIII’s oldest daughter, Mary, who was Catholic. In 1553, Eden found cause to dedicate a new work to Dudley, a translation that would be one of the first true histories of the America in English.

In the early 1550s, Eden acquired a small English tract by Balthasar Springer titled, *Of the newe landes and of the people founde by the messengers*

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83 In particular, see Alford, *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*.

84 This was a particularly bad gamble for Eden, as Dudley was executed as a traitor by Mary I for putting his daughter, Lady Jane Grey on the throne for a short spell. Eden seems to have been forgiven though, as his edition of Martyr’s Decades was dedicated to Mary I and her husband, Philip II of Spain. Eden remained productive and, perhaps more importantly, out of prison and alive, throughout Mary’s reign and into the Elizabethan period. Indeed, due to the popularity of his work, he remained productive well into the seventeenth-century, as we shall see in Chapter 3. For the controversy surrounding Jane Grey, see Alison Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Days Queen* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003); and Alison Weir, *Children of England: The Heirs of King Henry VIII, 1547-1558* (London: J. Cape, 1996).
of the kynge of Portyngale named Emanuel.\textsuperscript{85} Printed and translated in Antwerp in 1515 by Jan van Doesborch, the tract itself was based on Springer's 1508 Dutch tract, \textit{Die reyse van Lissebone}, by the same printer.\textsuperscript{86} Springer himself is a mysterious figure, a Tyrolese banking agent who accompanied Francisco de Almeida on a voyage to India in 1505, and of whom very little biographical information is known.\textsuperscript{87} Importantly, the 1515 English edition is sandwiched between two portions of Amerigo Vespucci's \textit{Mundus Novus}, leading Eden to believe that the entire tract was Vespucci's history of America.\textsuperscript{88} The material caused a rather virulent reaction in Eden; he wrote,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Springer, \textit{Die reyse van Lissebone om te varen na dz' eylandt Naguaria in groot Indien} (Antwerp: Jan van Doesborch, 1508); one of two known copies in the JCBL (J508 S769r).
  \item Ibid., pp. 8-9.
  \item D'andrade and Randles note, "That Springer was concerned with India and Vespucci with America does not seem to have troubled the editor at all; both were 'new lands.'" Ibid., p. 8. There also seems to have been some controversy over the authorship of the text in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century,
Thus, the initial reason Eden began his campaign to bring American history to English readers was to give them a true and authoritative version of the history of America. Yet the reason he believed the tract was erroneous was more complex than the simple mixing of American and Indians voyages. When Eden mentioned that he read “Decades, and also the navigations de novo orbe,” the quarrel was not over a mixed up Springer and Vespucci, but a question of authority between Martire and Vespucci.

Since the publication of Amerigo Vespucci’s letters in 1503 and 1504 and Waldseemüller’s attribution of Vespucci’s Hemispheric discovery in his 1508 map of the world, Vespucci’s claim of discovery had trumped that of Christopher

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89 Sebastian Münster, A treatyse of the newe India, with other new founde landes and llandes, aswell eastwarde as westwarde, as they are knowen and found in these oure dayes, after the descricion of Sebastian Munster in his boke of universall Cosmographie, trans. and ed. by Richard Eden (London: Edward Sutton, 1553), pp. aa.ii.-aa.iii.
Columbus.\footnote{See Hessler, \textit{The Naming of America}.} Witness Thomas Lanquet’s English chronicle, updated by Thomas Cooper in 1549.\footnote{Thomas Lanquet and Thomas Cooper, \textit{An epitome of cronicles} (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1549).} Following an entry for 1492, Lanquet wrote, “Certaine new ilandes were found in the Ocean Sea first by Amerinus Vespucius, and after by Christophorus Columbanus.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 269A.} English chroniclers were simply following contemporary European wisdom, which by the middle of the sixteenth-century had accepted that Vespucci was the true discoverer of the Western Hemisphere.\footnote{Curiously, even Waldseemüller was conscious of the ramifications of the error on his map immediately attempting to withdraw it, to no avail. See Hessler, \textit{The Naming of America}.} Indeed, the first volume of the highly popular compellation of travel literature, Giovanni Battista Ramusio’s 1550 \textit{Navigationi et Viaggi}, made little mention of Columbus, printing only Amerigo Vespucci’s letters.\footnote{Two versions of the first volume of Ramusio appeared before 1555. See Giovanni Battista Ramusio, ed., \textit{Primo volume delle Navigationi et viaggi nel qual si contiene la descrittione dell’Africa} (Venice: Heirs of L. Giunta, 1550); and Ramusio, ed., \textit{Primo volume, & seconda edizione delle Navigationi et viaggi in molti luoghi corretta, et ampliata} (Venice: Heirs of L. Giunta, 1554). For modern editions of Ramusio, see Ramusio, \textit{Navigazioni e viaggi}, 6 vols., ed. by Marica Milanesa (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1978-). More American material, including Martire’s \textit{Decades}, would not appear until the third volume became available in 1556. See George Bruner Parks, \textit{The Contents and Sources of Ramusio’s Navigationi} (New York: New York Public Library, 1955), pp. 7, 31. Also see Parks, “Ramusio’s Literary History,” in \textit{Studies in Philology}, LII:2 (Apr., 1955), pp. 127-148.} Martire’s work, which circulated throughout Europe in manuscript correspondence in the 1490s before appearing in print by 1504, simply could not compete with the
perception, in part created by Vespucci himself, that Vespucci was the more important figure in the American discovery saga.\textsuperscript{95}

Eden, Martire, and Ramusio were each humanists whose efforts were dictated by classical study.\textsuperscript{96} Yet Eden chose to give the ultimate authority on American history to Martire. Eden reveals several clues that give us an indication of why he chose to trust Martire. First of all, as we have already seen, Eden encountered Martire’s work during his studies at Cambridge, and much of his assumptions on America were developed in reading Martire.\textsuperscript{97} In all of his American writings published before his death, Eden was pro-Columbian, reporting that Vespucci’s voyages followed Columbus’.\textsuperscript{98} Martire’s work was also

\textsuperscript{95}Felipe Fernández-Armesto argues that Amerigo Vespucci was a superb propagandist and was able to orally and textually promote his claims much better than Columbus. See Fernández-Armesto, \textit{Amerigo: The Man Who Gave His Name to America} (New York: Random House, 2007).

\textsuperscript{96}For Ramusio’s classical and humanist background, see Parks, “Ramusio’s Literary History.”

\textsuperscript{97}Eden’s copy of Martire’s Decades has survived, and after moving through the libraries of several notable Americana collections, now resides in the Garrett Library at the Evergreen Museum and Library at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland (E141 .A51 1533 QUARTO). For more information on this particular edition, which was heavily annotated by Eden, see Elizabeth Baer, “Richard Eden’s Copy of the 1533 \textit{Decades} of Peter Martyr,” in \textit{Essays Honoring Lawrence C. Wroth}, ed. by Frederick R. Goff (Portland, ME: The Anthoensen Press, 1951), pp. 3-14.

\textsuperscript{98}Curiously, we see later editors of Eden’s work, such as Michael Lok, attribute anti-Columbian words to him. For example, in the 1612 English edition of Martire, Lok writes as Eden, “In deede \textit{Colon} was not greatly learned: yet of good understanding. And when he had knowledge of the sayde newe landes by the information of the deade Pilotte, made relation thereof to certayne learned menne, with whome he conferred as touching the lyke thinges mentioned of olde authors. Hee communicated this secrete and conferred chiefly with a Fryar, named John Perez of Marchena, that dwelt in the Monastery of Rabida.” The
a true secondary humanist source, unlike Ramusio (and Eden) whose work was a compilation of mostly primary documents. Recalling Alexander at the tomb of Achilles, Eden expressed his admiration for Homer (and by proxy Martire), exclaiming through Alexander’s voice, “Oh the most fortunate, which haste founde such a troupe to magnifi thy doinges, meaning hereby, that the fame of Achilles was no lesse notable to hys posteritie by homers writing, then it was in hys lyfe tyme by hys owne marcial affayres.” Homer’s strength as an historian, according to Eden, was that his subjects lived in or near to his own time; Alexander (and Eden) admired how “exellently the Poet Homere had set forth his heroical factes” because he was close to his sources.

Perhaps more than Eden’s familiarity with Decades and Martire’s role as a humanist historian, Eden respected Martire’s work because he not only wrote about Spanish glory in the new world, but also included the exploration of other states, including the English. Martire included the explorations of Cabot in his Decades, events that the English chronicles had denigrated earlier in the century.

Eden’s patriotism stood out in his dedication to Dudley; preparing an American history in the vernacular for England was not his vocation, but a “duetie I beare to my natyve countrey & countreymen, which have of late to their great praise

posthumes transformation of Eden’s character will be discussed in Chapter 3. See Martire, De Novo Orbe, or The Historie of the West Indies, Contayning the actes and adventures of the Spanyardes, trans. and ed. by Richard Eden and Michael Lok (London: Thomas Adams, 1612), p. 2.

Münster, A treatyse of the newe India, p. aa.ii.

Ibid.
(whatsoever succede) attempted with newe viages to serche the seas and newe
found landes, I thought it worthy my travayle, to their better comfort, (as one not
otherwise able to further thyrr enterprise) to translate this boke oute of latin into
Englishe." By making the history of America available to the English, and
especially those who were engaged in making an English America, Eden
believed he was helping make up for lost opportunities and forge new ones. In
addition, Eden began to establish authority with his audience, showing that the
English were already involved with American exploration and colonial efforts.
America was not only strange and marvelous, Eden argued, but it was becoming
more familiar. Indeed, if Martire thought that Cabot’s effort was worthy enough to
include in his Decades, certainly the English could gather strength to continue
forward in creating an American colonial enterprise. As Eden would write in his
edition of Decades, “yow may reade sumwhat in this booke in the vyage of the
woorthy owlde man yet lyving Sabstiane Cabote, in the vi. booke of the thyrde
Decade.” England was part of this new American world, and it was time for
the English to begin exploiting this knowledge.

\[\text{101} \text{ Ibid., aa.iii.}\]

\[\text{102} \text{ Eden thought that a combination of bad luck and a lack of continuous colonial}
\text{efforts had hurt England as a nation. “Kinge Henry the .viii. about the same yere}
of this raygne, furnished & sent forth certen shippes under the governaunce of
Sebastian Cabot yet living . . . had not at that tyme bene wanting, it myghte
happelye have comen to passe, that that riche treasurye called Perularia . . .
myght longe since have bene in the towre of London, to the kinges great honoure
and welth of this his realme.” Ibid., aa.iii.}\]

\[\text{103} \text{ Eden, The Decades of the newe worlde of west India, p. c.i.}\]
Imagining an English America in the Spanish Text

At the heart of Eden's plan to give his sources authority was his interpretation of Cicero. At the beginning of Decades, Eden wrote,

The most famous areatour and learned philosopher Marcus Jullius Cicero, wryteth, that in all consultations as touchynge owre behavoure and order of lyvyng amonge men, it behoveth us ever to beare in mynde howe farre the dignitie of mans nature, excelleth the condition of brute beastes. . . . But the mynde of man, beinge of more noble nature, is nurysshed with knowleage, and taketh pleasure in disisyngge or excogitatynge sume honest thynge, whereby it not onely leaveth amongeth men a memorie of his immortall nature, but also engendereth the lyke affection in other that deylyte to see and heare such things as are commendable in theyr predessors. And this surely thynke I to bee the cause that eyther the famous factes of worthy men, or ingenious inventions of experte artificiers, have not onely nobilitate the autours and divisers of the same, or such to whom they have byn dedicate, but also that parte of theyr commendations have redounded to all suche as have spente theyr tyme and taken peynes in illusstratynge and settyngge further theyr doynges.¹⁰⁴

The medieval way of writing history in England, focusing only on the present and only things that were seen and experienced, was like the "condition of brute beastes." The new way of writing history was far more complex, suited for "the mynde of man [which is] nurysshed with knowledge." Eden extolled his readers to start to trust these new histories that were describing strange and marvelous things. These historians, regardless of whether they were English or not, had

The New World was a strange and marvelous place. Of that Eden had no doubt. However, the novelty of America was not a good reason to discount England’s ability to succeed there. Describing the unbelievable amounts of gold flowing from the new world, Eden reminded his readers to recall Solomon’s adventures

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. a.i.a.
Figure 9. Eden’s *The Decades of the newe worlde or West India* (1555), title page. Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., title page. Image from the Massachusetts Historical Society, Dowse Library.
in the Bible; "consider the saying of wyse Salomon, who affyrmeth that there is no new thing under the Sunne, & that the thing that hath been, cometh to passe again: which saying doeth greatly confyrme the trueth, of such thinges as are spoken of in this Boke." 106 The ultimate textual authority in the early modern European world was the Bible, and one of the wisest figures in the book claimed there was "no new thing under the Sunne." Yet, as Eden would point out in Decades, "Salomon for al his inconstant and waverynge wysedome and his great ryches obeyned by his navigations to Ophir, yet was there at this tyme no knowleage of Antipodes, neyther dydde any of his shyppes sayle abowt the hole worlde, perce the Ocean, and traverse the Equinoctial Line to thinferiour hemispherie or halfe globe of the earthe and sea as dyd the fomous shypp Victoria sent furth by Themperours maiestie." 107 Solomon did many great things, but he did not know about the New World. There were things that the ancients did not know about. Therefore new, strange, and marvelous knowledge should not automatically be thrown out, but studied, considered, and if found to be true, accepted. Indeed, while most of the maps in the world were influenced by Ptolemy, Eden noted, his geography was ultimately erroneous; "albeit he was an excellent man, yet were there many thinges hyd from his knowledge, as not sufficientlye tryed or searched at those daies, as manifestly appeareth in that he

106 Münster, A treatyse of the newe India, first page of the epistle to the reader.

107 Eden, The Decades of the newe worlde or west India, p. a, iii.
knew nothing of. America with the hole fyrme [?] lande adherent therunto, which is nowe found to be the fourth parte of the earth.\textsuperscript{108}

Eden was left with one more question to answer. How could readers test whether a source was true or false? Eden’s answer was to travel to the place a source was describing and experience it for one’s self. The travel would not take place physically though; in order for the English reader who was tied to the country to experience America, they would travel there textually and metaphysically. Eden argued, “Nought els to say, but that experience to be most certayn which is joyned with reason or speculacion, and that reason to be most sure which is confirmed with experience.”\textsuperscript{109} Eden’s solution to the problem of traveling to America was for the reader to imagine what the New World was like through reading a text. At that point, the reader could use reason and speculation to come to an understanding of whether a text it authoritative or not. Indeed, physical experience could only take a person so far, according to Eden. Writing on the importance of trusting the wisdom within texts, Eden stated “wheras I have here spoken of knowledge joyned with experience, I meane by knowledge that which we commonly call learning, whether it be gotten out of bokes (which are the writinges of wyse and expert men) or otherwyse by conference & educacion with such as are lerned: meaning nought els by

\textsuperscript{108} Münster, \textit{A treatyse of the newe India}, seventh page of the epistle to the reader.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., eleventh page of the epistle to the reader.
Figure 10. Translation notes and from Eden's copy of Martire. Image courtesy of the Garrett Library.

learning, but the gathering of many mens wittes into one mans head, & the experience of many yeres, and many mens lyves, to the lyfe of one, whom we call a learned, wyse, and expert man." Using the texts produced by "wyse and expert men" to guide them, readers could gain the experience of many years without ever leaving their homes.

In translating the texts in The Decades of the Newe Worlde, Eden made the mostly Spanish histories of America decidedly English. Eden’s translations were remarkably accurate regarding the editions he had access to. Word for word, Eden went through each of the three decades of Martire, Gomara, and the other texts. True to his authors, he leaves nothing out. However, he makes the texts his own by directing his readers’ interest towards particular passages, creating marginalia to highlight his own particular vision. Commentary such as “Note, frome the begynning of the worlde” or “Riches are the instruments of conquests” are typical of the marginalia created by Eden that is found on each page. While these notes merely pointed towards texts that Eden had translated exactly from his authors, they each presented a particular vision of American history that he wanted his readers to visualize. Far from a mere translator, Eden was authoring a particularly English version of the history of

111 Münster, A treatyse of the newe India, eleventh page of the epistle to the reader.

112 Eden’s translation style is exemplified through his notes in the edition of Martire he used to translate the material. See Figure 10 and note 110 above.

113 Eden, The Decades of the newe worlde or west India, last page of “The epistle of Peter Martyr.”
America, visualizing the landscape in the text, as evidenced from the maps he
drew in the margins.\textsuperscript{114}

In the final analysis, Eden sought to broaden the fortunes of England. He
dreamed of an English America on the other side of the world. “Suche as fable
that there is Antipodes, that is to saye, menne of the contrarye parte, where the
sunne ryseth when it falleth to us, and to have theyr feete agaynste oures, we
oughte by no reason to beeleeve. Those bee the woordes of Syncte
Augustyne.”\textsuperscript{115} Yet Augustine was wrong. The opportunity for an English
Antipodes was available, an English America in an Iberian Atlantic world. Eden’s
policy was not imperialistic, but patriotic and opportunistic. To write the history of
America in England was to colonize the textual space in an Iberian Atlantic; a
textual space that could one day become a physical reality.

\textbf{Epilogue: New Beginnings}

By the beginning of the 1560s, Richard Eden had constructed an English
version of American history that had solved a major historiographical issue,
resolving textual authority in Anglo-American historical thought. Eden’s vision of
American history was exemplified in his 1561 translation of Martin Cortés’ \textit{The
Arte of Navigation}.

That is to saye. Our eyes have brought unto us the knowledge of
moste excellent thinges. For what so ever is disputed of the worlde,
had never bene invented, yf niether the Starres, niether the Sunne,
niether heave, coulde have bene seene. For the knowledge of the

\textsuperscript{114} See Figure 10 and note 110 above.

\textsuperscript{115} Münster, \textit{A treatyse of the newe India}, fourteenth and fifteenth page of the
epistle to the reader.
daye & nyght, takyng beginning at the eyes, caused us as it were by certen limites and boundes to measure the circuites of monthes and yeares, wherby we came to the knoweledge of tymes and the order of universall nature. 

Experience was still important in obtaining historical knowledge. Eden acknowledged that “our eyes have brought unto us the knowledge of moste excellent thinges.” However, when Eden wrote about “our eyes,” he meant more than simply English eyes. By figuring out how to trust international textual sources, “we came to the knoweledge of tymes and the order of universall nature.” Using the Erasmian humanist method of testing the validity of a textual source using metaphysical travel, as well as using Cicero to justify writing a history he had not experienced, Eden opened the door to an Anglo-American historical enterprise that would begin to flourish in the second half of the sixteenth-century.

Yet perhaps more importantly, Eden’s work allowed the English to begin imagining an English space within an Iberian dominated Atlantic world. For England to become more international and cosmopolitan, it needed to establish a presence in America. England had to move towards America before it was too late, for “But if I shuld here particularly and at large declare how Englande is in few yeares decayed and impoverysshed, and how on the contrary parte Spayne is inryched, I shulde perhappes displease more in descrybyng the myserie of the one, then please other in expressynge the storysthynge state of the other, which by all reason is lyke dayly to increase, aswell for the great rychesse that are

yearely brought thither from the Indies."¹¹⁷ However, despite the high stakes that England was now grappling with, it need not risk everything to establish a New World presence. Eden wrote, “for in maner all the late discoveries both of the Spanyardes & Portugales, had theyr begynnyng of such small conjectures, with uncertyne hope (as it were preter spem sub spe) until God and good happe, by the constant travayle and valiaunt mynde of such as fyrst attempted the same, gave them to enjoye that they hoped for.”¹¹⁸ The English, like the Spanish and the Portuguese, would have to start their American colonial enterprise on a small scale. In Eden’s estimation, his translated American history was exactly the small step necessary to begin moving the English westward into the Atlantic.

As the English began to realize their colonial ambitions during the second half of the sixteenth-century, a new generation of historians would take up Eden’s work and continue to build upon his example. However, these late sixteenth-century figures would now begin to utilize their new found authority to begin a political program aimed at establishing a permanent English position in the New World. Rather than seeking a place in an Iberian Atlantic world, English historians would begin using Spanish-American historians such as Bartolomé de las Casas to carve out an English Atlantic World.

¹¹⁷ Eden, *The Decades of the newe worlde of west India*, pp. b.iii.b-b.iii.a.
CHAPTER THREE

INVENTING EMPIRE

Historiography and Tradition in an Emerging English Atlantic

“Secondly the acceptation of Columbus his offer of the West Indies by kinge Henry the Seaventh at the very firste maketh moche for the title of the kinges of England althoughe they had no former interest.”
Richard Hakluyt (1584)

“And there do Pallaces and temples rise
Out of the earth, and kissee th’enamored skies,
Where new Britania, humlie kneels to heaven,
The world to her, and both at ther blest feete,
In whom the Circles of all Empires meet.”
George Chapman (1596)

Prologue: The Life and Death of Stephen Parmenius

In the fall of 1581, a young Hungarian humanist arrived in Oxford, England to pursue a program of scholarly study. Prior to his arrival, Stephen Parmenius

1 Hakluyt, A particuler discourse concerninge the greate necessitie and manifolde commodityes that are like to growe to this realme of Englane by the westerne discoveries lately attempted, pp. 88-89.


had been traveling for several years examining the growth of Protestant churches across western Europe.\textsuperscript{4} However, instead of undertaking an examination of the development of Anglicanism, he decided to consider a new field of learning. Parmenius had the fortune of meeting Richard Hakluyt, Anglican minister and one of the chief promoters of Anglo-American knowledge, upon entering Christ Church.\textsuperscript{5} Taking residence with Hakluyt, Parmenius became fascinated with America and the programs that Hakluyt was advocating.\textsuperscript{6} In less than two years, Parmenius’ studies had progressed to such an extent that he decided he needed to visit America for himself. Hakluyt introduced him to Humphrey Gilbert, who was planning a colonial endeavor to North America; this meeting inspired Parmenius to write a series of Latin poems about these forthcoming adventures in America.\textsuperscript{7}

Parmenius planned to write an epic work describing Gilbert’s voyage; his official mission on the expedition was to record the activities.\textsuperscript{8} Yet the splendor and glory that Parmenius imagined he would find in America contrasted with the reality he found in Newfoundland. In surviving letters written during the voyage, Parmenius described a desolate landscape and harsh climate.\textsuperscript{9} Like many


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 22.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., pp. 23-37.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp. 55-57.
Europeans, he was stunned by the colder weather of North America and could hardly fathom how the English would be able to establish a successful colony in such a place. We will never know how the reality of life in America would have affected the composition of the poem he planned to write. The ship he was sailing on, the Delight, crashed upon some rocks and sank on 27 August 1583, drowning Parmenius and sending most of his work to the bottom of the sea.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} Baptista Boazio, \textit{The Famous West Indian voyadge made by the English fleete} (London, 1589). Map in the Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room (Jefferson LJ239).

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 58-60.
Fortunately for posterity, he had sent some correspondence and drafted observations back to England several weeks previous to the accident aboard some English fishing vessels that happened to be in the area.\(^{12}\) Hakluyt rued the tragic demise of his colleague and friend and decided to eulogize him the best way an academic could, both using Parmenius’ work in his own writings and giving them a spot in his *Principall Navigations*.\(^{13}\)

In the dedication to his *De Navigatione*, a poem composed to mark the embarkation of Gilbert’s voyage, Parmenius wrote, “my distinguished and learned friend Richard Hakluyt took me along to you [Gilbert], having expounded to me your celebrated plan to lead a colonizing expedition to the New World in the near future. In the course of this, I was able to recognize that you are a man of such stature and spirit as deserves to be remembered for ever by posterity; ... I also began to study my subject so keenly.”\(^{14}\)

Even amongst the grandiose protocol of an early modern humanist dedication, two important ideas stood out. Parmenius recognized the historical implications of Gilbert’s voyage and decided that he could record the events of the voyage for the sake of “posterity.” However, Parmenius also understood that in order to write a history of this particular undertaking, he needed to master the historiography of previous Anglo-American endeavors. Using Hakluyt’s prodigious Anglo-American documentary materials, he immersed himself in the record of the English in America. *De* ____________


\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 79.
Navigatione is filled with references to an Anglo-American past; Parmenius wrote “Consider what a country lies close by, | Across the narrow neck of land that keeps | Us separate, with sea on either side. | Discovered first for you by Englishmen | Some time ago, when spirited Cabot | Approached these regions, following the wake | Of great Columbus.”15 The English had an American past which laid the foundation for an American future. Cabot’s voyage was a precedent not taken advantage of, yet in Parmenius’ estimation it was a precedent that gave England sovereignty in America.

It is easy to understand why most contemporary accounts of the English involvement in and with America begin in the Elizabethan period. In comparison with the first half of the sixteenth century, there was an explosion of printed Americana in England.16 Especially after 1580, America occupied the pen of more and more English writers. From literature to geography, the New World featured as a prominent muse. Modern geographers, historians, and literary scholars have dissected and analyzed this material in hundreds of different studies over the past several decades.17 No one individual has featured more prominently in these discussions than Richard Hakluyt. His Discourse of

15 Ibid., p. 103.
17 The literature that focuses on late sixteenth century Anglo-Americana is far too numerous to list here; the Bibliography at the end of this study can serve as a helpful introduction to the field. Additionally, see Armitage, “Literature and Empire,” in OHBE, Vol. I, pp. 99-123; Ralph Bauer, The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World, esp. pp. 481-516; and Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America.
Western Planting begins the classic text on British North America that has trained several generations of historians, and we know more about his life than at any time since Samuel Purchas’ death, thanks to the work of David Beers Quinn, Peter Mancall, and other scholars.\textsuperscript{18} With a bibliography rivaling Shakespeare, Hakluyt spent much of his publishing life promoting an Anglo-American colonial agenda, and as such we know him now as a colonial promoter.\textsuperscript{19} Yet we know very little about Hakluyt the historian; only David Armitage has considered his historical legacy.\textsuperscript{20}

As with Hakluyt goes the rest of the field; little has been done to grapple with Anglo-American history in the Elizabethan period.\textsuperscript{21} The reason for this historiographical oversight has much to do with the mechanics of English colonization; the 1607 founding of Jamestown has become the traditional date associated with the history of the English in America, and nearly all histories of


\textsuperscript{20} Armitage, “The New World and British Historical Thought: From Richard Hakluyt to William Robertson,” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, pp. 52-75.

\textsuperscript{21} Armitage noted the scarcity of Anglo-American historiographical studies in the notes of his fine essay; “There is as yet no study comparable to [David] Brading, *The First America*, for British America.” Ibid., p. 73. Armitage goes on to list several essays dealing with seventeenth century Anglo-American historiography, but nothing for the sixteenth.
Anglo-American historical writing begin with the literature coming out of the Chesapeake, New England, and from London colonial promoters in the first half of the seventeenth century. This chapter seeks to understand historical developments in the Elizabethan period from the perspective of what transpired earlier in the sixteenth century. As we have already explored, by the 1550s English writers and thinkers had overcome the historiographical barriers necessary to write an English history of America; Thomas More and Richard Eden used Iberian accounts of the New World to write and construct their own histories. In particular, Eden used his history to imagine an English space in a Spanish Atlantic world.

Mary Tudor's death and the rise of her half-sister Elizabeth to the throne made an Anglo-Spanish American alliance and the English America Eden envisioned highly unlikely. Not only did Elizabeth reinstate Anglicanism as the official faith of England, but English attitudes towards the Iberian historical narrative began to change. Published in the same year Eden released his Decades of the Newe Worlde, Bartolomé de las Casas' Destruction of the Indies proved to be highly influential in England (as well as the rest of Europe).

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22 See note 19 above.

23 There is some controversy over the causes of Mary’s death. For an overview, see V. C. Medvei, “The Illness and Death of Mary Tudor,” in Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, Vol. 80 (Dec., 1987), pp. 766-770.

Coupled with the deterioration of England’s relationship with Spain, Las Casas’ words challenged English scholars to think outside the boundaries of an Iberian-American historiography, especially during a period of rising English patriotism. The English had already imagined what an English America might be like in Spanish context; they now began to imagine that same entity in an English context. Many Elizabethan Anglo-American historians sought to construct a narrative that was entirely English, both in authorship and subject. To do so, they would need to establish a textual tradition of sources that supplied precedent and authenticity. In moving ahead with an American colonial enterprise, the English first needed to justify the expansion; to do that, they needed to grapple with the history of America to find their place in it. Yet at the same time, English experiences in America began to complicate historical writing, making it difficult to situate exactly where historical authority would lie. The American histories created in this period would move towards the thesis-driven model exemplified by Las Casas, while Anglo-American experts cemented the textual authority established in the first half of the sixteenth century.

We will begin with an examination of the transformation of American historical culture in Elizabethan England, particularly focusing on the impact of Las Casas. The Spaniard’s work was influential in helping move English thinkers towards a more Anglo-centric view of America. The middle decades of the

sixteenth century saw them experiment with composing more original accounts using non-English actors. But in order to construct an Anglo-American history, sources needed to be documented and, in some cases, invented. The pre-Columbian British tradition utilized by John Dee and Richard Hakluyt in the 1570s and 1580s is especially illuminating in this regard. Authenticity resided in both the textual evidence and the authority of the author. The final two decades of the sixteenth century saw a rising tide of Anglo-American historical writing primarily focusing on the heroic activities of such figures as Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. Combined with the all-encompassing works of Richard Hakluyt, Anglo-American historical thought was consumed with justifying empire and establishing its future parameters. By the end of the decade, this English vision of American empire was documented textually and visually by John White and Theodor De Bry, which in turn circulated throughout Europe as an American history to compete with the dominant Spanish narrative. Ironically, it was De Bry’s images of Spanish cruelty in Las Casas that sparked the English imagination late in the sixteenth century. By the beginning of the seventeenth century as the Virginia Company worked to create an Anglo-American colony, an American historical enterprise was fully established in England as historians worked to document and reconcile the past with the present.

**Elizabeth, Colonization, and American History**

The ascension of Elizabeth to the throne in 1558 quickly brought to an end any thoughts of an Anglo-Spanish alliance in America. Mary Tudor’s widower, Philip II of Spain, continued to seek a royal union with England and perhaps bring
it into the Holy Roman Empire, but within a year Elizabeth had rebuffed Philip’s offer of marriage and returned England to Protestantism through the Anglican Church. Over the course of the next four and a half decades, Elizabeth would bring a period of stability to the English throne that it had not seen since before the Wars of the Roses. Her refusal to take a husband helped not only diplomatically but also domestically; she was extremely popular through much of her reign, owing in some part to the cult of personality that surrounded the “Virgin Queen.” The first thirty years of her reign, leading up to the invasion attempt of Philip II in 1588, were extremely critical in the development of Anglo-American historical thought.

Elizabethan England is rightly characterized by scholars as the period of English Renaissance. The humanist reforms employed by Henry VII and Henry VIII had now been in place several generations; a younger generation was coming of age having the advantage of an English humanist tradition to draw upon. The brilliance of Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spencer, and William Shakespeare have been highlighted as examples in late sixteenth century English culture, but to their names are added thousands of other writers, artists,


musicians, philosophers, diplomats, and politicians. The intellectual climate in England was especially bright during this period, and the English intelligentsia grew exponentially.²⁸ More people could interact with complex ideas, and with this came a greater affinity to the developing English state.²⁹ England was still a volatile milieu of religious anxiety and antagonisms, both Protestant and Catholic, yet nearly all interests were based to some degree on their value to the health of the nation.³⁰ The growing English patriotic impulses led some thinkers to reevaluate the importance of America in England’s future plans. These changes are particularly evident in the later writings of Richard Eden.

Having already negotiated the turbulent political climate of the middle decades of the sixteenth century as a public intellectual relatively unscathed, Eden turned his attention towards navigating a course to greater English involvement in America.³¹ Eden’s work remained quite popular well into the


³¹ Eden was not without his enemies however. Eden’s support of a Huguenot American colony and his service to the Vidame of Chartres Jean de Ferrières as a secretary had prompted Ferrières to advocate on his behalf for a pension. However, Eden’s dedication to Philip and Mary in *The Decades of the Newe World* cost him politically during Elizabeth’s reign, and Ferrières was forced to apologize Elizabeth in subsequent correspondence. See NA SP 12/92/74 (Sept. 1573). For more on Ferrières and Huguenot involvement with Elizabeth, as well
seventeenth century; his edition of Martin Cortés’ *The Art of Navigation* went through eight separate editions and remained in print as late as 1630, while his translation of Pietro Martire d’Anghiera remained the standard narrative for the Iberian-Atlantic experience until at least 1628 and possibly into the eighteenth century.  

We have already seen how Eden promoted a vision of English expansion into America, a vision that saw England as a partner of the Spanish. Eden’s belief in American expansion did not change following the ascension of Elizabeth; he still believed that Anglo-American colonial expansion was a key component of a successful English future. However, the manner in which those colonies would be planted did change. We can find clues to this shift in attitude in two of Eden’s later writings, both published in the immediate years after his death: *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies* (1577) and *A very necessarie and profitable booke concerning navigation* (1579).

Soon after the publication of *The Decades of the Newe Worlde*, it is apparent that Eden sought to issue a second and updated edition that included all eight of Martire’s *Decades*. While political turmoil, other publications, and an

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32 Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, *The famous historie of the Indies declaring the adventures of the Spaniards*, trans. by Richard Eden and Richard Hakluyt (London: Thomas Dawson, 1628). The final printing of Martire in England occurred in 1628; however, scholars are using the text throughout the eighteenth century, and particularly during the revolutionary period, for reasons that are unclear. This, however, is a question for another day.
THE
History of Travayle
in the
West and East Indies, and other
countries lying euyther way,
towards the fruitfull and ryche
Moluccae.
As
Adoformula, Persia, Arabia, Syria, Egypte,
Ethiopia, Guinea, China in Cathayo, and
Japan: VVith a discours of
the Northwell passage.

In the hands of our Lofts be all the corners of
the earth. Psalm.94.

Gathered in parte, and done into English by
Richard Eden,

Newly set in order, augmented, and finished
by Richarde VVilles.

Imprinted at London
by Richard Jugge.
1577.
Cum Privilegio.

Figure 11. Pietro Martire d’Anghiera, The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies, title page. Image courtesy of the Kirishitan Bunko Library, Sophia University.33

33 Martire, The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies, and other countries lying euther way, towards the fruitfull and ryche Moluccae, ed. and trans. by Eden and Richard Willes (London: Richard Jugge, 1577), title page. Image gathered from the Laures Rare Book Database and Virtual Library, Kirishitan Bunko Library, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan.
obligation to earn a living held up his plans, he began working on the project again shortly before his death in 1576. Three details immediately stand out about this edition. Unlike any of his previous works, Eden enlisted a partner, Richard Willes, to complete the project. Old age had slowed Eden's work considerably and the help was necessary, but Willes brought a different set of goals to the project. Instead of merely focusing on the American story, this new edition would explore both the West and East Indies, as well as portions of Africa. While Willes noted that this was Eden's original intent, based on Eden's earlier body of work, it is highly likely that Willes brought his own ambitions into the project after Eden's death. Additionally, this new edition was smaller and likely marketed to a larger audience; it was probably intended for purchase by individuals of more humble means.

But most importantly, the epigram on the title page reveals a shift in thinking in terms of the progression of colonial thinking. Whereas before Eden understood the Americas to be a Spanish territory, here he quoted Psalm 94: "In the hande of our Lorde be all the corners of the earth." Instead of requiring a partnership with the Spanish to expand into the new world, England only needed the approval of God, who held title to all lands. This shift in thinking was very


35 Ibid. The new edition was printed in crown octavo (7.5 by 5 inches), while the earlier one was crown quarto (10 by 7.5 inches).

36 Ibid., title page.
important in the development of both Anglo-American colonial and historical thought. Eden was very careful in 1555 to delicately frame his argument for English colonization of America within Spanish jurisdiction; subtlety was critical due to the political situation. But now he could argue for English sovereignty in the New World. Possession was an important part of claiming authority within a new realm; early sixteenth century Euro-American histories used primacy of discovery as a strong part of their case in establishing colonial dominion in America. God's will was certainly part of the argument, and most theories of American empire argued for the Christianizing of the indigenous peoples in their justification of conquest. But God's will was subject to change and interpretation, according to Eden and Willes. In a new preface, Willes let the reader know that this edition would provide a change in tone from the old one. "This greate and large volume consisteth principally of foure partes, agreeable unto those foure corners of the worlde, whereunto the skilfull seamen and merchauntes adventureres of late yeeres have chiefly traveiled, and yet specially are wont to resorte."

Not only would the work demonstrate that the English explored the Americas, but it would also show that they had successfully


38 Ibid. Also see Armitage, ed., *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 1998).

navigated many different areas around the globe. In this highly charged religious arena between Catholicism, Protestantism, and the many variations in between, English success abroad was a strong indication that God’s will was being done. Evidence of a mastery of the seas and geographical knowledge of the world would be the building blocks for a successful colonial enterprise; as Willes argued in a new epistle, the “tyme is now” for the English to lay open a “geography [that] laye hydden many hundred yeeres in darkenesse and oblivion.”

The key point to consider here is that rather than advocating English expansion into many different parts of the globe, the history of English travel on a global scale was used as evidence to demonstrate their readiness for expansion into the Americas. These travels were to be used to inspire the creation of an English colonial enterprise, Willes noted, for “if varieties of matter, occurrents out of forraigne countryes, newes of newe founde landes ... may recreate and delight a mynde travelled in weighty matters, & weeried with great affayres ... you shall finde delight in reading over these relations, wherein so newe, so straunge, so divers, so many recreations and delightes of the mynd are expressed.”

America was a metaphysical escape from a troubled reality; it is no wonder that the preface invokes the memory of Thomas More. The utopian image of America was continued by Eden and repeated by Willes; America was a place

40 Ibid., “The Epistle,” p. ii {b}.
41 Ibid.
where the ills of society could be transformed, both in the imagination and reality. The use of devices such as the will of God, evidence of global English travel, and a redemptive America would become commonplace in late sixteenth century Anglo-American histories, key points in the case for the English colonization of America.

Eden fervently believed that the key to English greatness was in the expansion of the state; an empire of the mind must be replaced by an empire on the ground. No longer could England seek to participate in another national vision, but would need to create their own. He invoked the Seneca tragedy of *Medea* as he introduced this new text in what were likely some of his last written words. It is not surprising that he chose Seneca to highlight the importance of vigilance in taking advantage of the golden opportunity for the construction of empire. As a humanist, Eden seized upon a passage from antiquity that harkened back to Europe’s encounter with America. “The testimonie of the Poet Seneca in his Tragedie De Medea, where by the spirite of Poetical furie, he sayth...

... In late yeeres new worldes shalbe founde, | And new landes shal then appeare on the grounde. ... For then shal the Ocean dissolve his large bandes, | And shewe foorth new worldes, regions, and landes.”

It was as if Seneca was a prophet who glimpsed a future that Eden was now living. However, beyond the immediacy of Seneca’s words was the threat of lost opportunity. The theme of exile from promise was featured by Seneca in this work, and Eden latched on to it. Later in *Medea*, Jason cries out in anguish at the death of his sons, lamenting

43 Ibid., pp. 6a-6b.
“I must be faithless. It is not fear, but fearful father-love that has conquered faith.”⁴⁴ But his ex-lover Medea counters “We are fleeing, Jason, fleeing. ‘Tis no new thing to change our abode; but the cause of flight is new—‘twas for thee I was wont to flee.”⁴⁵ Instead of giving up on the opportunity of an Anglo-American empire because the chance of participating in Spain’s American empire was lost, the English should seize upon new world promise and create empire on their own.

At the same time he was working with Willes on an updated version of The Decades, Eden completed a translation of Joannes Taisnier’s Opusculum Perpetua Memoria dignissimum, a series of navigation aids in the same genre as the Martín Cortés text that he had rendered in English more than a decade previous. In his own study of the translation, John Parker remarked several years ago that Eden’s work here “is a reflection of [his] passion for bringing England into the Age of Discovery and the scramble for overseas empire.”⁴⁶ Indeed, the dedication to William Winter, a naval officer whom Eden flattered with the title of “Master of the Queen’s Shippes” at the beginning of the text, is littered with allusions to the necessity of sailing to the New World.⁴⁷ Beyond advocating

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⁴⁵ Ibid., line 447.


a colonial enterprise though, Eden stressed the importance of becoming masters of the sea. After recounting a series of great historic navigators going all the way back to Noah, he argued "who so lyveth to knowe further more particulery who invented all other partes and instrumentes partyning to al sortes of Shyppes, may reade ye thyrde booke of Polidor Virgil, Cap. xv, De Inventorib." Eden was of course referring to Vergil’s famous De Inventoribus Rerum, or On Discovery, although his reference was slightly off. The chapter in question, eleven, dealt with the origins of navigation, but the message went beyond the simple speculation over who did what first. Vergil wrote “Marchandyse was firste instituted for to certifie menne of necessaries, by the waye of exchaunge: but after, when money was coyned, it was occupied more for mennes private welth then for any common profyt, and for that cause Sicero calleth it a vyle and servyle crafte.” By invoking Vergil, Eden was making the argument that any English empire had to have its origins outside of pure commerce. This


49 Vergil, An abridgemente of the notable work of Polidore Virgile Containing the devisers and fyrste fyneders oute aswell of antyquities, artes, ministeries, feactes and civill ordinaunces, as of the rites, and ceremonies, commonlye used in the churche: and the original beginning of the same, ed. and trans. by Thomas Langley (London: Ihon Tisdale, 1560), Fo. lxxviii, back.

50 Andrew Fitzmaurice would try to persuade us here that Eden’s reluctance to make a commercial argument for empire demonstrates a humanist “nervousness [with] colonisation;” he argues that humanists were motivated more “with the pursuit of glory.” Fitzmaurice, Humanism and America, p. 187. However, material gain and glory for self and country were not mutually exclusive; indeed, profit was an essential element in many sixteenth and seventeenth century arguments for colonization. On this point, I am indebted to Alexander B. Haskell.
reference was not accidental, but centered in direct contrast to the perceived Spanish colonial enterprise. By the time Eden crafted his dedication, the work of Bartolomé de las Casas had shifted the ideological landscape of how the Spanish American experience was received and interpreted in England, as well as the rest of Europe.

Las Casas’ *La Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* would not find an English translation until 1583, but the ideas within proved extremely influential.


51 Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Spanish colonie, or Briefe chronicle of the acts and gestes of the Spaniardes in the West Indies*, trans. by M. M. S. (London: Thomas Dawson for William Brome, 1583). Image from the Library of Congress, Jay I. Kislak Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division (081.00.03).
influential in England soon after its publication in 1552.\textsuperscript{52} Certainly the anonymous translator M. M. S. summed up the common sentiment in late sixteenth century England about the Spanish, writing “So that although the wicked for a time doe triumph, yet doth not God leave their abominable cruelties unpunished.”\textsuperscript{53} Regardless of Spanish prosperity, God would not spare his judgment when the time was right. For M. M. S. and many other English thinkers, the time of judgment was coming soon.\textsuperscript{54} The millennial elements of early modern English thought have been thoroughly documented.\textsuperscript{55} However, the effect of Las Casas on the developing Anglo-American historical thought needs to be assessed. Eden had privileged Martire and Gomara, verifying their authenticity metaphysically. Yet Las Casas cast a different light on these sources, putting their trustworthiness in doubt.

The influence of Las Casas’ work in England has been characterized as “ambivalent and contradictory;” although the English emulated the actions of the Spanish in their colonial plans, they utilized the Black Legend that grew from \textit{La Brevisima relación} to chastise the Spanish in their histories of America.\textsuperscript{56}

Indeed, by the end of the sixteenth century, the words of Las Casas were being

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., “To the Reader.”


\textsuperscript{55} See Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow, eds., \textit{Anglo-American Millennialism, from Milton to the Millerites} (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

\textsuperscript{56} Hart, \textit{Representing the New World}, p. 3.
used to teach the English Spanish. However, instead of focusing on the political ramifications of Las Casas' work, it is important to consider Las Casas as the historian. Beyond the new world implications, Rolena Adorno has demonstrated that *La Brevisima relación* major impact was "a warning to Spain's European possessions of what Castilian domination could mean." But Las Casas the historian was an innovator. Instead of relying on firsthand testimony, he scrutinized his sources intensely. Most importantly, his work was thesis driven. He utilized the evidence at his disposal to answer a very specific question: "How did things come to turn out as they had after a half century of Spanish rule in the Indies?" This was a modern historian and, as Adorno has persuasively argued, he moved beyond the common answers of the day such as divine or metaphysical causation to probe for understanding.

Las Casas was a transcendent figure in the developing late-sixteenth century Anglo-American historiography not for the anti-Spanish sentiment that his

57 "The Dictionarie hath coste me greatest paynes; for after that I had collected it into Spanish and English out of Christoval de las Casas, and Nebrissensis; casting in some small pittaunce of mine owne, amounting well neere two 2000 words..." Richard Percival, *Bibliotheca Hispanica. Containing a Grammar, with a Dictionarie in Spanish, English, and Latine, gathered out of divers good Authors: very profitable for the studious of the Spanish toong* (London: John Jackson for Richard Watkins, 1591), "To the Reader, first page.


59 Hanke, *Bartolomé de Las Casas*, p. 23.

60 Ibid., p. 32.


62 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
work aroused, but because his example pushed English historians to press towards a more thesis driven narrative. The arguments we saw in More and Eden were implicit rather than explicit; the sources rather than the historian did the intellectual heavy lifting. In order to deal with the issues surrounding the English creation of an American empire, the questions first needed to be raised. What was England’s relationship with the Americas? What would an English America look like? Why was America integral to the growth of the English state? Why should a physical empire in the Americas be pursued over an entrepôt empire focused on Europe and the East Indies? While not all of these questions were entirely historical in nature, English thinkers and writers in the late sixteenth century used American history to define exactly what an Anglo-American empire should and would be. Establishing an Anglo-American precedent and constructing its narrative was amongst the first tasks historians took up in the wake of Eden and Las Casas. In doing so, they took the first serious steps at inventing an Anglo-American empire.

**Inventing an English Reality**

In spite of the initial intellectual explorations of America that English thinkers and writers had undertaken in the first half of the sixteenth century, the reality of their physical endeavors into the New World left much to be desired. While Spain had an enormous American empire by 1560, the extent of English involvement was the seasonal fishing camps in Newfoundland and the occasional journeys of exploration.\(^{63}\) With the door to an Anglo-Spanish...
American alliance quickly closing and the Inquisition tempering any individual forays into Spain's New World possessions, an English America would need to be created from within the nation itself. The process of internal colonization of the British Isles was well underway; Welsh and Irish colonization efforts were several decades old by the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Thus the process of colonization was not foreign to the English. But America was "beyond the pale;" it was an entirely different world, antipodal in nature. The English themselves, despite humanist educational reforms, continued to be informed to a great extent by precedent. While written documentation proved worthy of establishing authority, they did not have much of this evidence to interrogate about the actions of English actors in the New World. On the surface, this insistence upon a written record of Anglo-American New World experiences seems antithetical


given the English reliance on an unwritten common law. However, the common law was based on experience, and there was seemingly very little Anglo-American experience for the English to document.

In order to establish a precedent for English involvement in America, writers and thinkers would need to construct a national narrative of English exploits in America. Prior to the Elizabethan period, very little was made of these English attempts. More’s American vision centered around the Iberian narrative of Vespucci, while Eden turned to Martire’s Columbian history of the New World. While the presence of Jean Cabot in The Decades helped establish trust for Eden, the Spanish narrative was the primary narrative that gave him authority. Without the massive documentary record necessary to chronicle and explore the history of the English in America, a new methodology would need to be employed. Building upon the metaphysical authentication method used by Eden, these new Anglo-American historians would give their tales veracity by establishing an impeccable reputation as New World scholars. After creating a high level of trust amongst their readers, they could then work to piece together the various strands of Anglo-American history, as we will see below. Indeed, the truth could be stretched where needed to form a cohesive narrative, using the past to argue why the English had sovereignty in America. This process of invention was critical to the development of an Anglo-American historical enterprise in the late sixteenth century, and can be illustrated through an

examination of the life and work of two renowned Elizabethan experts on America: Richard Hakluyt and John Dee.

Richard Hakluyt has been scrutinized heavily by modern scholars of late sixteenth century Anglo-Americana.\(^{68}\) An ordained minister in the Anglican church, trusted diplomat, and first-rate scholar, he was at the center of England's American ambitions. First intrigued by the New World in the offices of his uncle by the same name, Hakluyt worked tirelessly through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in an attempt to push England towards establishing a colonial presence in America. He understood the political realities of his generation and knew that simply emulating the Spanish experience in America was not enough. While the Spanish had laid the groundwork for establishing a successful American enterprise, Hakluyt was convinced that the English needed an historical precedent to press ahead with expansion. Indeed, he needed to prove that England had been active in America in the immediate aftermath of the Columbian encounter and perhaps prior it, which would give the English the right to claim sovereignty in the New World. Consequently, Hakluyt poured over documents and chronicles from early in the century, seeking to construct a coherent historical narrative. His work in the royal archives and foreign texts such as Martire and Ramusio yielded many of the documents we have discussed in the previous two chapters. In the context of the Spanish example, though, Hakluyt found precious little in which to base his work. There were no grand

\(^{68}\) A Google Book search of the term "Hakluyt" returns 323,000 results. For more on Hakluyt, see note 16 above.
narratives, for example, of John Cabot's experiences in America that he could discover. However, he found enough material to build an outline of English activities in America from Cabot's voyages to the 1580s. In order to fill in the gaps, Hakluyt visited sailors and explorers, piecing together all of the anecdotal evidence they could provide. Furthermore, where evidence could not be found, Hakluyt invented stories to serve his purposes. Combined, these sources helped Hakluyt construct an Anglo-American history that focused solely on English exploits in America.

An examination of Hakluyt's first three American works illustrate these premises aptly. In 1580, an edition of Jacques Cartier's explorations of northeastern North America from Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi* was translated by John Florio. Eden had been familiar with the early editions of *Navigationi*, but focused primarily on Martire's *Decades*. Ramusio's work centered on documenting all of the European voyages to America, and while the focus could certainly be characterized as Iberian given their voyages relative to the rest of Europe, he also included voyages from other nations,

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70 David Beers Quinn notes that “most scholars believe that [Madoc’s] story developed wholly to fit the need of publicists of the time to have rivals to Columbus.” *NAW*, Vol. I, p. 66. I will develop and accentuate this argument in greater depth below.

including the English and the French. Ramusio would become very influential to Hakluyt, and would serve as inspiration on both Divers Voyages and Principal Navigations. Although he was not credited by name in the edition, Hakluyt’s fingerprints are all over the work. While at Oxford, he commissioned Florio, an Italian language instructor at the school, with the translation of Cartier in Ramusio. In his dedication to the Sheriff of Oxford Edmond Bray, Florio wrote about his friends Hakluyt and John Dee at Oxford; it was “at [their] requests and earneste solisitations,” that he undertook “this translation.” His message was clear: “Englishe Marchants” needed to follow the example of “the Spaniardes, the Portugales, and the Venetians” and seek fortune in the New World.

The translation itself was directed at “Gentlemen, Merchants, and Pilots;” people who might invest and entertain adventures in America. In it, we see the first indication of Hakluyt’s historical vision of America and the themes he would stress over the course of his career. Unlike in Eden’s work, the focus here is on a very specific part of the New World: “the Northweast partes of America.”

For more on Ramusio, see Lia Markey, “The New World in Renaissance Italy: A Vicarious Conquest of Art and Nature at the Medici Court” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 2008); and Tucker, Homo Viator, pp. 9-11.


Cartier, A Shorte and Briefe Narration of the two Navigations and Discoveries to the Northweast Partes called Newe France, p. A.ii. front.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. B.i. front.

Ibid.
Florio presented examples of how the Spanish, Portuguese, and French had all attempted to settle in this portion of America, but had all been unsuccessful. It was an area, he argued, that was “no lesse fruitful and pleasant in al respects than is England, Fraunce, or Germany;” the best climates and landscapes that Europe had to offer. This was not an idle boast, Florio noted; he had done his due diligence and examined all of the available literature. As an expert in the literature of America, his narrative could be trusted. Indeed, all the information he was presenting could “be verifyed, as in the Histories of all theyr Conquests and Discoveries doth manifestly appeare.” But most importantly, England had the best argument for possession of this territory of all the European powers with claims to the land. Florio wrote that the “letters patents [were] yet extant,” and the maps from the voyages demonstrate that the territory in question was claimed for England by the Cabots. Even though Cartier had claimed the area for France, the claims of England were established about four decades earlier, giving them the right of possession. Because the French had not taken advantage of the English inaction, now was the time to strike; Florio proposed sending “50 or 60 saile of shippes” to start a colony that would almost certainly

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. B.ii. front.
80 Ibid.
support itself and produce a healthy profit.\textsuperscript{81} “There is none,” he boasted, “that of right may be more bolde in this enterprise than the Englishmen.”\textsuperscript{82}

Florio brought up a number of points that would be repeated over the next several decades by Hakluyt. The indigenous population was waiting to be Christianized and the English were best suited for this task. Half a century of religious strife in England had galvanized the populace with a nationalistic strain of Protestantism, which coupled with the millenarianism that became very common after the Reformation, made the conversion of American Indians an important task.\textsuperscript{83} Biblically, in order to affect the second coming of Christ, all the peoples of the earth had to encounter Christ’s teachings; this of course was an extrapolation of Matthew 24:14, which read “this Gospel of the kingdom shalbe preached through the whole worlde for a witnes unto all nacions, and then shal the end come.”\textsuperscript{84} Invoking the conversion of an un-Christianized population was a powerful argument to make in favor of colonization because it could help bring about the return of Christ. Additionally, Florio cited the best authorities on the subject. Arguing that northeastern North America was an excellent place to plant colonies, he called upon the historical wisdom of Ramusio and the examples the set forth in \textit{Navigationi et Viaggi}. Numerous voyages by the French, Portuguese,

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid.}{\textsuperscript{81}}
\footnote{Ibid.}{\textsuperscript{82}}
\footnote{See notes 49 and 50 above, as well as Brigden, \textit{New Worlds, Lost Worlds}.}{\textsuperscript{83}}
\footnote{Matthew 24:14, \textit{The Bible and Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and Newe Testament} (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560), p. 1018 (Matthew, p. 14).}{\textsuperscript{84}}
\end{footnotes}
and Spanish had explored the area and found signs of enormous wealth and promise, not the least of which was a shorter route to Asia by way of a northwest approach around America. This evidence was not conjecture, he noted, but factual data verified by the top American scholars in Europe. Finally, he demonstrated that the English had a history in this region older than any other European nation. Not only was this information found in Ramusio, but also in “our owne Chronicles.” The historical urgency of the situation pierces through each of these threads and helps us understand Hakluyt’s developing philosophy of Anglo-American history. America was a template to be molded and shaped by the English, in Hakluyt’s estimation. Following the line of logic employed by Thomas More at the beginning of the century, there was a utopian and redemptive element in the New World that would help to transform English society. The lessons of the past, whether crafted by English or foreign actors, needed to be recast in such a way so as to serve the needs of the present.

The choice of texts was a clever ploy by Hakluyt to underscore the necessity of quick action. “And no doubt,” Florio wrote, “if the French men in this their new Fraunce, would have discovered up further into the land towards the Weast northeast partes, they shoulde have founde the Sea, and might have sayled to Cataya.” The insinuation was clear: unless the English seized the opportunity in America that had been presented to them, their history in the New

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85 Cartier, *A Shorthe and Briefe Narration of the two Navigations and Discoveries to the Northeast Partes called Newe France*, p. B.ii. front.

86 Ibid., p. B.i. back.
World would be one of missed chances. Indeed, given the fact that their European enemies, Spain and France, were already well ahead of the English, there was no time to spare. This theme was reinforced two years later when Hakluyt published his *Divers Voyages*. Inspired by his work with Ramusio’s text, Hakluyt set about producing a documentary history of the English in America. The visual impact of *Divers Voyages* is striking, especially in contrast with the better known *Principall Navigations* that was published seven years later, which we will explore below. Given the small size of the text, Hakluyt likely marketed this book for a wider audience, seeking to popularize the concept of an English America. *Divers Voyages* was Hakluyt’s first credited work that the English reading public, a growing group of educated wealthy and middling-means individuals, would encounter, and he bolstered his intellectual credentials with the best sources. The book itself is masterful in its historiographical depth; he utilized textual sources from the pre-encounter era to the latest accounts from the New World. It is clear that Hakluyt wished to establish himself as the foremost

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87 Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the Ilands adjacent unto the same, made first of all by our Englishmen, and afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1582).

88 *Divers Voyages* was published in crown octavo.

expert on America in England, and by demonstrating his mastery of the most important New World literature, Hakluyt set himself apart from anyone else in the country.

Hakluyt's tone was established from the outset. He began by listing "the names of certaine late writers of Geographie, with the yeere wherein they wrote." Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, inset title page 1.

Next, he wrote "the names of certaine late travaylers, both by sea and by lande, which also for the most part have written of their owne travayles and voyages." These lists served several different purposes. The focus of names was decidedly English, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century. Hakluyt, Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent, ed. by Jones (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1850), pp. xlii-lxiii.

Beginning with John Mandeville in 1320, Hakluyt chronicled the history of English geographical writing, highlighting on those individuals who wrote about America. Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, inset title page 1.

While the earlier writers have a more foreign character, each of the later individuals on the list were English. The same holds true for the explorers he singled out. The implication he tried to convey was that the English were on the cutting edge of American knowledge and exploration. Regardless of the lead the Spanish had in colonizing the New World, the English were quickly catching up and England was now home to some of the best thinkers and explorers in the


90 Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, inset title page 1.

91 Ibid., inset title page 2.
European world. Both lists began prior to the Columbian encounter. From Mandeville to Marco Polo, Hakluyt sought to establish an English lineage of encounter and discovery. He invoked Polo to bring some familiarity to his readers; offering them an account they were already familiar with would help to give his own ideas more authenticity and provide a hook with which to interest the reader. Temporally, Hakluyt presented a sizeable gap in the English experience within America. From roughly 1500 to 1550, Hakluyt did not list any Anglo-American sources, save a curious book by Robert Thorne, the contents of which make up a large portion of *Divers Voyages*.

In his dedication to Phillip Sydney, Hakluyt stated his immediate cause for publishing *Divers Voyages*; he wanted to push the English to pursue exploration in the northeastern portions of North America in search of a passage to Asia. Similar to the argument presented by Florio, Hakluyt explained that if the English did not begin this project in the near future, the Spanish or other European powers would gain the upper hand in the region. “Charles the Emperour and the king of Spaine,” Hakluyt implored, “now is wisely considering have in their Contractation house in Sivill appointed a learned reader of the sayde art of Navigation.” He made this statement to point out that it was only a matter of time before the Spanish mastered the northern route to Asia and closed off any ambitions the English had in this area.92 The English, he implored, were more

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92 Ibid., “To the right worshipfull and most vertuous Gentleman master Phillip Sydney Esquire,” p. ¶3 front.
suited for colonizing America than the Spanish for two very important reasons. First of all, only the English could properly Christianize the indigenous populations. The influence of Las Casas on Hakluyt here is evident. He lamented that “hetherto in our owne discoveries we had not beene led with a preposterous desire of seeking rather gaine then Gods glorie, I assure my self

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that our labours had taken farre better effecte."\(^94\) Because the English had put their own financial well being above the work of God, their dreams of American empire had been thwarted. However, now that they had put their religious house in order, they were much more ready for the task, especially in light of Iberian atrocities in the New World. He admonished the Spanish and Portuguese colonial activities, claiming that God would punish them for their "pride and avarice" because they pretended "to convert Infidelles" while really only thinking of American "goods and riches."\(^95\) But more importantly, most of North America had been claimed by the English already. In order to provide solid proof that the English could rightfully take possession of this area, he reprinted the best evidence he could muster. "To leave this matter & to drawe to an ende, I have heare right worshipfull in this hastie worke first put downe the title which we have to that part of America which is from Florida to 67. degrees northwarde, by the letters patentes graunted to John Gabote and his three sonnes, Lewes, Sebastian, and Santius, with Sebastians owne Certificate to Baptista Ramusius of his discoverie of America, and the testimonie of Fabian our own Chronicler."\(^96\)

\textit{Divers Voyages} was not a comprehensive statement; Hakluyt's own admission that it was a "hastie worke" is a testament to that fact. \textit{Principall Navigations} would offer a far more organized case for English exploration of America. Nonetheless, the work demonstrates that he believed very strongly that there

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. ¶2, back.

\(^{95}\) Ibid.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., pp. ¶3, back-¶4.
was little time to waste to begin an Anglo-American colonial enterprise. The materials he reprinted showed the English license to settle in the area, English attempts at settling the area, and Iberian and French descriptions of the area. None were more important though than the materials he reprinted authored by Robert Thorne.

Thorne followed his father by the same name into the business of trade between Spain and England; based out of Bristol and Seville, he would in time become connected with Henry VIII's ambassador to Charles V's court, Dr. Ley. In 1527, Thorne met and corresponded with Ley, proposing a voyage of exploration to northeastern North America with the intention of founding an English colony and searching for the important northerly route to Asia. Hakluyt reprinted a series of letters from Thorne to Ley, as well as a book describing the venture and the importance of it to both Ley and Henry VIII. This was a crucial piece of evidence for Hakluyt; Thorne's plans demonstrated that the English had not given up their right of possession of this territory during the first half of the sixteenth century, but had been actively pursing a course of exploration and colonization. The problem with this evidence for modern scholars is the fact that the Thorne materials only exists in the publications of Hakluyt and his colleague John Dee, whom we will discuss shortly. Nowhere else in the documentary record can we find any evidence to corroborate the fact that Thorne wrote the materials in question. While it is possible that the documentation has been lost,
especially given the fact that Hakluyt’s personal papers are no longer extant, it is probable that Hakluyt invented the evidence to solve a crucial problem regarding the English right of possession in North America. While Thorne was a very successful businessman and most certainly was acquainted with the entire English community in Spain, he died in 1532 and could not back up Hakluyt’s assertions. It is not a coincidence that Hakluyt sandwiched Thorne’s materials between letters patent and published accounts of the New World that could be easily verified by any of his readers. Indeed, while his introduction establishes him as an expert in American knowledge, he felt it was necessary to bolster his credentials further; he was able to discuss all of his findings “with an excellent learned man of Portingale, most privie to all the discoveries of his nation.” Authority established, Hakluyt then had the liberty to invent needed materials to further his case for creating an English presence in America.

Two years later, Hakluyt would present his decisive manifesto on English colonization to Queen Elizabeth and a select circle of her advisors, known today as the Discourse of Western Planting. Written at the behest of Walter Raleigh

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98 Hakluyt, Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, “To the right worshipfull and most vertuous Gentleman master Phillip Sydney Esquire,” p. ¶. back.

99 Hakluyt’s work only made four known copies of the Discourse, which was meant to be viewed by the Queen and her advisors only, and only one of those is extant today. It can be found at the Manuscript and Rare Book Division in the New York Public Library. David Beers Quinn and Alison M. Quinn published a scholarly edition of the Discourse in 1993, which includes a facsimile copy of the manuscript side by side with a transcription. Given the rarity and fragility of the original manuscript and the excellent facsimile that the Quinn edition provides, I have consulted the facsimile rather than the original. See, Hakluyt, A particulier discourse concerninge the greate necessitie and manifolde commodyties that are
as he attempted to convince the Queen to allow him to organize and plant an 
American colony, the Discourse shows how much research and work Hakluyt 
had undertaken since the publication of Divers Voyages. Having found new 
documentary evidence of English activities in America in the first half of the 
sixteenth century, he no longer needed to afford Thorne’s account the primacy 
that he had two years earlier. While Hakluyt still mentioned Thorne in the 
Discourse, the account was buried deeper into the text. The work itself was 
organized into twenty-one chapters, each focused on a particular reason for 
English colonization of the New World. His arguments had matured a great deal 
by 1584 and his command of the sources was evident. In making his initial 
argument for colonization, namely the conversion of the Indians, he openly 
questioned the sincerity of Iberian attempts at the same. Knowing that the 
Christianizing of the indigenous population a major part of Iberian claims for their 
sovereignty in the Americas, Hakluyt wondered “Yea I my selfe have been 
demaunded of them howe many Infidells have beene by us converted?”

Utilizing Swiss, French, and English sources, Hakluyt documented the Iberian 
failure to convert the “Infidells.” Indeed, as he would explain later, “the people 
kepte in subjection desire nothinge more then freedome.”

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like to growe to this realme of Englande by the westerne discoveries lately 
attempted.

\(^{100}\) Ibid., pp. 10-11.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp. 40-41.
Near the end of the *Discourse*, Hakluyt took a curious approach to arguing against Spanish title to the Americas. He argued the English held proper title to the New World because “the west Indies were discovered and inhabited 322 yeres before Columbus made his firste voyadge which was in the yere 1492" by none other than “one Madock ap Owen Guyneth a Prince of North Wales.” Hakluyt pointed the Queen towards a history of Wales published that year by a young historian named David Powel; their connection is important because it intertwines Hakluyt with another major English intellectual, John Dee. Aside from Hakluyt, Dee was the largest force in England pushing for expansion and empire. Astronomer, Astrologer, Cosmographer, Geographer, Mathematician, Scientist, Antiquary, and Historian, he was a Renaissance and Humanist scholar in every possible sense. Having survived the political turmoil of the mid-sixteenth century with his life intact, Dee enjoyed a growing reputation and influence during the Elizabethan period, although he needed to constantly guard against charges of heresy and witchcraft until his final days. During the 1570s, he began to believe that the key to England’s future was in establishing a

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102 Ibid., pp. 88-89


105 Ibid.
powerful navy and an overseas empire; indeed, Dee argued he was already living in a “Brytish Impire.” Writing in 1577, he argued “that, this Pety-Navy-Royall, is thought to be the onely Maister Key, wherewith to open all Locks, that kepe out, or hinder, this Incomparable Brytish Impire, from enjoying (by many means) such a yerely Revenue.”

Dee viewed the realm as a conglomeration of the British Isles, an “Imperiall Crown of these Brytish Ilandes.” Britain was unique amongst the European powers because it was an island nation, and was therefore particularly suited to control the seas. The printed marginalia left by Dee highlights this point. As he advocated for the building of a more powerful navy, Dee underlined two important marginal comments in his personal copy.

“The marveilous Priviledge of the Brytish Impire” was their God given right to rule the seas; “fisherboates onely, could never bring to pas our enjoying the great blessing of God, appropriat to this Kingdom.” England needed to build a more powerful navy to realize its full potential and power. The world should sail the seas at England’s pleasure, and those seas, in Dee’s estimation, needed to be more fully utilized by the crown. Indeed, in the midst of lobbying for an American

106 Dee, General and rare memorials pertayning to the perfect arte of navigation annexed to the paradoxal cumpas, in playne: now first published: 24. yeres, after the first invention thereof (London: John Daye, 1577), p. 8.

107 Ibid., p. 9.

108 The British Library copy was personally owned and annotated by Dee in approximately 1588.

109 Dee, General and rare memorials pertayning to the perfect arte of navigation annexed to the paradoxal cumpas, p. 8.
colony in November 1577, Dee took a moment to inform the Queen of her current title to several overseas territories, including Greenland.\textsuperscript{110}

Like Florio, Powel had become acquainted with Hakluyt and Dee while at Oxford, and in the process of securing employment as the personal chaplain of Henry Sidney, he was introduced to a manuscript copy of the History of Cambria, Now Called Wales.\textsuperscript{111} Humphrey Llwyd had begun the translation from Welsh into English but had passed away before he could complete the project.\textsuperscript{112} Dee was a Welshman as well, and played upon the patriotic sentiments in Powel to complete work on what would be the first printed history of Wales. There is no doubt Dee shared some of Powel’s patriotism, but it was not the major reason he sought to finish the project. Both Dee and Hakluyt were seeking a pre-Columbian claim to the New World and found in the Welsh folk hero Prince Madoc a figure in which to build their case.\textsuperscript{113} Dee had worked on establishing American primacy through St. Brendan, but was not able to construct a

\begin{footnotes}


\item[113] See note 70 above.
\end{footnotes}
persuasive argument using that example. Soon after Powel began working for Sidney, Dee gave him the unfinished manuscript that was in Sidney’s possession. Both Dee and Hakluyt impressed upon him the importance of constructing a history of Madoc in an American context, and Powel was happy to oblige.

Powel was very careful to establish authority at the beginning of the text. He implored his readers to understand that he was simply passing along what was a long textual tradition over four hundred years old; he wrote that “these collections were copied by divers, so that there are at this daie of the same in Wales a hundred copies at the least, whereof the most part were written two hundred yeares ago.” Indeed, he was only continuing the work of the late Llwyd, who “would not onelie have set out this historie absolute and perfect, but also have opened unto the world other antiquities of this land, which now lie hidden and unknownen.” The story itself was rather straightforward. Madoc was a Welsh prince whose two brothers were battling for supremacy of the

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114 Dee remarked in his notes that “Brandan, the learned man, discovered much of the western parts.” NAW, Vol. I, p. 55. Also see British Library, Cotton MS, Augustus I, i, 1; J. A. Williamson, The Cabot Voyages, p. 201.

115 Humphrey Llwyd and David Powel, The History of Cambria, Now Called Wales: A Part of the Most Famous Yland of Brytaine, Written in the Brytish Language Above Two Hundreth Yeares Past (London: Harding and Wright, 1811; orig. 1584).


117 Llwyd and Powel, The History of Cambria, Now Called Wales, p. ix, “To the Reader”.

118 Ibid.
Rather than take sides, Madoc “sought adventures by seas, sailing West, and leaving the coast of Ireland so far north, that he came to a land unknownen, where he saw manie strange things.” But rather than recount an Homerian journey that only insinuated American landfall like we saw in St. Brendan’s voyage, Powel at once equated the “land unknownen” with America, pointing out that “this land must needs be some part of that countrie of which the Spaniardes affirme themselves . . . must needs be some part of Nova Hispania or Florida.” Powel interjected at this point to present several pieces of evidence to bolster the claim. First of all, he argued, “the common report of the inhabitants of that countrie, which affirme, that their rulers descended from a strange nation, that came thither from a farre countrie: which thing is confessed by Mutezuma king of that countrie.” The great Mexican empire that Cortés encountered was led by individuals descending from the Welsh colonists left by Madoc, in Powel’s estimation. This was a persuasive piece of evidence considering that most Europeans thought very little of American intellect and ingenuity. The fact that the greatest of the American empires was founded by descendents of the British Isles would have fit nicely into this worldview. Powel also used a linguistic argument, noting that “the Brytish words and names of

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119 Ibid., p. 166.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., p. 167.
places, used in that country even to this day.\textsuperscript{123} While the settlers eventually began to utilize indigenous languages following “the manners of the land,” a great deal of Welsh place names and monikers were incorporated into the lexicon and landscape.\textsuperscript{124} This was important to point out because it established possession in manner which would carry special weight even in Iberian circles.\textsuperscript{125} Finally, Powel purported that even the Spanish remarked that the group of indigenous people in question “honored the cross: whereby it may be gathered that Christians had been there, before the coming of the Spaniards.”\textsuperscript{126} Because Wales was now a part of England, Queen Elizabeth had rightful possession of America based on initial discovery and colonial settlement, the naming of places and things, and the Christianization of the indigenous population.

This argument had been fermenting the minds of Dee and Hakluyt for quite some time, and the publication of \textit{The History of Cambria} in 1584 finally made it available to the masses. One year earlier, George Peckham edited a history of Humphrey Gilbert’s voyages in which he noted, “it is very evident that the planting there shall in time right ample enlarge her Majesties Territories and Dominions (or I might rather say) restore her to her Highnesse auncient right and interest in those Countries, into the which ... Madocke ap Owen Gwyneth ... arrived and there planted himselfe, and his Colonies, and afterward returned

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125} See note 37 above.

\textsuperscript{126} Llwyd and Powel, \textit{The History of Cambria, Now Called Wales}, p. 167.
himselfe into England." Peckham, the major investor in Gilbert’s failed voyages, consulted with both Dee and Hakluyt to try to convince Queen Elizabeth to allow him to continue the project. The story of Madoc’s voyage to America made for an excellent piece of evidence to argue for further colonization attempts. While Peckham’s attempts failed, most likely due to his ties to Catholicism, the invention of Madoc’s journey by Dee and Hakluyt demonstrates the lengths to which they would go to create an Anglo-American history that established English primacy in the New World. While the evidence in the first half of the sixteenth century and times prior required some fabrication, English activities in the later half of the century allowed the process of invention to move the narrative closer to the present and establish just what an English empire in America might look like textually and visually.

**Writing an English America**

In spite of a lack of any substantial colonial enterprise in England, Anglo-Americana flourished in the second half of the sixteenth century. Although addressing different topics, most were devoted to pushing the English towards the colonization of America. As John Hawkins would write introducing Humphrey Gilbert’s history, “Next as an endles runing streame, her Channels doth discharge: | That swell above theyr boundes, into an Occean wide and large. | So

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England that is pestered nowe, & choakt through want of ground | Shall finde a soile where roome inough, and perfect doth abounde."\(^{129}\) From the publication of Eden’s *Decades* until the end of the century, at least one hundred and twenty-one separate titles were published in England, and a significant number of these received at least two printings.\(^{130}\) Most of the material was historical in nature, meaning it was devoted to narrating English and foreign activities in the New World. Additionally, a considerable portion devoted some space to geographical knowledge of America. The majority of late sixteenth century Anglo-Americana was built upon the foundation laid by Hakluyt and Dee, and most of the publications can be traced back to their influence. Less than twenty percent of the total number of publications in the second half of the sixteenth century were published prior to 1580, and much of this literature was focused on the Iberian model utilized by Eden.\(^{131}\) William Cuningham, assessing the state of geographical knowledge in 1559, remarked “yea & that is daily more & more perceived, for what countrie, or lland, is not in oure age searched out? What shall I herein speake of Vesputius Americus, who . . . found out America . . . to the great benefites of all Europe.”\(^{132}\) While privileging of Amerigo Vespucci’s

\(^{129}\) John Hawkins, “*M. John Hawkins, his opinion of this intended voyage,*” in Peckham, *A TRUE REPORTE*, p. §.i..


\(^{131}\) 24 of the 121 titles were published prior to 1580.

American encounter over that of Columbus would continue throughout Europe into the seventeenth century, it is important to note the tenor of Cuningham's work. Geography was an imprecise science because it was constantly changing due to recent discoveries, but these discoveries were being made on behalf of all Europeans. English readers should concern themselves with developments in America, Cuningham mused, because they could soon find themselves jockeying for a piece of it. Thomas Hacket, in dedicating his translation of André Thevet's *The New found worlde* in 1568 pushed the argument further, remarking that while he hoped England would find cause to explore and colonize America "to Gods glory and the benefite of this common Wealth," it was still a world foreign to the English.¹³³ The text, from Thevet's French perspective and imagination, still had a geographical focus on the Iberian Atlantic world and the mysterious and marvelous elements within it. Hacket, who would also translated Jean Ribault's account of French activities in Florida, wished to impress upon his readers that Spanish America was a strange world, untamed by Europeans and certainly un-Christianized.¹³⁴ Calling upon the gallantry of a mythical medieval England, Hacket pressed his readers to remember that "the valiant and curagious

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personages of the world have brought to passe many excellent enterprises, so that their fame shall never dye, atcheved as well by sea as by lande."\(^{135}\)

The English continued to write about Spanish America in the late sixteenth century, but experience started to become a more important element in the Anglo-American narratives as they started to venture into the Atlantic in ever greater numbers.\(^{136}\) Yet in a sign that humanism had fully enveloped the mind of English writers, experience could only be trusted so much. We should recognize, however, that the nature of experience was changing. While scholastic learning emphasized the physical nature of personally experiencing events, humanist experience had both a physical and metaphysical element to it. An individual could relate what he or she experienced, but if it was not supported by textual evidence, it could not be fully trusted.

\(^{135}\) Ibid., "The Epistle Dedicatarie," p. iii, back.

\(^{136}\) After Eden, there were a small quantity of narratives published that focused on the Iberian Atlantic world. See Martire, *De Orbe Novo Petri Martyris Anglerii Mediolanensis, Protonotarii, & Caroli quinti Senatoris Decades octo*, ed. and trans. by Richard Hakluyt (Paris: Guillelumum Avuray, 1587); Hernán Lopes de Castaneda, *The first Booke of the History of the Discoverie and Conquest of the East Indias, enterprised by the Portingales, in their daungerous Navigations, in the time of King Don John, the second of that name*, trans by N. L. (London: Thomas East, 1582); Martin Fernandez de Enciso, *A Briefe Description of the Portes, Creekes, Bayes, and Havens, of the Weast India*, trans. by John Frampton (London: Henry Bynneman, 1578); Barnardine of Escalanta, *A discourse of the navigation which the Portugales of make to the Realmes and Provinces of the East partes of the worlde, and of the knowledge that growes by them of the great thinges, which are in the Dominions of China*, trans. by John Frampton (London: Thomas Dawson, 1579); Antonie Galvano, *The Discoveries of the World from their first originall unto the yeere of our Lord 1555*, ed. and trans. by Richard Hakluyt (London: George Bishop, 1601); and Francisco López de Gómara, *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the Weast India, now called new Spayne, Atchieved by the worthy Prince Hernando Cortes Marques of the valley of Huaxacac, most delectable to Reade*, trans. by Thomas Nicholas (London: Henry Bynneman, 1578).
evidence, the experience would prove unreliable. John Hawkins, a ship builder who made several slave trading voyages to America, published the details of his voyages in 1569. His tales were full of adventure and intrigue, working to cast the English slave traders in a heroic light. However, Hawkins understood that his history was incomplete. Concluding his account, he admitted “if all the miseries and troublesome affayres of this sorowefull voyadge shoulde be perfectlye and throughlye written, there shoulde nede a paynfull man with his penne, and as greate a tyme as he had that wrote the lives and deathes of the martyrs.”

Hawkins only trusted his recollections of the voyages to a certain extent. While he had been to America, he did not consider himself to be an expert on America, but a man of action. While Hawkins believed his text was a history, he did not have “greate a tyme” to spend perfecting his narrative and checking it against the current body of scholarship. As the main actor in the history, he was too personally invested in the story and the characters within to be objective. A scholar independent of the saga and skilled in writing, “a paynfull man with his penne,” was more capable of constructing the history than a participant.

Hawkins’ tentativeness in evaluating his own experiences pointed towards a new development in Anglo-American history. Interpretation, the act of an expert in examining events and giving them meaning, would become an essential element of the late-sixteenth century Anglo-American history. Several years later, a crew member on one of Hawkins’ voyages verified many of the details in his own

\[137\] John Hawkins, A true declaration of the troublesome voyadge of M. John Haukins to the parties of Guynea and the West Indies, in the yeares of our Lord 1567 and 1568 (London: Thomas Purfoote for Lucas Harrison, 1569), final page.
account of the action, authenticating his narrative based on the earlier noted facts.\textsuperscript{138}

The recommendation and certification of historical recollections can be seen in the proposals for adventure by Humphrey Gilbert. Gilbert enlisted the services of the poet George Gascoigne in 1576 as he sought backing for another search for the elusive Northwestern passage to Asia. Gilbert helped to fund Martin Frobisher’s ill-fated voyage that returned to England with holds full of fools-gold, and sought to rebuild his reputation in print. Gascoigne, one of the most important poets of the early Elizabethan period, cast Gilbert as an expert on American matters, both academically and experientially. Expounding “upon the commendable travaile which | Sir Humfrey Gilbert hath dis- | closed in this worke,” Gascoigne placed him in line of great explorers of the age, including Columbus, Vespucci, and Magellan, as the rightful heirs of Neptune, Roman god of the sea.\textsuperscript{139} “But al those three, and al the world beside, | Discovered not, a thing of more emprice, | Then in this booke, is learnedly descride, | By vertue of my worthie friendes device. | Yf such successe, to him (as them) then fall, | \textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{138} Job Hortop, \textit{The Rare of Travailes of Job Hortop}, ed. by G. R. G. Conway (Mexico City: 3a Calle de Marsella 47, 1928). There are two separate editions of Hortop. See Hortop, \textit{The Rare Travailes of Job Hortop, and Englishman, who was not heard of in three and twentie yeeres space} (London: William Wright, 1591) [First edition]; and Hortop, \textit{The Travailes of an English man. Containing his sundrie calamities indued by the space of twentie and odd yeres in his absence from his native Countrie} (London: William Wright, 1591) [This is the second edition, which is found in the Conway edited edition of 1928, itself a facsimile of the copy found in the British Library].

\textsuperscript{139} Humphrey Gilbert, \textit{A Discourse Of a Discoverie for a new Passage to Cataia} (London: Henry Middleton, 1576), page right after “To the Reader.”
Neptune the 5. we justly may him call.”¹⁴⁰ In spite of the success of earlier explorers, none of them had accomplished their ultimate goal: finding a quick western route to Asia. Gilbert’s work, if taken seriously, would trump all of the others’ discoveries and make England master of the seas.

Francis Drake’s exploits became important topics for Anglo-American historians as well. Thomas Greepe composed an epic poem on Drake’s many adventures and circumnavigation of the globe in 1587. Examining his accomplishments, Greepe wrote “His rare attempts performed and doone, | With honour, fame and victory: | The like before who ever wonne, | That you can call to memorie. | Therefore I pray for Englandes sake: | The Lord preserve the noble Drake.”¹⁴¹ The fantastic deeds that Drake had accomplished were worthy of remembering forever, according to Greepe, but only if those memories served a greater purpose. Greepe argued that England should use the momentum established by Drake to build a presence in the New World. Walter Biggs and Thomas Cates also wrote about Drake in the context of the Spanish Armada. England had been in a state of war with Spain since 1585, and during that time some colonial sentiment had been subdued in order to devote resources towards the war. The “victory” of the English in 1588 over a sizeable force sent by Philip II to invade England emboldened many of England’s champions of American

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Greepe, *The true and perfecte Newes of the woorthy and valiaunt exploytes, performed and doone by that valiant Knight Syr Frauncis Drake: Not onely at Sancto Domingo, and Carthagena, but also nowe at Cales, and uppon the Coast of Spayne* (London: I. Charlewood for Thomas Hackett, 1587), lines 367-372.
colonization to continue their push. Biggs was a captain aboard one of Drake’s ships and had lost his life during a struggle in Spanish America. Cates then continued the account, writing in Biggs’ stead. First imploring his readers to forgive the lateness of the account because “the comming of the Spanish Fleete upon our coast,” Cates explained how he would prove the trustworthiness of the account. Cates had “by chaunce recovered of late into my handes ... a copie of the Discourse of our late West Indian voyage,” and due to his examination of other sources and the testimony of other “honest and well disposed persons” he could verify that “therein a most true report of the services and other matters which happened in the sayd voyage.” Experience scrutinized by an expert in American knowledge could supply all the veracity a text might need. But most importantly, historians writing about Drake made sure to stress that the importance of writing the history of the voyages was not in the actions themselves, but in what they might mean for the future of the English in


144 Ibid., page before dedication.

145 Ibid., first page of dedication.
America. Late in the century, Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, a favorite poet of Scottish and future English King James VI, wrote “While through the World’s unhunted wildernesse | I, th’ old, first Pilot’s wandring House address: | While (Famous Drake-like) coasting every strand | I do discover many a New-found-Land: | And while, from Sea to Sea, with curious pain | I plant great Noah’s plenteous Vine again.”146 Drake’s victories against the Spanish in America, Spain, and the English Channel, coupled with his circumnavigation of the globe, set in motion a destiny that could only be fulfilled through the English colonization of America. It was the English destiny, Du Bartas argued, to people the “New-found-Land” like Noah had after the Biblical flood.

In the midst of the wars with Spain, Walter Raleigh was able to mount several colonial expeditions to the New World, establishing two successive colonies on Roanoke Island of the coast of North America. Both colonies would ultimately fail, with one almost completely disappearing without a trace, and they have been considered as a setback for English colonization in America.147 However, these colonial attempts were extremely important as they gave the English, as well as most Europeans, one of the first detailed visualizations of America. Nearly a century after the Columbian encounter, visual representations


Figure 15. Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1590), title page. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.\(^{148}\)

of America were extremely rare in Europe. While the first printings of Columbus’ letter in 1493 contained several woodcuts, the numerous volumes of work on the New World that followed during the sixteenth century conveyed very little visually. American maps were also very rare and would continue to be the stuff of intrigue and espionage well into the seventeenth century. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, European Americana included more visual representations of America. Curiously, the thinkers and writers behind Anglo-American works were innovators in this realm. There are two very important reasons for this development. Even in the late sixteenth century, authority and authenticity could still be established by showing a reader the event that was being written about. While a reader could metaphysically travel to the New World to authenticate an event, incorporating a visual element helped to create a foundation of trust. But perhaps more importantly, the English had many more personal experiences in America to call upon in the second half of the sixteenth century. The visual representation was much more trustworthy if it came from first-hand experience, preferably from the subject’s mind to paper.

Late sixteenth century Anglo-American images have been thoroughly studied over the past fifty years; we now have an exhaustive picture of how the

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150 The images associated with Columbus’ first letter are very similar to those found in the *Nuremberg Chronicle*; further research is needed to ascertain any relationship between the two.
Figure 16. Theodor de Bry, "The Towne of Secota" (1590), based on a watercolor by John White. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{151} Hariot, \textit{A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia}, p. 62. Image from edition in the Library of Congress.
English represented the New World visually during this period.\(^{152}\) As such, we will not spend too much time analyzing the significance of this genre. Nonetheless, it is important to understand the significance of the Roanoke images; they will become critical in establishing acceptance for an Anglo-American historical narrative in Europe to compete with the Spanish one. John White accompanied the Roanoke expedition of 1585 as an artist in residence; combined with Thomas Hariot, both would work to document the colonial endeavor textually and artistically.\(^{153}\) Upon their return to England, White brought a series of watercolor paintings with him that cast America in a light few Europeans had ever seen before. Hariot would publish an English pamphlet of his textual study in 1588, but it was the images that sparked the imagination of New World scholars in England.\(^{154}\) That same year, Hakluyt convinced expert Dutch engraver Theodor De Bry, in London on other business, to undertake a European edition of Hariot that combined the text with White’s images.\(^{155}\)

\(^{152}\) Kim Sloan’s recent compendium of visual Anglo-Americana is the most important work in this area to be published in the past decade, and is built upon the work of a previous generation of historians led by David Beers Quinn. See Sloan, *A New World: England’s First View of America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).


\(^{154}\) Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (London: R. Robinson, 1588).

\(^{155}\) Peter Stallybrass has written an excellent essay detailing the story behind the publication of the De Bry edition. See Stallybrass, “Admiranda narratio: A European Best Seller,” in Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia: The 1590 Theodor de Bry Latin Edition* (Charlottesville:
1590, De Bry, in consultation with Hakluyt, Hariot, and White, had produced four separate folio editions in English, French, German, and Latin.

We must not make the mistake of giving these editions too much immediate influence. The folio editions that were issued by De Bry were extremely expensive and were marketed to a select audience of wealthy patrons and colonial promoters. The average person in Europe would not have had access to the De Bry edition, and the closest most English readers came to the

University of Virginia Press, 2007), pp. 9-30. Additionally, the 2007 reprint of the De Bry edition has made the excellent presentation copy found in the British Library and Mariners’ Museum accessible to a large audience in way heretofore unseen.

images was the textual version of Hariot published in Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations*. White’s watercolors would surface from time to time in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but were only collected by the British Museum in the mid to late nineteenth century.\(^{157}\) But the people in Europe who could influence decisions about the New World did see the images, and for them, it was their first detailed look at a world they had heretofore only read about. The key word to consider here is “see.” De Bry, in his dedication to Walter Raleigh, accentuated the importance of the visual element, writing “Sir, seeing that the parte of the Worlde, which is betwene the Florida and the Cap Breton nowe nammed Virginia, to the honneur of yours most sovveraine Layde and Queene Elizabeth.”\(^{158}\) Hariot repeated these sentiments. Believing that there had been “some slaunderous and shamefull speeches bruited abroade by many that returned from thence,” about their experiences there, Hariot strove to authenticate their experiences in a way that could not be assailed by those who focused on the failure of the Roanoke colony.\(^{159}\) “I have therefore thought it good beeing one that have beene in the discoverie and in dealing with the naturall inhabitantes specially imploied,” Hariot noted, “and having therefore seene and knowne more then the ordinarie: to imparte so much unto you of the fruites of our

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\(^{158}\) De Bry, “TO THE RIGHT WORTHIE AND HONOURABLE, SIR WALTER RALEGH,” in Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1590), p. 3 [a2].

\(^{159}\) Hariot, “TO THE ADVENTURERS, FAVORERS, AND WELWILLERS,” in Ibid., p. 5 [a3].
labours, as that you may knowe howe injuriously the enterprise is slaundered.\textsuperscript{160}

Their experiences at Roanoke were so far out of the ordinary that not even the available literature could prepare or authenticate Hariot's testimony. The images, on the other hand, could corroborate the story he was telling and prove his history to be trustworthy. A \textit{briefe and true report} was the first of a series of pictorial reports about America and other foreign locales, and the images within it would go on to determine how Europeans would portray America throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. But most importantly, this edition was an English history of America; an English textual account seen through images captured through English eyes. This was a vision of America that could compete with the Spanish narrative that had dominated the sixteenth century, and would spur the English towards more ambitious projects in the following decades.

\textbf{Epilogue: Hakluyt and Beyond}

Richard Hakluyt's crowning achievement was his \textit{Principall Navigations}, published in 1589, and then revised and expanded as \textit{Principal Navigations} from 1598 through 1600.\textsuperscript{161} Going beyond the cursory approach of \textit{Divers Voyages},

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{161} Hakluyt, \textit{The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English nation, made by Sea or over Land, to the most remote and farthest distant Quarters of the earth at any time within the compasse of these 1500 yeeres} (London: George Bishop and Ralph Newberie for Christopher Barker, 1589); Richard Hakluyt, \textit{The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by Sea or overland, to the remote and farthest distant quarters of the Earth, at any time within the compasse of these 1600 yeres} (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599); and Hakluyt, \textit{The Third and Last Volume of the Voyages, Navigations, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation, and in some few places, where they have not been, of strangers, performed within and before the time of these hundred}
\end{footnotesize}
Hakluyt documented every single voyage he could find that the English had made anywhere in the world. Much larger in size than its previous incarnation, this demy quarto edition was meant for use by individuals of means and those seeking to explore the world. However, the first edition suffered from the hurried nature that had claimed *Divers Voyages*. There were a number of printing errors and editorial slips; much of the content seemed thrown together with little regard for authenticity. Hakluyt was being pulled in many different directions at this stage of his career, and it is quite remarkable that he was able to even issue the 1589 edition as quickly as he did. Over the intervening decade, he worked to perfect the work, editing dubious sketches and perfecting the errors within, although the tale of Madoc remained through both editions. By 1598, he was able to issue the first volume of the revised copy with a host of new material he had uncovered in the past ten years.

Reminiscing about the textual journey he had taken over the past two decades, Hakluyt thought about the changes that had occurred in England over the turn of the century. The political uncertainty of the middle decades of the sixteenth century was beginning to return as Queen Elizabeth moved closer to the end of her life without a designated heir. Following the failed attempts by Walter Raleigh to establish a permanent colony in North America and his

yeeres, to all parts of the Newfound world of America, or the West Indies (London: George Bishop, Ralfe Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1600).

instance of finding a city of gold in Guyana, Elizabeth turned her attention elsewhere. Yet the national mood had changed in regard to exploration and colonization. Since the 1570s, English navigators and explorers had sailed the world over in search of new opportunities for self and country. *The Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt recalled, were conceived “with [the] diligent observation, [that] some thing might be gathered which might commend our nation for their high courage and singular activitie in the Search and Discoverie of the most unknowne quarters of the world.” Unwilling to allow the Spanish and other nations to take the initiative in this regard, it was the English, Hakluyt argued, who were at the forefront in the rapidly changing field of world geography. The works themselves covered a vast amount of material that spanned the entire breadth of the known world and beyond, but Hakluyt’s argument remained true to his focus of his previous works. The English, he opined, were now the masters of the seas and thus fully capable of establishing an overseas empire in America. While they at first had set “foorth for their Northeasterne discovery,” and had gotten over what they once had found “obscure and ambiguous,” with the first three portions of the world mastered, it was now time to set their focus on the fourth. A master of his sources, Hakluyt had earned the trust of his audience. He could include with confidence materials both foreign and domestic, for while


his work did “carry the title of *The English voyages* ... I have bene careful to supply the same with the best and chiefest relations of strangers.”\(^{165}\) But instead of using this material to supply the main narrative, as we saw with Eden, Willes, and Hakluyt’s work with Martire’s *Decades*, he had other motivations for its inclusion now. Writing confidently, Hakluyt asserted that he translated “out of Spanish, and here in this present volume to publish such secrets of theirs, as may any way availe us or annoy them, if they drive and urge us by their sullen insolencies, to continue our courses of hostilitie against them, and shall cease to seeke a good and Christian peace upon indifferent and equal conditions.”\(^{166}\) Spanish American history was to be studied in order to learn methods to defeat the Spanish and possibly eclipse them in America. The battle for American empire was being fought not only on land and at sea, but in the hearts and minds of individuals who read their histories. With the international reputation Hakluyt had gained in the past several decades as a first rate scholar of American historical and geographical knowledge, his voluminous circulating bibliography combined with the work of Hariot, De Bry, and others had given Europeans an opposing narrative to consider when thinking about the history and future of America.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, things began to change rapidly in England and America. James VI of Scotland became James I of


\(^{166}\) Ibid.
England after the death of Elizabeth in 1603, and peace with Spain quickly followed. James was a proponent of English colonization of America, and Hakluyt played a role in the formation and promotion of the Virginia Company. Indeed, he would live to see a permanent colony in America by his death in 1616 and have an opportunity to explore Virginia in several of his final works. After the Virginia Colony had been successfully planted, Hakluyt turned his attention towards the East India Company and their work in Asia, but continued to advocate for continued colonization of America. One of those who he took an interest in was Michael Lok, a major investor in several late sixteenth century voyages of exploration, including the Martin Frobisher adventure. Lok took it upon himself, with the support of Hakluyt, to reassess Anglo-American history in the context of Martire’s Decades. Plagued by debt from the Frobisher expedition that would send him to prison for a spell and follow him until his death in 1620, Lok saw an opportunity for profit in a reissue of Hakluyt’s edition of Eden’s translation, especially in the context of the newly planted Virginia colony. In his Latin dedication to James I, Eden is not mentioned. Instead, Lok haughtily cast himself as the intellectual heir of Hakluyt, praising the elder statesmen for

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his service and placing the credit for the original translation at this feet.\textsuperscript{169} Lok's new edition would become the standard reading of Martire in England through 1628, enjoying three separate editions, as well as the first complete English edition of Martire's \textit{Decades}.\textsuperscript{170} The evolution of the title pages is telling. The 1612 title page gives partial credit to Eden for the translation, although most of the translation was due to "the industrie, and painefull travaile of M. Lok."\textsuperscript{171} By 1625, Eden's name disappeared from the title page to be replaced with Hakluyt's, and by 1628, Hakluyt had assumed sole translator's credit. 

\textit{De Novo Orbe} was really a conglomeration of Eden and Hakluyt's translations, along with new commentary, editorial decisions, and translation of Hakluyt's Latin into English. While he credited Eden at times and purported to include some his commentary, the tenor of the work had changed. The mood was somewhat anti-Spanish; Lok went so far as to change Eden's pro-Columbian narrative to a decidedly negative viewpoint.\textsuperscript{172} But more importantly, this edition signaled a new outlook on American history in England. It was not so important as to study Spanish American history to understand America, but to understand

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\item[171] Martire d'Anghiera, \textit{De Novo Orbe} (1612), title page.

\item[172] Ibid., p. 1.
\end{footnotes}
how their history could be useful for the new Anglo-American colonies. "Wherin, we are chiefly to consider, the industry, and travailes of the Spanyarde ... All whiche, may bee exemplary unto us, to performe the like in our Virginea, which beeing once throughly planted, and inhabited without people, may returne as greate benefitte to our Nation in another kinde, as the Indies doe unto the Spanyard." Instead of learning about Spanish America to “annoy” the Spanish as Hakluyt had written a decade ago, the English would be wise, in Lok’s estimation, to learn from their example so as to make Virginia as profitable to the English “as the Indies doe unto the Spanyard.”

The new century would bring changes to the production of history in the English Atlantic world. For the first time, historians writing American history would be able to call America their home. In 1555, Richard Eden had a relatively manageable American historiography to master when he constructed Decades of the Newe World; by 1612, that historiography had grown exponentially. Michael Lok remarked upon the problem new American historians would face, noting:

Whose committe themselves unto the huge, and mayne Ocean, in a small vessell, may sooner expect to be swallowed in that vastity of waters, through the rage and furie of the Sea, then hope to gaine the desired, and intended haven. And seeing my selfe may well bee compared to that small vessell, being but a little bote, and no barke of any burthen, to sayle the tempestuous Seas, and spacious Ocean of this History: I will therefore (like the unskilfull Navigators of former ages) rather coast it along the shoares, then spreade my sayles unto the envious windes in a daungorous Sea.  

Lok chose to “coast it along the shoares” rather than move into uncharted

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174 Ibid., “To the Reader,” p. B.
territory when constructing his own narrative and interpretation of American history, choosing to follow experience and precedent as his course. But as John Wolfe argued in his 1598 translation of John Huighen Van Linschoten, *Discourse of Voyages into the Easte & West Indies*, it was more exciting to venture into the unknown. “But to leave these *Poeticall Fictions*, and vaine Fables,” Wolfe wrote, “which doo but declare the Nature of Man to bee desirous of Novelties, and curious to know those things whereof he is ignorant”¹⁷⁵ The English were a people, Wolfe noted; who did not “coast it along the shoares” but “were incited to make it generally knowne unto their *Island*” the secrets of the world.¹⁷⁶ The experience of how the known would clash with the unknown is the subject of our next chapter.


¹⁷⁶ Ibid., third page of “To the Reader.”
CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRUCTING EMPIRE

The Historical Processes of the Anglo-American Colonial Enterprise

"And as for Virgils verses, though it pleased him to brave the world in taking to the Romans, the Art of Empire, and leaving to others the arts of subjects: yet so much is manifest, that the Romanes never ascended to that height of Empire, till the time they had ascended to the height of other Arts." Francis Bacon (1605)¹

"But to undertake any profession contrary to a mans naturall inclination, is a losse of time, a worke that yeldeth no profit, but breedeth many inconveniences, and destroyeth nature: For the meere Schollerwill never bee good Statist, Souldier, Merchant, nor Mechanicall tradesman." Robert Harcourt (1613)²

Prologue: A Changing Historical Landscape

Above all others in early seventeenth century England, Francis Bacon was the embodiment of the early modern Renaissance humanist. Born in the second half of the sixteenth century, Bacon grew up amidst some the greatest political

¹ Francis Bacon, The two bookes of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and advancement of learning, divine and humane To the King (London: Thomas Purfoot and Thomas Creede, 1605), p. 11 [front].

and scholarly luminaries of his age. Indeed, his early governmental posts put him in the same circle as Richard Hakluyt. Bacon’s rise in stature and fame in the early seventeenth century corresponded with an increased momentum in England to permanently establish colonies in America. An investor in and supporter of the Virginia Company, Bacon began to consider the implications of what an English overseas empire meant and the purpose history could play in this endeavor.

A classically trained scholar, Bacon saw a great deal of fault in the numerous histories that appeared in the London bookshops in his era. He was especially wary of contemporary history, noting that “Moderne Histories, whereof there are some few verie worthy, but the greater part beneath Mediocritie.”

Given the ever changing modern historical landscape, evidence was bound to increase continually, altering conclusions and rendering prior printings worthless. And even more worrisome, Bacon believed, was the fact that these erroneous histories would now be a part of the historiography, misleading readers well after their contents had been proved false. At the heart of this conundrum was the reliance by modern historians on testimony to prove their case. Senses were fallible and could often mislead even immediate actors in an event. Turning to antiquity, Bacon pointed out that “Tacitus wisely noteth ... so great an affinitie

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3 For more on the life of Francis Bacon, see Markku Peltonen, ‘Bacon, Francis, Viscount St Alban (1561–1626)’, in DNB [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/990, accessed 17 Aug 2011]

4 Bacon, The two bookes of Francis Bacon, pp. 12 [back]-13 [back].
hath fiction and beleefe."⁵ Personal experience led to belief in one’s memory of that experience; narratives of this nature made for compelling accounts of an event. The problem was that these experiences could not be thoroughly vetted or verified, regardless of the trustworthiness of an individual. “Accepting or admitting thinges weakely authorized or warranted, is ... either a beleefe of Historie, (as the Lawyers speake, matter of fact:) or else of matter of art and opinion.”⁶ History was not valid, in Bacon’s opinion, unless it emanated from a position of authority and strength, which to him meant historiographical verification and accurate facts. It was best to simply wait until enough time had passed and evidence accumulated before attempting to write history, for as he “noted, the most corrected copies are commonly the least correct.”⁷

Empire also needed to be carefully considered before undertaking the task of its creation. Unless a firm plan was in place for success, backed by the power and approval of the ruler, empire building would be problematic. Bacon argued that “certaine it is, that nothing destroieth authority, so much as the unequall and untimely interchange of pressing power and relaxing power.”⁸ Allowing private enterprise to construct colonies only to royally usurp control once success had been achieved was a recipe for disaster. Furthermore, the size of an empire

⁵ Ibid., p. 21 [back].
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., p. 69 [back].
⁸ Bacon, “Of Empire,” in Bacon, The essaies of Sr Francis Bacon Knight, the Kings Solliciter Generall (London: John Beale, 1612), p. 53.
mattered less than its value. Indeed, Bacon believed the two were likely inversely related, stating that “there is nothing among civill affaires more subject to error, then the right valuacion and true judgement concerning the greatnes of an estate.”\textsuperscript{9} Referencing the sprawling Spanish Empire, which held huge tracts of territory throughout the Americas and other parts of the world, he indicated that size might even be an impediment to a well-functioning empire. An English empire could have “but a small dimention or stemme, and yet apt to be the foundation of great Monarchies.”\textsuperscript{10} In fact, the larger the empire, the more burdensome the tax burden required to keep it functioning would become; “neither will a people overcharged with tributes,” Bacon observed, “bee ever fit for Empire.”\textsuperscript{11}

Bacon studied the colonial experiences of past societies, pointing out in some advise to the Virginia colony that “plantations are amoungst Ancient, Primitive, and Heroicall Workes.”\textsuperscript{12} Virginia’s success could well be determined by scrutinizing the triumphs and failures of past empires in the historical record. Bacon would only comment generally on England’s seventeenth century colonies; while happy to encourage them and offer guidance, his historical temperament, based on sixteenth century precepts, would not allow him to craft a

\textsuperscript{9} Bacon, “Of the greatnesse of Kingdomes,” in Ibid., pp. 233-234.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 235.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 236.

general history of colonial America. The closest he would come to American
history was more than a century in the past during his account of the life of Henry
VII, as we will later see.

Yet other English thinkers began to imagine the utility of contemporary
Anglo-American histories when paired with the prospect of empire building.
Using Venerable Bede as an example, Thomas Wright opined “what Country in
any age did ever represent unto the world such venerable wittes, as England?”
Regardless of their late start, the English were much smarter than other
Europeans and now counted some the most accomplished humanists amongst
their countrymen. The creation of an Anglo-American historical narrative and an
Anglo-American empire were linked; indeed, as Robert Gray would point out,
America was a land where even Indian’s “reason of the future events by those
that are alreadie past.” Understanding the history of America was an important
component in the process of successfully colonizing America; for individuals who
would never visit the New World, the printed word and America were inexorably
linked. Silvester Jourdain affirmed this conviction in a short history of Bermuda,
wondering “who is he that feeles not the benefit of [the printing press and
America]?“ Seventeenth century English thinkers like Thomas Scott began to

13 Thomas Wright, The passions of the minde (London: Valentine Simmes,

[back].

15 Silvester Jourdain, A plaine description of the Barmudas, now called Sommer
obtain as many American histories as possible, making "it a principall part of my employment, to buy all the manuscripts & other ancient and rare Authours out of the hands of the Heretiques." But others, like Robert Harcourt, eschewed historiography altogether, arguing "the meere Scholler will never bee good Statist, Souldier, Merchant, nor Mechanicall tradesman." Experience, in Harcourt’s estimation, would always trump scholarly knowledge.

Over the previous three chapters, we have seen how humanist principles allowed English writers to construct a unique Anglo-American historical language, through which they articulated their ideas for an ideal English empire and the role America would play in those visions. An essential part of this process was overcoming inhibitions English thinkers held regarding the trust of foreign sources. Privileging textual sources, regardless of their origin, over local experiential and testimonial sources, allowed English writers to appropriate Spanish texts, authenticate them, and use them for their own designs. Through historiographical study, individuals could become American experts without ever leaving England. Metaphysical authentication through textual experience trumped actual physical experience, as Bacon suggested. But as the English began to amass their own substantial corpus of firsthand experiences in the New World, personal experience would begin to clash with testimonial experience. The effects of this clash revealed themselves gradually over the seventeenth


century; the first generation of colonists generally accepted the historical narratives crafted in London using the sources they constructed. But increasingly towards the end of the century, colonists began to differ with the version of Anglo-American empire emanating from the center. On these occasions, the personal experience of the colonists trumped the textual experience of the metropolitan writers. However, rather than reverting back to fifteenth century methods of historical writing, colonial writers of American history simply augmented humanist principles, becoming masters of both the existing American historiography and the experience of America itself; they would argue that they were best equipped to write Anglo-American history. The story of this transition will be our focus over the next two chapters.

The death of Elizabeth and the ascent of James VI and I marked a new epoch in both the history of England and Anglo-American historical writing. Scholars have been apt to extend the seventeenth century into the Elizabethan era when considering English interaction with America, pushing the narrative to 1584 and Richard Hakluyt’s *Discourse of Western Planting*. However, it is important to separate Anglo-American historical writing in the late Tudor and early Stuart periods. James’ ascension meant that a colonial supporter was on the throne of England. While Elizabeth was favorable towards the colonial endeavors of her brightest lights, such ventures never received the sort of help that James VI and I gave them (although neither was very enthusiastic about giving state financial support to colonial endeavors). Additionally, late sixteenth century Anglo-Americana holds a distinctly patriotic edge in the context of the
conflict between England and Spain. As we saw in Chapter Three, Bartolomé de las Casas’ work was extremely influential during this period, as English writers put their own colonial ambitions in contrast to those of the Spanish. However, within a year of taking the throne, James began to negotiate a peace with Spain that would last about two decades. While the rhetorical hatred of the Spanish continued in the dialogue of militant Protestants, more moderate thinkers saw the colonial possibilities an Anglo-Spanish alliance offered.\^18 Instead of entertaining the idea of forming a partnership with Spain in America as we saw in Chapter Two, early seventeenth century promoters of an English presence in America took this development as a sign to begin carving an entirely English space in America. By 1607, English colonization of America began in earnest with the founding of Jamestown and continued throughout the rest of the century.

With the establishment of a permanent physical space in America, both colonial and metropolitan writers began to explore the possibilities of what a contemporary Anglo-American history might look like. Would colonial narratives be primary sources, or could they be histories unto themselves? Indeed, where would the history of English America be written? Based on practices developed in the sixteenth century, metropolitan scholars would need to scrutinize colonial texts, judging authenticity based on the existing American historiography. But what role would experience play? Textual authority was partially developed out of the need to trust foreign sources. Individuals writing American history in the

English colonies would be the English actors themselves. Would their status as English citizens lend the texts authenticity? Ultimately, the discussion would center on where the narrative of empire would be constructed: the metropolis or periphery.

Anglo-Americana increased by over 500 percent in the first half of the seventeenth century in comparison with the entire sixteenth century. As America became a greater part of the English experience, more and more writers began to explore its implications in their works. Our focus in this chapter then will be understand how Anglo-American historical literature developed in this period, examining the major themes that appear. As permanent American colonies were established in the early seventeenth century, more English writers, both metropolitan and colonial, began to promote the interests of the colonies using American history. Promotional writers in England and America sought to give their readers an authentic glimpse into Anglo-American colonial life using the history they saw themselves creating. The historiography of early Tudor Americana also became very important during this period, as historians focused on stories of Madoc, Columbus, Henry VII, and the Cabots to illustrate where they thought the developing English empire in America should proceed. Metropolitan and peripheral strains of Anglo-American historical thought began to subtly differentiate in the first few decades of the seventeenth century. A close examination of the literature with a focus on the work of Samuel Purchas and John Smith reveals the developing attitudes towards American history, authority, 

\(^{19}\) See *EA* Vols. I-II.
and empire on both sides of the Atlantic. The outlook of Anglo-American historians regarding Spanish-American historiography began to shift as well, with many writers seeking English emulation of the Spanish Empire in America. By mid-century, both metropolitan and colonial writers were beginning to use American history to attempt to shape the developing Anglo-American empire.

**Historiography and Promotion**

A sizeable portion of the Anglo-Americana that appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century can be categorized as promotional literature, a genre focused on selling the specific colonial ambitions of its authors. Both historical and literary scholars have typically given little validity to the authenticity of the claims of its authors. Beyond the work of Richard Hakluyt, as Loren E. Pennington observed nearly fifty years ago, few of the works of colonial promotion have “retained an undiminished reputation. The rest have been subjected to an increasingly rigorous criticism or largely ignored on the grounds that they were mere propagandists.”

While the use of this literature has increased in the decades following Pennington’s work, it is significant that his dissertation remains the authority on promotional literature half a century later. The factual fidelity of promotional literature remains the biggest criticism, and with good reason. Nearly all of the material references the mild climate and ease of agriculture in the locales they described. As the English began to colonize

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Figure 18. “A Declaration for the certaine time of drawing the great standing Lottery” (1615/16). Promotional literature came in many different formats, including lottery broadsides. This one reads, in part, “Deere Britaines now, be You as kinde; | Bring Light, and Sight, to Us yet blinde: | Leade Us, by Doctrine and Behaviour, | Into one Sion, to one Saviour.” Image courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London.21

America in earnest during the early part of the seventeenth century, the reality of experience began to contrast with some of the fantasies promotional authors were selling. As early as the second half of the seventeenth century, historians used promotional literature as a source very carefully, nearly always commenting on the fantastic nature of some of the claims their authors made.

As a result, the historical nature of promotional literature has not been studied as carefully as other material. Richard Dunn summarized the attitude of modern historians towards promotional literature, noting “writers of [promotional and vituperative pamphlets] may be deliberately ignored for our purposes, since

they were too obviously engaged in special pleading.⁴² Dunn argues against taking such material seriously because most English readers were “probably little interested in these pamphlets” and early seventeenth century metropolitan authors “were usually dubious or openly unfavorable in their appraisal of America.”⁴³ Yet in the first half of the seventeenth century, at least 3,355 editions were published that referenced America; a large portion of these could be described as promotional literature.⁴⁴ Part of this explosion in Anglo-Americana can be explained by the proletarianization of printing in seventeenth century England that allowed more individuals to join the public sphere. But it is noteworthy that the average work that referenced America in the first half of the seventeenth century enjoyed 3.62 printings, suggesting that an avid readership existed in England for Anglo-Americana.⁴⁵

We should take the literature of promotion seriously, especially when we explore the historical content of their arguments. While most were factually inaccurate when measured against twenty-first century standards, nearly all were remarkably precise in light of the source material they had available. At a moment when the experience of American colonization was mixing with the authority of textual authenticity, promotional literature should be understood as

⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁴ See EA, Vol. II.
⁴⁵ Ibid. The 3,355 editions were split amongst 928 titles.
an experimental genre that incorporated both historiographical knowledge and testimonial experience. It had taken nearly a century to develop a flourishing Anglo-American historical enterprise based upon the validity of written sources, many of which were foreign texts. Now that English America was a reality, writers would need to devise methods to validate the experiential writing coming from America.

Promotional writers were selective in their presentation of evidence, not unlike modern historians seeking to prove their thesis. Most promotional literature shared several goals. As their name implies, they sought to convince readers to either invest in the colony or become a colonist. Less implicit is the experience they wanted to give to their readers. William Wood, in *New Englands prospect*, pointed out that "thou mayest in two or three hours travaile over a few leaves, see and know that, which cost him that writ it, yeares and travaile, over Sea and Land before he knew it."26 Like their sixteenth century counterparts, these seventeenth century promotional writers believed that their work would allow readers to metaphysically travel to America and experience it vicariously through their words. While prone to exaggeration on matters of climate and the fertility of the land, their Authors were also very conscious of presenting an accurate historical account of their topic. As Wood stated, "I presume to present thee with the true, and faithfull relation of some few yeares travels and experience, wherein I would be loath to broach any thing which may puzzle they

beleefe.” While each wanted to improve the prospects of the American colonies, they also were conscious of their reputation and did not want to damage it.

Promotional writers shared a common historiography and methodology as they crafted their narratives. The authors thoroughly immersed themselves in the available Anglo-American literature and referred to it in order to bolster their authenticity. Robert Johnson stated “There are divers monuments already publisht in Print to the world, manifesting and shewing, that the coastes and parts of Virginia have beene long since discovered, peopled & possessed by many English.” Johnson placed himself within the historiography that preceded him; the facts he presented could be verified through the experiences of Englishmen in the past. Richard Hakluyt continued to be a very important source throughout the seventeenth century; his work formed the basic historical context for many of the publications. Richard Eburne is typical of early seventeenth century writers who credited Hakluyt’s histories. “Let him be pleased to know: First, That I am not alone, nor the first in this attempt, but have for my president the precedent examples of some farre before me in Learning and Knowledge; as Master Hackluit, who long since wrote a greate Volumne of English Voiages.” The marvelous nature of America and perhaps Eburne’s claims should not be

27 Ibid., p. 1 of “To the Reader.”


questioned, he argued, because it could be verified by the work of trustworthy individuals. Placing one’s labor in the historiographical framework was of the utmost importance. As Luke Foxe explained in a collection of voyages about the search for the Northwest Passage to Asia, “for what are all those of Mr. Hackluiits, and Mr. Purchas, but the Collections and preservations of other mens labours; For who can speake or write that which was never done before, and I doe confesse my selfe to be infinitly bound unto them and others for their paines.”

Anglo-American historiography served as a guide to both the reader and writer, plotting where previous generations had gone and where the current generation could go.

They also cited each other in their narratives, using the observations one author made to authenticate their own recollections. Robert Harcourt, writing to promote the Guiana colony, used the narrative of Walter Raleigh to lend authority to his own, stating “let us call to remembrance one excellent and materiall observation ... by Sr. Walter Raleigh ... was effectually, and faithfully published to the world by his owne penne.”

Andrew Whitaker compared his own account of Virginia to that of John Smith, which in his estimation would lend authority to his own tome.

Eburne not only contextualized himself amongst the work of


established masters such as Hakluyt, but also his peers. “Other men, divers,
have laboured severally in describing and commending, one this Countrey,
another that: as Chaptain Whitebourne, New-found-Land; Captaine Smith, his
New-England; Master Harecourt Guiana; and some others, more than one or
two, Virginia.” Eburne argued that in order to “shew the benefit and the good,”
one had to situate the narrative within “the ancient and frequent use ... of
Plantations.” Each verifying the other, the observations in the promotional
literature could be easily confirmed.

The use of textual authority had been more than a century in the making,
as historical veracity had moved from personal experience to textual verification.
But historiography could only establish a certain amount of authority, according
to a number of writers. As more English explorers and colonists gained personal
American experience, their familiarity with their subject was used to lend
authenticity to their work. Thomas Chaloner, introducing Thomas Gage’s travels
through Spanish America, poetically explained the importance of first-hand
experience. “That he the state which of these Parts whould know, | Need not
hereafter search the plenteous store | Of Hakluit, Purchas and Ramusio, | Or
learn’d Acosta’s writings to look o’re; | Or what Herera hath us told before, |
Which merit not the credit due from hence | Those being but reck’nings of

33 Eburne, A plaine path-way to plantations, p. 1 of “To the Reader.”
34 Ibid.
another score. | But these the fruits of self-experience.”\textsuperscript{35} Chaloner explained that while secondary sources could give a reader a good background on a subject, it was best to get the knowledge from an individual like Gage who had seen and experienced the history for himself. Indeed, there was little need for “Hakluit, Purchas and Ramusio” who were second-hand historians, Chaloner argued, when the reader could get the information directly from Gage.

Gage’s \textit{The English American} was a curious book that captured the imagination of the English reading public. Enjoying at least sixteen printings into the eighteenth century, \textit{The English American} was a history of Gage’s more than decade long journey through the Spanish Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{36} Gage was certainly, as Dionisia Tejera has described him, “the product of the complicated XVII c. of his country.”\textsuperscript{37} Born to English Catholics and educated in Spain, Gage joined the Dominican order and smuggled himself to the Spanish Philippines in 1625.\textsuperscript{38} For the next twelve years, Gage travelled into Peru, through Central America, and into Mexico. Returning from America and finally arriving home in England, Gage

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{35} Thomas Gage, \textit{The English-American, his travail by sea and land, or, A new survey of the West-Indian's} (London: Richard Cotes, 1648), p. 1 of “Upon This Worthy Work, Of his most worthy Friend the Author.”
\bibitem{36} Gage, \textit{The English-American}. Also see EA, Vols. II-V.
\end{thebibliography}
renounced his vows, married, and became an Anglican preacher that supported the Parliamentary cause during the Civil War. With the help of the noted regicide Thomas Chaloner, Gage was able to publish his unique history of Spanish America from an English perspective.\textsuperscript{39}

Gage’s narrative is unique in that he was able to traverse the entirety of Spanish America as a foreigner during a period when it was illegal for anyone other than Spanish citizens to emigrate to their colonies. Certainly there are many examples of illegal immigration in the Spanish New World during this period, given the porous and imaginary character of early modern borders. Yet Gage was able to fully ingratiate himself in the culture during his stay; indeed, during this “exile from [his] native Countrey,” he “was wholly disposed of in that part of America called New-Spain, and the parts adjacent.”\textsuperscript{40} The work is very valuable to modern scholars who seek an understanding of the lower classes and indigenous perspectives during the early seventeenth century; Gage often empathized with these individuals, as he worked with them on a daily basis in the Dominican missions he served. But Gage’s ultimate goal was to present the English with an accurate portrait of Spanish America; indeed, he wanted the English to know what it was like to live and thrive in a functioning European New World society. His friend Chaloner, in his introductory poem, advocated an


\textsuperscript{40} Gage, \textit{The English-American}, p. 1 of “The Epistle Dedicatory.”
English invasion of Spanish America to help the "wronged Indians, whom you shall set free | From Spanish yoke, and Romes Idolatry."  

But Gage viewed Spanish America as an ideal to emulate, not an object of conquest. Through demonstrating the success that the Spanish had obtained in the New World, he was promoting the further development of English America. "The Spaniards," Gage explained, had an empire that could rightly be described in terms "that the Sunn never sets upon their Dominions." England could stubbornly view the Spanish example as a way not to set up colonies, or they could view their "neighbors the Hollanders" efforts to emulate the Spanish. Because of their efforts, the Dutch like the Spanish now had "conquered so much Land in the East and West-Indies." If his work was taken and used to the "benefit of my English Country-men," the newly established colonies in North America would flourish as well.

A number of promotional writers cast themselves in direct contrast to those who relied on texts for their authority. Richard Rich noted that readers could trust him more than a professional writer because "I am a Soldier, blunt and plaine," implying that his lack of articulation was a commodity when it came

41 Ibid., p. 4 of "Upon This Worthy Work, Of his most worthy Friend the Author."
42 Ibid., p. 3 of "The Epistle Dedicatory."
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., p. 2 of "The Epistle Dedicatory."
to describing America.\textsuperscript{46} William Crashaw explained that the readers could rely on the testimony of Andrew Whitaker because “I have it from the faithful relation of that religious, valourous and prudent Gentleman, Sir Thomas Gates.”\textsuperscript{47} John Mason admitted that it might be a bit chillier in Newfoundland than in England, but that the weather “is it tollerable, as by experience.”\textsuperscript{48} “Experience,” William Morrell explained, “cannot plead me ignorant, much lesse innocent, having seene and suffered.”\textsuperscript{49} Likewise, Michael Sparke introduced Francis Higginson’s narrative on New England by telling the readers that they would “here reade the truth, and that thou shalt find without any frothy bumbasted words, or any quaint new-devised additions ... by a reverend Divine now there living.”\textsuperscript{50} Scholars could communicate with each other, according to Sparke, but could average people trust “frothy bumbasted words” that they couldn’t understand?

Yet testimonial and textual authority coexisted in an uneasy truce during the first half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, Virginia Company writers argued a mixture of experience and a reliable written sources were the best


\textsuperscript{47} Whitaker, \textit{Good newes from Virginia Sent to the Counsell and Company of Virginia}, pp. 11-12 of “The Epistle Deducatorie.”

\textsuperscript{48} John Mason, \textit{A briefe discourse of the New-found-land with the situation, temperature, and commodities thereof, inciting our nation to goe forward in that hopefull plantation begunne} (Edinburgh: Andro Hart, 1620), p. 2.


\textsuperscript{50} Francis Higginson, \textit{New-Englands plantation} (London: T. Cotes and R. Cotes, 1630), p. 1 of “To the Reader.”
combination to elicit trust. In several 1610 accounts of the new colony at Jamestown, the Counseil for Virginia exclaimed that there would be nothing in the text “but what he hath from the secrets of the judiciall councell of Virginia, from the letters of the Lord La Ware, from the mouth of Sir Thomas Gates, whose wisedomes (he conceiveth) are not so shallow, as easily to be deceived of others, nor consciences so wretched, as by pretences to deceive others.” The danger in simply using testimony was that people could be easily swayed from the truth and senses could deceive. “Opinion,” they argued, “is a blind Oedipus, who could see nothing, but would heare all things ... But judgement, is as Salomon in his throne, able by the spirit of wisedome, to discern betwixt contesting truth, and falshood.” A balanced mixture would ensure reliability and trustworthiness, according to the Virginia Company. “If our knowledge and constant perswasion ... be of no authority,” they wondered, then the reader could not be convinced of any truth.

Above all, promotional writers were interested in building an English empire in America. John Beaumont, amidst a poetic rhapsody to the glory of tobacco, imagined empire unfolding before him as England “stretcht out her mightie hand | Over Virginia, and the New-found-land, | And spread the Colours of our English Rose | In the farre countries, where Tabacco growes, | And tam’d


52 Ibid., p. 1.

the savage nations of the West, Which of this jewel were in vaine possesst.  

English civilization would tame “the savage nations of the West,” enriching the mother country with the addition of an empire of tobacco. Thomas Walkington turned towards antiquity to pressure England into the pursuit of empire. Cleverly twisting the words of Ovid, Walkington opined “I answer with the poet one only word inverted: Qui Non est hodie, cras magis aptus erit. He that is Homers Irus for facultie today, may bee a rich Crasus for invention tomorrow.” Recalling the failure of Henry VII to take advantage of Columbus’ offer, Walkington reversed Ovid’s maxim of pre-preparation by stating “He who is not prepared today will be more so tomorrow.” While England did not gain the Indies through Columbus, establishing an American empire now would turn them, in Odyssian terms, from Irus the beggar to Crassus the rich man. Robert Harcourt was even more direct, stating in no uncertain terms that investment in the Guiana colony would mean “an Empire may be gained to our Soveraigne.” By the time William Morrell exhorted the English government to punish malcontents who were impugning New England, the imperial nature of the metropolis was assumed. “Expos’d by

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her's unworthy of her Land," Morrell cried, "Intreates with teares Great Britaine to command | Her Empire, and to make her know the time, | Whose act and knowledge onely makes divine." Only through continuous expansion in the New World could England rise up to the status of a great empire, argued Daniel Price, who hoped "that Virgine Country may in time prove to us the Barne of Britaine, as Sicily was to Rome, or the Garden of the world as was Thessaly, or the Argosie of the world as is Germany."

Promotional writers were endorsing an empire in America, and constantly reminded their readers that the New World was at the heart of a struggle for English glory. Joseph Wybarne was not subtle in his advice: "if thou lookest for newes, you may doe well to goe to the Colonie at Virginia." But both colonists and investors were needed if the project was going to be successful. Harcourt concluded his work with a plea to King James, stating that his assistance would "gaine unto our Soveraigne the dominion of a rich and mightie Empire, which if it may bee once possessed by his Majestie, and inhabited by his English Subjects, will absolutely be invincible, to the unspeakable honour & renown of our nation in all after ages." While each advocated a specific colonial agenda, all believed that an American empire would make England great. The history they wrote and

58 Price, Sauls prohibition staide, p. F2 [back].
60 Harcourt, A relation of a voyage to Guiana, p. 62.
utilized marked the beginning of a shift back towards testimonial authority in Anglo-American history.

**Madoc and Columbus, Henry and Cabot**

Another element in early seventeenth century Anglo-American historiography was justification of New World dominion. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century, establishing American colonies was part of a comprehensive program against the Spanish. Writers like Richard Hakluyt and his compatriots certainly extolled the English right to be in America, but ultimately their war against Spain was enough justification for most. Establishing a right of possession became much more important once peace with Spain was consummated in 1605. If, as many geographic writers insinuated, the Americas were within the domain of the Spanish, how could the English peacefully colonize the New World?

The majority of English writers who treated Spanish America in the first half of the seventeenth century argued emulation was the best course when studying them. Robert Johnson scrutinized English efforts in Virginia against the backdrop of the Spanish Empire. “But for that other part of inlarging their bounds, in truth their praise is duly given, and well deserved ... English men are best at imitation, and doe soone excell their teachers.”\(^6\) In Johnson’s estimation, the English would do well to study the Spanish success in America, imitate it, and then achieve even greater glory. The Virginia Company noted that “if wee

compare the beginnings, they were meaner then ours, and subject to all the same, and much more uncertainty.\textsuperscript{62} The Virginia colony could surely achieve more success than the Spanish colonies in time, they suggested, because the English would begin with more resources and stability. While extolling the importance of colonizing the New England region, John Smith pointed out the wisdom of examining Spanish experiences in America. "It would bee an historie of a large volume, to recite the adventures of the Spanyards, and Portugals, their affronts, and defeats, their dangers and miseries; which with such incomparable honour and constant resolution, so farre beyond beleefe, they have attempted and indured in their discoveries & plantations ... as now are others, that doe but seek to imitate their unparalleled vertues."\textsuperscript{63} Smith was confronting critics of English colonization that were basing English success upon Spanish historical outcomes. It was important to learn from the Iberian New World experience, but even imitation would only take the English so far. Different circumstances would lead to different outcomes, Smith argued; adventurers and critics needed patience to allow the plantations to come to fruition. Richard Whitbourne exemplified the attitude of many early seventeenth century English writers of American history, reminding his readers of the stakes of colonization. While it was difficult "to perswade people to adventure into strange Countries [and]

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{62} Counsell for Virginia, \textit{A true and sincere declaration of the purpose and ends of the plantation begun in Virginia} (London: George Eld, 1610), p. 17.
\item \textsuperscript{63} John Smith, \textit{A description of New England: or The observations, and discoveries, of Captain John Smith} (London: Humfrey Lownes, 1616), p. 41.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
especially to remaine and settle themselves there," the reward of such enterprises was great considering "what infinite riches and advantages other Nations (and in particular the Spaniards and Portugals) have gotten to themselves by their many plantations." With great risk came great reward,

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Whitbourne contended, but that risk could be mitigated by the knowledge of what
the Spanish had already achieved on a similar gambit.

But in order to solve the problem of sovereignty in the New World, English
writers frequently turned to pre-Columbian and late fifteenth century traditions of
Anglo-American discovery and exploration. These narratives focused on four
particular figures: Prince Madoc, Christopher Columbus, Henry VII, and
John/Sebastian Cabot. As we explored in the first three chapters, Madoc and the
relationship between Columbus and Henry VII were important components within
the development of an Anglo-American historiography in the sixteenth century.
Yet in the seventeenth century, writers utilized these figures in unique and
differing ways. No single tradition for each dominated the historical literature;
individuals shaped and molded the evidence to suit their particular purposes.
Nonetheless, the common element that united all of the various narratives was
their use in justifying an English presence in the New World.

Prince Madoc was a twelfth century Welsh noble who sought his fortune
towards the west by sailing across the Atlantic in the midst of a civil war. We saw
in Chapter Three that Madoc first appeared in the historical literature in the late
sixteenth century, likely an invention used by John Dee and Richard Hakluyt to
demonstrate English primacy of discovery in the New World. His sixteenth
century geographic use was very specific; Madoc arrived in North America and
established colonies in areas the contemporary Spanish had previously ignored.
The story of Madoc then was a justification of an English presence in Virginia,
which stretched from the northern edge of Florida to Newfoundland. By the
seventeenth century, the utility of Madoc had broadened. Robert Harcourt, writing to promote English activity in the South American territory of Guiana, noted “that part of the world which wee now call America, was heretofore in the yeere of our Lord 1170 discovered, conquered, and possessed by Madoc, one of the sons of Owen Gwyneth prince of north-Wales.” America remained a hemispheric idea; Madoc’s discovery gave the English license to settle throughout America, regardless of who was already there.

Samuel Purchas utilized Madoc in considering the peopling of the Americas. Since the introduction of America into the European consciousness in the late fifteenth century, scholars grappled with the question of the New World’s place in the history of the world. Of foremost importance to many of these thinkers was the origin of America’s peoples. A number his contemporaries argued that the Indians were a lost tribe of Israel, thus fitting America into a Biblical historical schematic. Purchas saw utility in contextualizing the story of Madoc’s voyage within the peopling of America. He recounted several writers promoting the idea that Americans were the ancestors of European sailors who, being blown off course, arrived in America via luck and skill. Ignoring the obvious problem of peopling a continent without the help of women, Purchas posited that such skilled sailors “could happily effect, this voyage to and from the West

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67 Harcourt, A relation of a voyage to Guiana, p. 2 of “The Epistle Dedicatory.”
Indies;" if they could arrive in America, they could certainly sail back.\textsuperscript{68} As evidence for this proposition, Purchas explained that Madoc had "left his country of Wales, seeking adventures by Sea," and at the end of his voyage "came to a land unknowne, where hee saw many strange things."\textsuperscript{69} The implication was clear: Madoc sailed to America and returned. Otherwise, the record of his journey would not exist.

The return of Madoc to the British Isles was a very important point in justifying the English presence in America. In the precarious early existence of Jamestown, Virginia Company officials in London worked furiously to recruit both capital and colonists for the enterprise. Spanish reprisal against the presence of an English colony in America was a big concern for adventurers, and company officials sought to ameliorate concerns of military action by stressing the international legality of Anglo-American colonization. In their 1610 publication, \textit{A true declaration of the estate of the colonie in Virginia}, the Counsel for Virginia documented English experiences in America back to Madoc. Describing the operation, they wrote "in the yeere 1170 Madocke ... sailed into the West Indies, and after a second, and a third returne, and supplie, settled himselfe in those dominions."\textsuperscript{70} Not only did Madoc make his initial voyage, but he returned to

\textsuperscript{68} Samuel Purchas, \textit{Purchas his pilgrimage. Or Relations of the world and the religions observe in all ages and places discovered} (London: William Stansby, 1613), p. 610.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Counsel for Virginia, \textit{A true declaration of the estate of the colonie in Virginia} (London: Eliot's Court Press and William Stansby, 1610), p. 15.
promote a colonial adventure. This was both an important piece of evidence for the legality of the Jamestown settlement and a precedent for colonizing the New World. Madoc experienced America, understood that it could enrich his kingdom, and returned to his homeland to recruit capital and colonists for an expedition. The fact that he undertook three separate voyages proved that he did not give up his claim to the land, but worked to gather the resources for a permanent settlement.

Thomas Herbert penned the most detailed explication of Madoc’s travels in 1638 after three decades of English colonial experience. The Welsh explorer was vital to a legal English claim in the New World, according to Herbert, because “the Spaniards have not so much right to those Countries (I meane of America) as our King has; so long as they arrogate their claime from a primier discovery.” The fact that the Spanish used Columbus’ voyages as part of their claim to America only bolstered England’s case. Herbert stated his case in melodramatic fashion, claiming that “although Madoc and his Cambrian crew are dead and their memory moath-eaten ... [they] deserve to be revived clearly.”

Madoc’s story was well known by the early seventeenth century and had been used by numerous Anglo-American writers. The difference between them was in Herbert’s analysis of Madoc’s motivations and proofs of the voyages. According to Herbert, Madoc’s impetus to sail westward came “from an innate desire to

71 Thomas Herbert, Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique (London: Richard Bishop, 1638), p. 361.

72 Ibid., p. 359.
travell, and to avoid domestique broiles he put that in action which some old prophetique sayings gave him light and encouraged him in. The “old prophetique sayings” Herbert referred to here were the writings of Plato that could be read as a prophecy of the New World. This was a humanist reading of Madoc; a twelfth century “Heroick Country-man” who desired exile over conflict and based his knowledge of the world on a reading of the ancients. He was a man to be emulated, an example of the ideal colonist. More than anyone else of his age, Herbert proposed, “Madoc from these lights discerned” that a land lay westward across the Atlantic. His courage and intellect led to the discovery of America, and England should take advantage of his work.

But what was the evidence that demonstrated Madoc discovered America? Herbert brought several different proofs to the fore. First of all, he presented, the “language and authority of good Authors may be credited” as evidence of the Madoc voyage. He referenced here the work of Richard Hakluyt, one of the most trusted American historian of the age, as well as David Powel’s “translation” and expansion of The History of Cambria. If the top experts trusted the story, Herbert believed that readers should also place their faith in the

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73 Ibid., p. 356.

74 See Chapter Three for further details on Plato’s “New World” writings.

75 Herbert, Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique, p. 355.

76 Ibid., p. 357.

77 Llwyd and Powel, The History of Cambria, Now Called Wales. See Chapter Three for more on this text.
information. Nonetheless, he went beyond the historiography to cement his authority. Herbert claimed that "the foot-steeps and reliques of their former living there are to be traced;" there was contemporary New World evidence to prove the facts of the story. From remnants of Christianity at the court of Montezuma to Welsh linguistic reminders in indigenous reminders to subtle archaeological evidence, Herbert cemented his case that Madoc made it to the New World and constructed a permanent presence there. While the intervening centuries had obliterated the cultural memory of those twelfth century American colonists, the fact that they remained in America proved, in Herbert's estimation, English New World primacy.

Christopher Columbus took on an important role in early seventeenth century Anglo-American historiography as well. George Abbot's *A briefe description of the whole worlde*, which was first published in 1599 and enjoyed sustained success through the middle of the seventeenth century, provides several important tropes. Abbot stressed the Genoese nationality of Columbus, taking a decidedly anti-Spanish stance on the Columbian encounter. Contextualizing Columbus' voyage in a Biblical prophecy "that the Gospell ... be preached in all coastes and quarters of the worlde," Abbot described him as "a man worthie of perpetuall memorie" who was "borne at Genua in Italie." He

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78 Herbert, *Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique*, p. 359.

79 Ibid.

recounted the sixteenth century controversies over the European discovery of America, arguing that the Spanish were at fault for trying to give the credit of discovery to Amerigo Vespucci (whom Abbot wrongly assumed was Spanish). “The Spaniards,” Abbot observed, “who by nature are a people proude, have since the death of Columbus, laboured to obscure his fame, envying that an Italian or stranger should be reported to be the first discoverer of those parts, and therefore have in their writings since given forth.”81 While he displayed an ignorance of the Spanish-American historiography here, Abbot’s pro-Columbian stance was near universally observed throughout the first half of the seventeenth century in England.

Columbus was a visionary that needed to be emulated by the English, according to several writers. Thomas Abbay, in a preface to John Smith’s A map of Virginia, opined upon the genius of Spanish Queen Isabella’s selfless act of pawning her jewels to fund Columbus’ initial voyage. “Cannot this successfull example move the incredulous of this time, to consider, to conceive, & apprehend Virginia, which might be, or breed us a second India? Hath not England an Izabell, as well as Spaine, nor yet a Collumbus as well as Genua?”82 Abbay believed the enormous success of that initial investment in the New World was enough proof that English investors should follow the same example. John

81 Abbot, A briefe description of the whole worlde, p. H1 [front].

82 Smith, A map of Virginia with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government and religion, ed. by Thomas Abbay (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1612), p. 1 of “To the Hand.”
Florio echoed this sentiment in his dedication to James VI and I’s wife Anne, noting “as erst Colombus at command of glorious Isabella, it hath (at home)discovered neere halfe a new world: and therefore as of olde some called Scotia of Scota, and others lately Virginia.” English explorers had followed the

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84 John Florio, Queen Anna’s new world of words, or dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues (London: Melch. Bradwood and William Stansby, 1611), p. 1 of “To the Imperiall Majestie.”
example of Columbus and discovered “halfe a new world.” Surely the English would then invest in the new found lands as the Spanish had done. John Smith extolled the danger in skepticism at such propositions, pointing out that “if an Angell should tell you, that any place yet unknowne can afford such fortunes; you would not beleve him, no more then Columbus was beleaved there was any such Land as is now the well knowne abounding America.”

It was critical for the English to believe that an Anglo-American colonial endeavor would be successful, and the history of Columbus’ discovery was an important reminder of the power of belief and faith. Promoting the settlement of New England, Smith prompted his readers “to consider and examine it worthy Columbus could give the Spaniards any such certainties for his dessigne ... though I can promise no mines of golde, yet the warrelie Hollanders let us immitate, but not hate, whose wealth and strength are good testmonies of their treasure gotten by fishing.” The Spanish had faith that Columbus would succeed, and their faith was repaid in “mines of golde.” Smith could not promise the same result, but posited that riches came from more than precious metals, as his example of Dutch fishing enterprises attests to. Richard Whitbourne also praised the virtues of faith in regards to the memory of Columbus. Promoting the establishment of an English colony in Newfoundland, Whitbourne noted “I have


86 Smith, New Englands trials. Declaring the successe of 26 ships employed thither within these sixe yeares (London: William Jones, 1620), pp. C4 [front]-C4 [back].
been often disheartened from proceeding herein: Yet, when I did remember
Columbus his good indevours, that first and patient Discoverer of the West
Indies, whom, if God had not hartened him on with a worthy minde ... hath ever
since filled the Spanish Cofers with gold an silver, and made that Nation Lords of
the greatest riches under the Sunne.”

The implication was that God rewarded the patient and faithful; Columbus was an important example of this principle that the English needed to remember. David Person summarized the sentiments of many during this period, proposing that Columbus’ “spirit (no question) was
warmed with a more celestiall fire than ordinary; who first of all before him, did
both invent and execute so glorious a designe, and profitable an enterprise, as
the discovery of a new world.”

Columbus had God on his side and was able to bring glory to both God and country. With God on its side, England would be able to accomplish similar things.

When early seventeenth century authors mention Columbus, there is an
Anglicized element to their work. Thomas Nash, introducing an edition of his friend Thomas James’ voyages, placed his friend in lofty company, stating “So may you deserve, with Columbus, Drake, and Frobusher, to have the
remembrance of you smell sweetly in the nostrils of posteritie, when you are in

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88 David Person, Varieties: or, A surveigh of rare and excellent matters necessary and delectable for all sorts of persons (London: Richard Badger and Thomas Cotes, 1635), pp. 200-201.
the dust." Nash placed Columbus along side English heroes Francis Drake and Martin Frobisher, insinuating that Columbus belonged to this group. One way to look at this statement is that Nash was elevating the status of Drake, Frobisher, and James by placing them in the company of Columbus. However, it is far more likely that Nash was giving Columbus English characteristics, especially when we contextualize the statement within the late fifteenth century experiences of Columbus and Henry VII. As we have already discussed earlier, sixteenth century English writers wrote about an apocryphal meeting between Henry and Columbus' brother Bartholomew. Columbus had been denied by the Spanish, Portuguese, and French, and decided that his last and best chance would be to bring his proposal to the English. Leaving his brother to this task, Columbus continued to pursue continental leads. However, on the way to the Tudor court, Bartholomew was captured by pirates and arrived in England on the verge of death. After recuperating and presenting his proposal, Henry eagerly accepted. But too much time had passed and Columbus found a new patron in the interim. By the time Bartholomew made it back Spain to report his success to Columbus, his brother had already returned from his successful voyage. The sixteenth century writers characterized the story as a tragic case of missed opportunity, using it as evidence of an early Anglo-American colonial impulse.

In the seventeenth century, the Columbus and Henry VII story fractured into several different strands. Chaloner, in his lengthy poetic introduction to

89 Thomas James, *The strange and dangerous voyage of Captaine Thomas James, in his intended discovery of the Northwest Passage* (London: John Legatt, 1633), p. 1 of “To my worthy friend.”
Gage’s *The English-American*, presented the meeting as a prologue to the Anglo-American colonial impulse. “Reader, behold presented to thine eye, | What us Columbus off’red long agoe, | Of the New-World a new discoverie, | Which here our Author doth so clearly show;” Columbus offered the New World to the English, Chaloner noted, but opportunities for English expansion in America were still available.⁹⁰ Samuel Purchas continued the sixteenth century tradition of the blameless missed opportunity. After arriving in England after his encounter with the pirates, Bartholomew presented a “Mappe of the World to King Henrie, which his brothers offer of Discoverie: which the King gladly accepted, and lent to call him into England.”⁹¹ But it was too late; Columbus had already made his voyage by the time his brother relayed the success of the English proposal. Francis Bacon, in his history of Henry VII, reiterated the sentiment, noting “that the Kings Fortune had a tender of that great Empire of the West-Indies. Neither was it a Refusall on the Kings part, but a Delay by accident, that put by so great an Acquest.”⁹² England was not at fault for missing the opportunity, but was obligated by that missed opportunity to take advantage of future chances.

A portion of early seventeenth century English writers of American history were critical of Henry VII’s role in not choosing to fund Columbus’ expedition.

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⁹⁰ Gage, *The English-American*, p. 1 of “Upon This Worthy Work, Of his most worthy Friend the Author.”

⁹¹ Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage*, p. 612.

Criticism of England's lack of early sixteenth century colonial ambition was a relatively new take on Anglo-American history. George Abbot gave the standard presentation of the anti-Tudor Columbian meeting. Describing a thorough but fruitless search for patrons, Abbot stated Columbus "went ... unto Henrie the seventh ... desiring to bee furnished with shipping and men fitte for such a navigation. But these men refusing him ... because they gave no credite unto his new narration ... but especiallie, for that they were unwilling to sustaine the charges of shipping." The anger in Abbot's narration is evident; in his estimation, it would have been acceptable if Henry had simply not believed Columbus' story as nearly every other European court had done. But England did not fund the expedition because, Abbot argued, because Henry did not want to "sustaine the charges of shipping." Greed had cost the English the opportunity to discover the New World and gain the vast treasures that had gone to Spain. Like Abbot, Gage didn't mince words when accounting for Henry's mistake; "you the English Nation shall see what wealth and honor they have lost by one of their narrow hearted Princes, who living in peace and abounding in riches, did notwithstanding reject the offer of being first discoverer of America; and left it unto Ferdinando of Arragon." Gage argued that England's mistake was solely responsible for the current power of Spain.

Others were not as forceful as Abbot or Gage, but continued to rue England's fate. Robert Gray agreed, while promoting the Virginia colony, that

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Henry VII made a dreadful mistake in refusing Columbus’ offer. Regarding the proposal, Gray lamented that “this offer was not onely rejected, but the man himself, who deserves ever to be renowned, was (of us English especially) scorned & accounted for an idle Novellist.” More than any other nation, according to Gray, the English “scorned” Columbus’ offer because they believed it to be like the bad fiction of an out-of-work writer. The lesson was clear: seventeenth century English adventurers needed to be much more forward thinking than the fifteenth century Tudor court that gave up “the most precious and richest veynes of the whole earth.” But Gray went beyond the pure indignation of Abbot; the English needed to remember what they had given up. The past pointed the way to the future; in Gray’s case, the past pointed the way towards investment in the Virginia Company. Columbus “chose Henry the seaventh of England,” only to have the ruler turn him down. England could not afford to pass up this opportunity again.

Not all writers put the onus of failure on Henry VII. In a sermon given to bolster support for the Virginia colony, Daniel Price described a capable king felled by a poor circle of advisors. When Columbus offered “that learned and famous Prince Henry the seventh” the chance to fund his expedition, “some idle,


96 Ibid.

dull and unworthy Sceptickes moved the King not to entertaine the motion.  

England needed clear thinking instead of “Dreamers” beset by “Pithagricall Transanimation” scheming to detract from voyages to Virginia. Instead of metaphorically traveling to America or waiting for one’s soul to be reincarnated there, the English needed adventurers that would physically seek the New World in the present. Thomas Herbert repeated this argument several decades later, noting that Columbus would have sailed for the English if “too much avarice had not swayed” Henry.  

Many though were like Robert Harcourt, who advised his readers “to wipe away from your eyes, the cloudie incredulous blindnesse that possessed our forefathers in the dayes of Henry the seventh, when they rejected the offer made ... in the behalfe of his brother Christopher Columbus.” The English missed their chance, but there were more opportunities to be gained. If they would invest in the new colonial endeavor, “honour and profit” would surely be theirs.

Finally, a number of writers focused on the relationship between Henry VII and John/Sebastian Cabot. As we discussed in Chapter One, John Cabot undertook a series of exploratory voyages for Henry VII in the 1490s. His son Sebastian was also an active English and Spanish voyager in the middle

99 Herbert, Some yeares travels into divers parts of Asia and Afrique, p. 361.
100 Harcourt, A relation of a voyage to Guiana, p. 9 of “The Preface.”
101 Ibid.
decades of the sixteenth century. However, early seventeenth century writers hopelessly intermingled the two Cabots in their work, rarely putting them in their proper roles. Regardless of whether they used John or Sebastian, all of the Anglo-American historical writing in the early seventeenth century that referred to a Cabot was attempting to articulate those late fifteenth century voyages. Samuel Purchas argued that America "might more rightly be termed Cabotia, or Sebastiana, of Sebastian Cabot a Venetian, which discovered more of the continent then they both [Columbus and Vespucci] ... first employed by King Henrie the seventh of England." Purchas was attempting to demonstrate the breadth of English discoveries in America and the right they had to plant New World colonies. The Virginia Company was even more specific, noting that "in the yeere 1495 John Cabot a Venetian ... discovered the North parts of America, to Meta incognita, and so it was annexed to the Crowne of England." The English had discovered the area, not the Spanish, and were therefore entitled to settle any part of North America. William Stirling believed that the Cabot voyages entirely exonerated Henry from any culpability in turning down Columbus' proposal. Calling Henry "the Salomon of England," Stirling argued "he presently seeke to repaire his errour by sending forth Sebastian Chabot a Venetian who did discover the Ile of Newfound-land, and this part of the Continent of America now intended to bee planted by his Majesties Subjects

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103 Counsell for Virginia, *A true declaration of the estate of the colonie in Virginia*, p. 15.
under the name of New England, and New Scotland."104 Lesser kings might
have vainly insisted on continuing the present course, but Henry recognized his
error and rectified it as soon as possible, to the benefit of England more than a
century later.

Understanding the use of Madoc, Columbus, Henry VII, and the Cabots as
historical evidence helps us to comprehend the historical vision of early
seventeenth century English thinkers regarding the colonization of America.
Regardless of how each author used their subjects, they universally saw the
advantages of having an English empire in America. This quartet of characters
from the beginnings from the origins of Anglo-American historiography allowed
writers to add depth, tradition, and precedent to their arguments. Readers could
trust their analysis precisely because of their use of the past. Henry might have
turned away an empire more than a century previous, but that empire was still
waiting to be claimed.

American History in the Metropolis and Periphery

The examination of metropolitan and peripheral strains of American
historiographical thought in the early seventeenth century English Atlantic is
problematic in several different respects. More than at any other period in the
development of Anglo-America, the colonists considered themselves completely
and totally English. Until the second half of the seventeenth century, the
presence of second generation colonists born in America was insignificant.

104 William Alexander Stirling, *The mapp and description of New-England*
These individuals had come of age in England and developed their identity there. They saw themselves as English colonists in the New World, and their writing during this period attests to the lack of a distinct American element of their identity. There is also a paucity of printed Americana emanating from the colonies. When colonists wanted to publish their ideas, they sent them to the press in London where the construction of their books was out of their control. Indeed, these tomes were often shipped to press via their respective metropolitan colonial enterprises. Entities like the Virginia Company would then have an opportunity to shape the presentation of the book so as to not damage their investment. While we cannot say with any certainty that metropolitan officials significantly changed the content of colonial narratives, as the manuscript record is decidedly incomplete in this regard, we must view authorship in most of these cases as an amalgamation of peripheral and metropolitan voices.

Nonetheless, we can begin to discern the beginnings of separate American historiographical threads splintering in the first half of the seventeenth century. Metropolitan and peripheral writers, for example, authenticated their work in different ways. In England, writers continued to base their work on textual evidence, augmented by the testimony of colonists and explorers when their stories could be corroborated by the historiography. Edward Grimeston, in the introduction to his translation of José de Acosta, outlined the method of textual authority typical in the metropolis during this period. “Many have written sundry books and discourses of the New World at the West Indies,” Grimeston
noted, "wherein they describe new and strange things discovered in those parts, with the actes and adventures of the Spaniards, which have conquered and peopled those Countries."\(^{105}\) How could the individual reader trust the material when there were so many varying accounts available to consider? Only through intensive research and substantiation could the truth be discerned. Grimeston was thoroughly versed in the historiography of Spanish America and could judge Acosta’s authenticity in that manner. By combining his own textual experiences with the knowledge of others, he could confirm his assessment. Grimeston expounded upon his methodology, stating that he confirmed the veracity of Acosta’s text “by the experience of many friends, and by my dilligence to search, discover, and conferre with men of judgement and knowledge.”\(^{106}\) Through a combination of historiography, testimony, and conference with other scholars, American historians writing in England could be certain the material they offered to the public was thoroughly vetted. Going further, Peter Heylyn criticized the use of memory as an infallible facility of recording. “Oblivion is the canker of all learning," Heylyn lectured, “and in most men ever-mastereth memorie; to avoyd which I compiled this manuall placing is it as in a repositorie, the totall of that little knowledge which I had purchased out of divers authors.”\(^{107}\) Only textually could


\(^{106}\) Ibid., p. 2 of “The Authors advertisement to the Reader.”

memory last perpetually, and only through historiographical study could memory be verified and perfected. Indeed, Heylyn carefully "set downe in the margent the names of [his] creditours," so readers could follow the steps of his factual verification.  

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109 Ibid., p. 3 of "The Preface."
Authority was built upon experience on the periphery. For those who had experienced the New World, their senses and memory were all the evidence they believed their readers should need. John Nicholl, describing a voyage he made to the Guiana colony, extolled the fact that his narrative was “the just account of a perfect memorie.”\textsuperscript{110} “The greater sort of people,” Nicholl argued, could be ordered amongst those “which either have travailed themselves, had conversation with travaylers, or imployed themselves to much reading, are not ignorant that in the maine of America.”\textsuperscript{111} Nicholl put primacy upon the testimony of those who had experienced the New World over those who simply lived vicariously through the tales of others. Ralph Hamor introduced his treatise on the Virginia colony by commenting on the humble nature of his work. “Having in the time of my residence in Virginia ... collected for my owne use and benefit, some few occurrents and accidents,” Hamor was convinced by Virginia Company officials to publish his account.\textsuperscript{112} The readers could trust his account because it was not made with profit in mind, but “only to delight myselfe.”\textsuperscript{113} Interestingly enough, while his readers could trust Hamor’s experience as authentic, he

\textsuperscript{110} John Nicholl, \textit{An houre glasse of Indian newes. Or A true and tragical discourse, shewing the most lamentable miseries, and distressed calamities induced by 67 Englishmen, which were sent for a supply to the planting in Guiana in the yeare 1605} (London: Edward Allde, 1607), p. 1 of “To the Reader.”

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. B1 [front]-B1 [back].

\textsuperscript{112} Ralph Hamor, \textit{A true discourse of the present estate of Virginia} (London: John Beale, 1615), p. 1 of “The Epistle Dedicatory.”

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
scorned all those readers who scoffed at his work, trusting only “what their eies
tell them to be true.”\textsuperscript{114}

The account of the early years of the Plymouth colony commonly called
\textit{Mourt’s Relation} is emblematic of these principles. Written in America by William
Bradford, Robert Cushman, George Morton (the “Mourt” of \textit{Mourt’s Relation}), and
Edward Winslow, and edited in London, the book derived its authority from a
multiplicity of differing methods. Phillip H. Round has argued that accounts such
as Mourt’s Relation constituted a new genre of ethnographic discourse, and as
such, were a conscious attempt by their authors to use description and
categorization to colonize the landscapes in which they lived.\textsuperscript{115} But we should
also be cognizant of the fact that the account itself is built on the firsthand
testimony of Plymouth colony leaders. Readers could put their trust in the
narrative because the authors had “discovered this place.”\textsuperscript{116} Furthermore they
were Englishmen on a mission for God and Country. While this was likely
stressed to stave off criticism that they sought to separate from England
altogether, it was also an important tool for developing authority. Not only were
they “the servants of James King of England,” but their work had brought diverse

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Phillip H. Round, \textit{By Nature and By Custom Cursed: Transatlantic Civil
Discourse and New England Cultural Production, 1620-1660} (Boston: Tufts
University Press, 1999), pp. 226-227

\textsuperscript{116} William Bradford, Robert Cushman, George Morton, and Edward Winslow, \textit{A
relation or journall of the beginning and proceedings of the English plantation
Indian groups under his dominion.\textsuperscript{117} Describing a meeting with a local Indian chief, they wrote “our Messenger made a speech unto him, that King James saluted him with words of love and Peace ... he liked well of the speech.”\textsuperscript{118} Bradford, Morton, and Winslow could be trusted because they were loyal English subjects who both worked to expand the domain of the king and experienced all that they described. As the Cushman intimated in the epistle, “as for this poore Relation, I pray you to accept it, as being writ by the severall Actors themselves ... therefore doubt nothing of the truth thereof.”\textsuperscript{119}

A comparison of two of the major Anglo-American historians of early seventeenth century reveals the changes that were occurring in historical writing during this period. Samuel Purchas and John Smith were friends and admirers of each other’s work; both looked at the history of America in complementary but unique ways. Purchas, like his muse Richard Hakluyt, was an Anglican priest who became enamored with the study of history.\textsuperscript{120} In a story repeated in nearly all of his books, Purchas noted that he was “addicted to the studie of Historie, my heart would sometimes object a selfe-love, in following my private delights in that

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 69.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 36.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 2 of “To His Much Respected Friend.”

\textsuperscript{120} The most important source for the study of Purchas’ life and work is the two volume handbook edited by L. E. Pennington. See Pennington, ed., \textit{The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626}, 2 Vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997).
Figure 22. Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage*, frontispiece (1613). Image courtesy of the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{121} Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage*, frontispiece. Image from the Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
kind." He was an admirer of Hakluyt and held a great deal of respect for both the construction and influence of *Principal Navigations*. Closely reading Hakluyt’s work, along with a number of other American historians, Purchas began to write his own history of the world. In a remarkable book, Purchas took his readers on a guided tour through the four parts of the earth, beginning and ending in England with stops in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.

First issued in 1613, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* was an important text in the development of an Anglo-American historical tradition. *Principal Navigations* presented readers with a chronological and geographical encyclopedia of English voyages throughout the world. While Hakluyt’s voice is evident throughout in his editorial decisions and voice, the work was essentially a collection of primary sources. Readers could craft their own narrative as they worked their way through the text. Indeed, it seems this is how Purchas came up with the idea for his book. “I acknowledge that Ramusius and M. Hakluyt,” he stated, “in their Bookes of Voyages, have been two Libraries unto me of many Navigations and Discoveries, here mentioned.”

Enjoying four distinct editions and at least twelve printings by 1626, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* would prove to be enormously influential throughout the seventeenth century. After Hakluyt’s death in 1616, Purchas would gain temporary custody of his papers, embarking on a mission to enlarge *The Principal Navigations*. “I was therein a Labourer also,” he explained,

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122 Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage*, p. 1 of “To the Reader.”

123 Ibid., p. 1 of “The Catalogue of the Authors.”
“both to get them (not without hard conditions) and to forme and frame those Materials to their due place and order in this Ædifice, the whole Artifice (such as it is) being mine owne.”

Hakluytus Posthumus or Purhas his pilgrims was the result; a magnificent four volume history of the world told through the narratives of explorers that would see 2 separate editions leave the presses.

While the two titles were similar, the subtle difference in the last word of the title was important. “Pilgrimage” indicated that Purchas would be making the journey himself; readers would follow in his footsteps as he wrote the history and described the natural world of the locations he visited. The experiences Purchas related in Pilgrimage were narrated in his own voice but experienced vicariously through the activities of others. Experience here is important, but only the experiences Purchas could validate through textual study would be included. On the other hand, “pilgrims” signified that the reader would determine the scope of their own journeys. Describing his methodology in Pilgrims, Purchase noted “what a World of Travellers have by their owne eyes observed in this kinde, is here ... delivered, not by one prosessing Methodically to deliver the Historie of Nature according to the rules of Art, nor Philosophically to discusse and dispute; but as in a way of Discourse, by each Traveller relating what in that kind he hath

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125 See EA, Vol. II.
On the surface, it seems Purchas advocated testimony and experience as the best method of authenticating a text. But by the presentation within *Pilgrims*, he was advocating the exact opposite. Purchas' editorial arrangement of the material shows an initial impulse towards selectivity. While *Pilgrims* looks to be comprehensive on its surface, he was careful to subject the text he used to the rigid scrutiny of the historiographical context and common sense. When discussing his methodology with readers, Purchas pointed out that he "either wholly omitted or passed dry foot things neere and common; Far fetched and deare bought are the Lettice sutable to our lips." The contradictory elements here actually complement each other. Given the marvelous and strange nature of foreign shores, "far fetched" elements in travel narratives lent credibility to the accounts. However, there is an important Herodotian component to Purchas that was not present in Hakluyt. While the later made nearly all of the editorial decisions for his readers, Purchas made the reader an active agent in the account. Presenting many different historical eyewitness accounts, he asked his readers to make their own judgments. Indeed, a thorough examination of the material would give a reader the experience necessary to determine truth and authenticity.

Purchas explained textual authority in greater detail in *Pilgrimage*. Geographic and temporal directionality were very important factors, according to

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126 Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his pilgrims*, p. 1 of "To the Reader."

127 Ibid., p. 2 of "To the Reader."
Purchas. He noted that the reader would follow him as went from "one Countrie into the next, in each particular part and severall Countrie, by the order of Time; deducing our Relations, so farre as wee have others foot-prints to guide us ... from the Ancient times, and by degrees descending to the present."\textsuperscript{128} Purchas could not write the history of an area when there were no "foot-prints to guide us;" there had to be textual evidence to back up a narrative or it could not be presented to the reader. Indeed, to Purchas, historiography was similar to the geographical contours of the world. "If any mislike the fulnesse in some places, and the barrennesse of wordes in others," he elaborated, "let them consider, wee handle a World, where are mountaines and vallies, fertile habitations, and sandie desarts: and others steps, whom I follow, hold me sometimes in a narrower way, which elsewhere take more libertie."\textsuperscript{129} Experience may have crafted the sources, but the ultimate authority came from the texts themselves, subject to the scrutiny of author and reader, set against the existing historiography.

Purchas' vision of American history was both Anglo-centric and complete at the same time. Beginning with the pseudo-American legends from Antiquity, he related the Columbian encounter in the context of Madoc, Henry VII, and Cabot, establishing an early Anglo-American presence in the New World. He detailed the English voyages of exploration, but to Purchas, Anglo-American history in America began with the founding of Jamestown. "After this followed the plantation by the present Adventurers, in the yeare one thousand six hundred

\textsuperscript{128} Purchas, \textit{Purchas his pilgrimage}, p. 1 of "To the Reader."

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p. 3 of "To the Reader."
and six, at which time a hundreth of our men were left there for the foundation of a New Britanian Common-wealth."\textsuperscript{130} In what was certainly the historiographical origin of the line of temporal demarcation used by many United States history textbooks to the present, Purchas viewed Jamestown as the beginning of a British empire in America. From this point onward, he argued, England would replicate itself across the Atlantic. Just as England and Wales joined "in one purpose of a two-fold plantation," so too would America become British "in the North and South parts of Virginia."\textsuperscript{131}

The majority of Purchas' history of America focuses on Spanish America, and modern historians have wondered whether this meant he did not put much stock in the new English colonies' success.\textsuperscript{132} Yet his work does not bear out this conclusion. Through each of the four editions of Pilgrimage, Purchas continued to chart the development of the English colonies, not with derision but based on the factual narrative as he could determine it through textual authority. The sections on Spanish America were larger than those on English America for the simple reason that Purchas did not have very many written sources to base his narrative of the English colonies on. Spanish America had existed for more than a century, but at the time Pilgrimage first appeared, the Virginia colony was less than a decade old. In his 1613 edition, Purchas devoted twenty-seven

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 632.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} For example, see Dunn, "Seventeenth-Century English Historians of America," pp. 206-207.
Figure 23. John Smith, *The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624). Image courtesy of the Carolina Digital Library & Archives at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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pages to English America versus ninety-seven pages on Spanish America. By 1626, the numbers were forty-eight and one hundred and forty, respectively. Over the two decades Pilgrimage remained in print, Purchas systematically devoted more and more resources to his English American sections as new sources were made available to him. If we consider the ratio of years in existence to pages written about, had the English colonies been in existence as long as the Spanish colonies, they would have received three hundred and thirty-nine pages worth of coverage! Purchas did not scorn the English colonies; he simply did not have enough valid textual sources to present a detailed historical analysis to this readers.

An Anglo-American source that Purchas especially valued was the works of John Smith. Over the course of the two decades Purchas was active, the two became good friends, with Purchas even writing a dedicatory poem for Smith’s The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles in 1624. Purchas appreciated Smith’s wealth of experience in traveling throughout the world and considered him a worthy scholar as well. “This the Captaine [Smith] saith,” Purchas applauded, “that hee hath beene in many places of Asia and Europe, in some of Africa and America, but of all, holds Virginia by the naturall endowments, the fittest place for an earthly Paradise.”\(^\text{134}\) Purchas trusted Smith explicitly because his narratives melded neatly with the existing historiography. After presenting Smith’s view of Virginia, Purchas noted that “Master Thomas

\(^{134}\) Purchas, Purchas his pilgrimage, p. 635.
Hariot hath largely described the commodities which the Water and Earth yeeld (set forth also in Latin with exquisite pictures by Theodore de Bry) in the relations of Brereton & Rosier, and others.\textsuperscript{135}

Smith was a latter-day crusader and explorer who played a crucial role in the English colonial enterprise during the early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{136} The consummate publicist, he plays a great role in the modern U.S. cultural imagination precisely because of his diligence in publishing his version of the events he took part in. Smith was constantly on the move during his life, scarcely staying in any one place for more than a few years. Yet we should consider him to be a peripheral writer, for that is exactly how he portrayed himself. Thomas Abbay, introducing Smith's \textit{A map of Virginia} in 1612, exhorted his readers to trust Smith's words, for "this booke may best satisfie the world, because it was penned in the Land it treateth of."\textsuperscript{137} Smith's authority lay in the fact that he had taken part in the events, experienced the world he was writing about, and knew what it was like to live in America. Even faults in the text could not be attributed to him; because he was "absent from the presse" and not available to proof the

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{137} Smith, \textit{A map of Virginia with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government and religion}, ed. by Thomas Abbay (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1612), p. 1 of "To the Hand."
text before it appeared in print, “it cannot be doubted but that some faults have escaped in the printing.” Smith was especially concerned with his reputation and sought to protect it at all times, particularly in light of those who blamed him for the troubles experienced in Jamestown immediately after its settlement.

Smith’s asset in his narratives was his memory. He methodically chronicled his experiences and the activities that occurred around him so that he could publish accounts of them. “And this is as much as my memory can call to mind worthie of note,” Smith told his readers, “which I have purposely collected, to satisfie my friends of the true worth and qualitie of Virginia.” His memory could be trusted precisely because he had “collected” the events, writing them down as they occurred in order to make the information publically known. Like Purchas, Smith saw the value in an English empire in America. The colony in Virginia was the first step towards creating an empire; as Smith proposed his true purpose in helping to colonize America was “to see our Nation to enjoy a Country ... commodious generally to the whole Kingdome.”

While there was an element of promotion in Smith’s work for both the colony and himself, the historical aspect of his books was very important to him. Introducing his Generall historie to readers, Smith remarked that “this History, as

138 Smith, A true relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first planting of that collony (London: John Tappe, 1608), pp. 1-2 of “To the Courteous Reader.”

139 Smith, A map of Virginia with a description of the countrey, the commodities, people, government and religion, p. 37.

140 Smith, A true relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia, p. E4 [back].
for the raritie and varietie of the subject, so much more for the judicious Eyes it is like to undergoe ... might and ought to have been clad in better robes then my rude military hand can cut out in Paper Ornaments."\textsuperscript{141} The denigration of his skill as a writer was purposeful; he cemented the veracity of the book by contrasting himself with a professional historian. His books were not about making a profit, Smith argued, for his was a “rude military hand” that sought to create a history of English America that “the judicious Eyes” of his readers could appreciate. He continuously stressed the same points in his works and often repeated the texts themselves. While he noted that “I would be sorrie to trouble you with repeating once thing twice,” reality demonstrates Smith was far from apologetic in replicating his words.\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, he was creating his own historiography through repetition, canonizing his words through repetition.

In the work of Purchas and Smith, we can clearly see the complementary and conflicting methods of authenticity that American historians in the metropolis and on the periphery utilized, as discussed throughout this chapter. Both are representative of the role that experience was beginning to play in Anglo-American histories. Yet there was a methodological delineation between the two uses of experience. Purchas’ experience came from historical study and metaphysical travel through the texts he was reading. Smith’s experience was testimonial in nature, coming from events in which he was an actor. But for both,

\textsuperscript{141} Smith, \textit{The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles}, p. 1 of “The Epistle Dedicatory.”

\textsuperscript{142} Smith, \textit{The true travels, adventures, and observations of Captaine John Smith} (London: John Haviland, 1630), p. 41.
there was a strong element of textual authority to back up their claims, although in Smith’s case, some of those texts were of his own creation. While the lines between experiential and textual evidence were often blurred in the first half of the seventeenth century, the categories would become more fully defined in the later years of the century, as we will see in the next chapter.

**Epilogue: The Weapons of Warfare**

There was a marked decrease in the amount of Anglo-American historical literature in the 1630s and 1640s. There is no evidence, however, that the lack of publications equates to a lack of interest in the colonies. As William Watts noted in his introduction to Thomas James’ account of a journey in search of the Northwest passage, “‘tis not to be doubted, but that the carefull reading of our Books of Voyages, would more elucidate the History of nature, and more conduce to the improvement of Philosophy, then any thing that hath beene lately thought upon.”

Constructing colonies, in Watts’ estimation, was still an important element in the quest for an English empire. But the conflict between the King and Parliament had grabbed everyone’s attention, putting the colonies on the back burner for the time being. As such, the colonies developed in relatively little metropolitan oversight, especially after the sides broke into civil war.

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143 Thomas James, *The strange and dangerous voyage of Captaine Thomas James, in his intended discovery of the Northwest Passage* (London: John Legatt, 1633), pp. 5-6 of “To the venerable Artists and younger Students in Divinity, in the famous University of Cambridge.”
Amidst the chaos in England, a curious conflict developed in New England. As more English colonists arrived in these northern colonies, some objected to the theocracy that dominated New England culture. Non-Puritans did not fare well in the New England colonies and many were ostracized or banished in one form or another. In retaliation, these individuals decided to bring their case to the public, writing histories of New England that placed these new societies in a decidedly bad light. Thomas Morton published a scathing review of New England religious culture in his *New English Canaan*. Unable to achieve his aims in America, Morton sought to affect change by campaigning in the metropolis. “I present to the publicke view an abstract of new England,” Morton pontificated, “which I have undertaken to compose by the incouragment of such genious spirits as have been studious of the inlargment of his Majesties Territories, being not formerly satisfied, by the relations of such as through haste, have taken but a superficiall survey thereof.”¹⁴⁴ He complained that people in England did not have a complete view of what was going on in the New England colonies, having read only partisan accounts thus far. The King, Morton argued, had been deceived by the New England government and would surely want to make some changes once he had learned what was really going on.

Others also hoped to affect change in New England by publishing accounts of their experiences in the colonies. Thomas Lechford, a lawyer who had caused trouble in the New England courts and found himself disbarred,

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Amsterdam: Jacob Frederick Stam, 1637), p. 5.
encouraged his readers to trust his “knowledge in such things, as briefly as I may. I conceive, and hope, it may be profitable in these times of disquisition.”

Samuel Gorton, who had caused so much trouble that he was banished from the colony, poetically taunted his New England rivals, writing “This Story’s strange, but altogether true: | Old Englands Saints are banisht out of New: | Oh Monstrous Art, and cunning of the Devill, | What hidden paths he goes, to spread, his evill!” Instead of founding a colony based on God’s laws, the New England government was certainly under the spell “of the Devill,” in Gorton’s estimation. John Child lamented “the sufferings” of his brother and other friends, noting that they faced “fines and imprisonments there.” All of these individuals used historical narratives in an attempt to affect change in the New England colonies that would benefit their interests.

New England leaders did not take these accusations lightly, but published their own narratives to combat the charges. Edward Winslow was the most active in refuting the claims against them. Responding to Gorton’s inflammatory poem, Winslow intimated that he knew “the true causes of all the Censures and punishments that befell Gorton in the Countrey” and described his contempt at

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the “belched forth ... horrid blasphemies.”148 Later, amidst refuting the claims of Child, apologized for having to engage his readers “in other mens quarrells,” but admitted that he had no other choice.149 Indeed; Winslow added that he stood “amazed at the malice of men to see this brought against the government.”150 If potential colonists did not want to be a part of their religious society, they could plant themselves in another colony or “let them leave this long voyage, and keep up at home.”151

Neither side was able to affect much change with their narratives. Charles I appointed the secular colonial adventurer Ferdinando Gorges as governor over the New England colonies, but that appointment was effectively useless as Parliament was ignoring Charles, who had more important things to concern itself with. Nonetheless, both metropolitans and colonials began to see the utility of using American history to shape the course of their lives and colonies. History was important, George Hakewill explained, because as “this Profession spred it selfe, men have generally beene more accomplished in all kind of morall & civill

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150 Ibid., p. 4.

vertues then before it took place.¹⁵² Historians on both sides of the Atlantic would put more energy towards these efforts in the second half of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER FIVE

WRITING EMPIRE

Producing the Anglo-American Narrative in the Late-Seventeenth Century

“And although the Colonies at first sent over succeeded not according to expectation, yet in a short time there Plantations were brought to very great perfection.” John Ogilby (1670)¹

“And certainly an Historian should not be displeased at it, if the Enemies of Truth discover their Madness at the true and free Communications of his History . . .” Cotton Mather (1698)²

Prologue: The Emergence of Anglo-American Imperial History

For nearly a century and a half, Anglo-American history was not influenced by the English government. While monarchs and Parliament were interested in the development and outcomes of English colonial enterprises, it was private individuals who wrote American history in the public sphere. The lack of a governmental role in American history was very different from the Spanish, whose kings played an active role in the development of the Spanish-American historiography. In the second half of the seventeenth century,


however, the Anglo-American historical landscape would change in a substantial way. Instead of individuals advocating for the creation of an Anglo-American empire and the terms through which it would be constructed, the government would begin to play a much more active role in the composition of the Anglo-American historical narrative. The foundations of the imperial version of Anglo-American history and the responses to it on both sides of the Atlantic is the subject of this chapter.

In 1650, Anglo-American historical writing was mostly composed of a diverse group of printed texts held together by a common purpose. Whatever the goals their authors might have been, each work demonstrated the utility of an English American empire using historical evidence. From promotional literature to general histories of the Western Hemisphere, writers engaged the experience of colonization by writing the history of the New World. The first half of the seventeenth century was a transitional era, as the individuals responsible for these histories began to incorporate experience into their narratives as a trusted source. However, the Anglo-American historical enterprise was centered in England, far away from the American colonies across the Atlantic. Many of these metropolitan writers had never been to America; these historians, typified by Samuel Purchas, usually validated the experiences they read about through historiographical study. Their understanding of the existing body of American history allowed them to experience the New World vicariously through the texts they read, enabling them in turn to verify the experiential and testimonial histories they encountered from the American colonies. While English colonists and
explorers such as John Smith privileged the narratives they constructed precisely because they had experienced the events they wrote about, their words were guided by the American history they were familiar with before coming to America.

The last half of the seventeenth century saw more and more English writers begin to focus on the American colonies as economic units that were established to benefit England and build its wealth and power. This was a new phenomenon in the Anglo-American historiography. While Anglo-American historical literature had always included an economic element, it was never played a fundamental role in the historical descriptions of America. English dominion in the New World, colonial development, and European interaction with Native Americans were the major historical tropes in the first century and a half of Anglo-American historical writing. However, proponents of an English American empire had never been forced to deal with serious criticism before. With American colonies established, individuals who disagreed with this course of empire worked to point England’s interests towards Asian, Russian, and Scandinavian trade. A substantial element in English society, typified by figures such as Dudley Digges, Thomas Mun, Josiah Child, and Roger Coke, produced arguments that the American colonies were a waste of valuable English resources.  

These opposition writers forced colonial proponents in England to produce counterarguments that would demonstrate the utility of Anglo-America. In doing so, they began to construct an American historical narrative that was economic in nature, focusing on commodities more than people. These writers studied what the colonies had produced in the past, seeking to use that evidence to justify the colonies' past existence and predict a course for the future. The Anglo-American Imperial histories emerging from England during this period used similar logic to histories of empire since antiquity; colonies were important to the economic health of the mother country. However, in terms of English writing, the imperial histories were a new phenomenon that developed precisely because of England's new status as an imperial center.

Additionally, the imperial vision of American history saw the conquest of Spanish America in a more complex light than previous generations of English writers. The key to success in the New World lay in learning how the Spanish had achieved success and emulating them. Similar to earlier presentations of Spanish-American history in admiring Spanish accomplishments and emulating their successes, the imperial histories began to find some utility in their tactics, especially regarding their conquest of the Americas. Indeed, studying the Spanish conquest of the New World would be the ideal way for the English to learn how to take control of Spanish America.

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In focusing their historical narratives of the colonies, as well as the whole of the Western Hemisphere, their past, present, and potential economic impact to England disturbed some colonial writers, who turned to historical writing to augment the economic narrative with one that was more centered on individual accomplishment. While typically emanating from New England, writers throughout the English American colonies demonstrated in their histories that while they were enriching England, they were also building societies in the image of the one they left. In less than a century, they had constructed from the wilderness something they could be proud of; indeed, they believed they had fashioned societies that were perhaps more than colonies.

England's relationship with America changed in fundamental ways in the last half of the seventeenth century.\(^4\) By 1650, the American question was not whether it would be a component of an English empire, but what would be the purpose of the Anglo-American empire.\(^5\) In fifty years, the English had attempted settlements in North America from the Carolinas to Cape Breton, and had successfully established a number of colonies in the process. In the Caribbean and South America, they had formed profitable ventures in the Bermudas and Barbados, while venturing ever closer to the Spanish main. Initial fears that the Spanish would seize upon English activities as an act of war and attempt to force

\(^4\) The most comprehensive statement on the seventeenth century English Atlantic world continues to be OHBE, Vol. I.

\(^5\) For an important statement on the development of the English Atlantic empire during this period, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
them out of America proved to be untrue for the most part; in spite of poor leadership and conflict with indigenous groups, the English colonies survived. Indeed, colonial planters in Barbados and Virginia had begun to build sizeable fortunes by mid-century, and New England business interests were constructing trade networks that would serve them well into the next century.

The success of the colonies is revealed in the increased role America played in the English consciousness, as reflected in the print culture of the period. Between 1651 and 1700, more than 5,322 separate editions of texts published in England mentioned America in one form or another. This is nearly a 73% increase in publications over those printed between 1500 and 1650. The figure does not include the burgeoning colonial presses, which accounted for an additional 1,149 printed items. From medicine to geography to literature to

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7 See Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, esp. Ch. 5.

8 See *EA*, Vols. III and IV.

9 Compare 3,885 editions printed between 1500 and 1650, with 5,322 editions printed between 1651 and 1700. See *EA*, Vols. I–IV.

history, the English were interested in learning as much as they could about America. They were fascinated by the people who lived there, the customs they exhibited, and the world they inhabited. But more importantly, the English wrote about the New World with such frequency in the last half of the seventeenth century because America was a part of their world; an English empire in America was a reality.\textsuperscript{11}

The English colonies themselves were able to develop in relative isolation from England, creating societies that dealt with the unique challenges of living in America. The lack of imperial oversight was partly due to the private ventures that funded and oversaw many of the early seventeenth century colonies. While the Stuart monarchs were supportive of American colonization, they preferred to use their own gold for other means. But the most important factor was the political turmoil in English society, exemplified by the struggle between the King and Parliament for the control of power.\textsuperscript{12} The ascendency of Parliament in the English Civil War and the establishment of a protectorate under Oliver Cromwell led to an increased governmental interest in the American colonies. Cromwell saw in America an opportunity to test the supremacy of Puritanical Protestantism against the Spanish and Rome, which he saw as the seat of the anti-Christ.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} See Elliott, \textit{The Old World and the New, 1492-1650}.


Under the guise of proselytizing, Cromwell was able to both increase the scope of the English holdings in America and his power at home and abroad. Whereas the initial thrust of Anglo-American colonization was privately funded, the English monarchy took an increased interest in the colonies after the return of Charles II in 1660. After the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the 1660s and 1670s, the English consolidated their colonial presence in North America with an empire that stretched continuously from Spanish Florida in the south to New France in the north. Charles II took a more active interest in colonial affairs, extending both the authority of England and himself to America. The establishment of the Lords of Trade brought an official governmental commission to bear on Anglo-America, a development that can be understood as Charles II emulating the Spanish Council of the Indies. James II continued to assert royal authority in the colonies during his brief reign, and even the Glorious Revolution's limits on the monarchy did not stop William III from pursing stronger royal ties to the colonies.


The Anglo-American Imperial history developed in the midst of this milieu of increased metropolitan oversight. The Spanish had long employed official historiographers to construct narratives of their work at home and in America, as Richard L. Kagan has recently demonstrated.\textsuperscript{19} English monarchs also employed official historiographers, but their work was nearly universally domestic.\textsuperscript{20} As we have seen over the previous four chapters, Anglo-American history emanated primarily from individuals outside of government control. Richard Hakluyt pursued American history because he thought it was in England's best interest to form an American empire, not because Elizabeth had instructed him to study the matter. But as the metropolis focused more on the progress of the English colonies in America, there became a need for an official English history of America, one that contextualized the colonies from an imperial point of view and countered arguments by individuals who spoke out against this course of empire. The need arose as metropolitan governmental officials began to consider the ramifications of an English empire in America. English individuals had textually colonized America over the past one hundred and fifty years by writing its history; now the English kings sought to colonize the history of America, nationalizing the narrative to serve their own purposes.

\textsuperscript{19} See Kagan, \textit{Clio and the Crown}. Michael A. Gonzales' forthcoming dissertation, "History Writing and the Negotiation of Imperial Identity in the Spanish Empire" (University of California, Berkeley), should also prove to be important in this area.

\textsuperscript{20} See Kelley and Sacks, eds., \textit{The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain}; and Woolf, \textit{The Social Circulation of the Past}. 

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Anglo-American historical literature during this period is immense. Centered in London, American words, ideas, and history became more common in texts outside those written especially about America. Plays centered in England often had references to America through a character or commodity. Political treatises included American examples, and nearly all medical texts incorporated American remedies. Additionally, the literature takes on a more British nature. Scholarly centers outside of London in Ireland and Scotland begin to publish Anglo-American texts. Although the British element in Anglo-Americana will not become prominent until the eighteenth century, it is important to take note that British interest in America was starting to become more prominent. Additionally, while not all Anglo-Americana should be seen as historical in nature, the majority of the material is useful in the study of historical thought. Instead of a systematic examination of the entirety of late seventeenth century Anglo-American historiography, we are going to consider its development through the lens of a single text: John Ogilby's *America*. Ogilby should be considered the first Anglo-American Imperial historian, and his work is important because it set the tone for comprehensive American histories radiating from both public and official sources through the rest of the century and into the next. He also presented the English with the most comprehensive visual statement of America that they had seen to date, far outdoing even Theodor De Bry's images of English America in both quantity and quality. The narrative Ogilby

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21 Ogilby, *America*.

22 There are 126 woodcut images and maps in *America*. Ogilby, *America* (1670).
constructed was seized upon outside of England, and editions of the work were published in both the Dutch Republic and German-speaking territories. Ogilby created a uniquely English vision of American history that could compete in Europe with the dominant Spanish version in a way that Eden, Hakluyt, and Purchas would never do. His history put forth a vision for English empire in America in the past, present, and future. But at the same time, Ogilby's history served as a template for those whose aims differed from the main to construct counter-narratives that contested the terms of empire and presented their own path towards an English empire in America.

**America's Tale**

The story of John Ogilby's life is one of both serendipity and success. Not much is known about his early life or parentage, but we can be certain that he grew up poor and with an abbreviated education. Born on the outskirts of Dundee, between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, Ogilby may have come from a noble family that had fallen on hard times. His life is emblematic of the imperial nature of British life in the seventeenth century after the ascension of the Stuarts. After moving with his family to London a few years after his birth, his father landed in debtor's prison. In a frantic effort to save the family from ruin, a twelve

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23 Ogilby has not received much scholarly attention to date, likely owing to the beating his reputation took in the eighteenth century. I have gathered the majority of my biographical information on Ogilby and his works from Margaret Schuchard, *John Ogilby, 1600-1676: Lebensbild eines Gentleman mit vielen Karrieren* (Hamburg: Paul Hartung, 1973); and Schuchard, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Works of John Ogilby and William Morgan* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975). Also see Charles W. J. Withers, ‘Ogilby, John (1600–1676)’, in *DNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20583, accessed 24 Sept 2011].
year old Ogilby gathered enough funds and purchased a ticket in the Virginia Company Lottery. Luck was with him, for he won the lottery and secured enough money to pay off all of the debt and secure his father’s release from prison. With a passion for the theater that would stay with him through his entire life, Ogilby studied dance and may have appeared in several London productions. However, he seems to have suffered a mysterious injury that ended his career as a performer, and he turned to the management side of the theater, emigrating to Ireland and opening a theater in Dublin.

John Ogilby was a master of navigating difficult circumstances, and by the 1640s he would need to summon his skills once again. Ogilby had to leave Ireland due to civil strife and moved back to England as a middle-aged man, forced to reinvent himself again. During the period of the Civil Wars, he was constantly on the move, but finally settled in London, getting married and starting a new career as a scholar. Ogilby was a supporter of the Stuarts and with the final victory of the Roundheads, he was forced to keep a low profile politically. He completed a number of well received literary translations during the 1650s, and by the time Charles II was invited back as king by Parliament, Ogilby was in a good position to improve his fortunes. He successfully petitioned Charles II to become a printer and set up a shop on Fleet Street to begin his new project.

Ogilby was a quick study and learned the art of marketing subscriptions for his books in short order. His political savvy and consistent support of the Stuarts paid off, for by the end of Charles II’s first decade as king, he was named Royal Cosmographer of England. From a desperate gambit to save his father to a royal position, John Ogilby reached the pinnacle of his career in the 1660s and 1670s.

Ogilby was an old man by the time Charles II awarded him his new position. However, he showed the stamina of a young man in putting together the most ambitious project of his life. Charles was interested in producing a compendium of the geographic, historical, and natural world, to be funded privately through a series of lotteries, subscriptions, and profits from sales. Within six years, Ogilby had produced works on Africa, Asia (along with specialized editions on China and Japan), America, and Britain. Margaret Schuchard notes the astounding speed with which Ogilby took to his new profession and the skill that he displayed at producing the editions.  

Running the press from his Fleet Street home and shop, he meticulously gathered the funds, constructed the editions, and delivered them to his customers. The volumes themselves were designed with the eye of Charles II in mind; they were each full royal folio editions, works of art to please both his royal patron and the wealthy subscribers who were adding the books to their library. With the political arithmetician Gregory King managing his office and the consistent demand for his works, Ogilby was constantly busy until his death in 1676.

As a printer, Ogilby has received notice from modern scholars for his meticulous work and attention to detail. As for his own scholarship, however, history has not been as kind. Like most writers of his age, works that engaged broad subjects such as the geographic histories he was producing were mainly compilations of the best known sources of the time. Authors would present a variety of published and manuscript sources in a particular order, intermixed with commentary on the subject. While the practice might lead a twenty-first century historian into scandal and disgrace, to the early modern historian, it was a common practice in the early modern period. It was his work on America, though, that has drawn scholars’ ire. In 1671, the Dutch historian Arnoldus Montanus published De

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Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld, which upon examination is very similar to Ogilby’s America. Examining printing licenses in Amsterdam and London, scholars found that Montanus’ license was issued first and have concluded, therefore, that Montanus was the original author of the work. Ogilby, they surmise, must have obtained the book fresh from the presses, quickly translated the work, and used it as his own. Labeled a plagiarist, most scholars have not put much stock in America or the ideas presented within, especially as evidence of Anglo-American historical thought.

Upon closer examination, however, the physical evidence from the text reveals a different story. Above all, Ogilby was interested in fulfilling his duty to Charles II and producing editions that would please his subscribers and anyone else who might consider purchasing the tomes. With a royal mandate but not with royal funding, Ogilby needed to make a profit and produce the volumes in rapid succession. While certainly a quick learner and mindful that the New World had saved his family from financial ruin early in the century, he was not an expert on America. Thus, he gathered all the material he could find on the New World, read through it, and chose the material that he believed would best suit the

27 Arnoldus Montanus, De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1671).

28 Most academic libraries that hold America in their collections list Montanus as the author of record. While a comprehensive listing of scholarly approbations against Ogilby would take several pages, the note in Sabin’s Bibliotheca Americana can suffice for all: “The English translation is ... ‘an impudent plagiarism’ from Montanus, plates included.” See Joseph Sabin, A Dictionary of Books Relating to America, From Its Discovery to the Present Time, Vol. XII (New York: J. Sabin’s Son, 1880), p. 305.
project. It is very likely this was a collaborative project, and he used his Fleet Street contacts, along with the work of Samuel Purchas, to construct the best possible narrative. We can only guess how Ogilby chose his material; there is no manuscript copy of America to compare the printed edition with, as there is no manuscript edition of Montanus’ text. Nonetheless, we can be positive that Ogilby did not steal the material from the Dutch historian. The proof is in the many images found interspersed amongst the pages of the text.

In order to produce a volume that his wealthy customers would pay for, Ogilby needed to richly illustrate the text with maps and images of America. A series of woodcuts would need to be commissioned for the project, the magnitude of which would make the proposition very expensive. What Ogilby needed was a partner to share both the risk and reward, preferably someone who could produce the woodcuts. He found one in Jacob van Meurs, a Dutch printer who had extensive experience with woodcuts. The documentary evidence is silent on the relationship between the two men; there is no surviving correspondence that has been found to corroborate the details of the venture. However, we can build a strong circumstantial case based on the textual evidence. The Ogilby and Montanus first editions were published in close succession of the other, using the exact same woodcuts. If Ogilby had plagiarized Montanus, it is highly unlikely that he could have produced an exact copy of the woodcuts or convinced van Meurs to part with them. There are more than one hundred images in the editions, many of them folio size maps and cityscapes. The expense must have been enormous, and Ogilby would have
Figure 28 and 29. "I. Tamaraca" from John Ogilby, *America* (1670), and Montanus, *De Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld* (1671). Images courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

had to pay a small fortune to obtain them, as van Meurs would want the woodcuts to use in other projects to pay for the investment.

The crucial evidence lies with the fact that it is highly probable that Ogilby's first edition of *America* was published before Montanus' volume. The first edition title page of *America* shows a 1670 publication date. Scholars have attributed this to a publication error, owing to material in the volume that dates to 1671. However, it is more likely that the volume was ready for printing in 1670, but printing delays or the lack of the woodcuts held up the printing. Ogilby was noted for his careful eye on the printing press, and it is doubtful that he would have let a title page error slip through the cracks. Given that the project was completed in 1670 but delayed at the press, he kept the original publication date intact. We can also tell that the Ogilby edition was printed first due to the fidelity of the texts. There were five separate printings of Ogilby's *America*, one Dutch edition attributed to Montanus, all of which appeared in 1671. A German edition, attributed to Olfert Dapper, was published in 1673 in Amsterdam by van Meurs.\(^{30}\)

An examination of the images used across all the editions reveals that Ogilby's *America* was printed first and the Montanus edition was printed second. An image titled "I. Tamaraca" is especially illuminating (see below for images).\(^{31}\) Beautifully portraying an island port, there is a very subtle fog in the background of the woodcut that mostly obscures a number of ships anchored off the shore.

\(^{30}\) Dapper, *Die unbekante Neue Welt*.

The effect is very distinct in the Ogilby first edition, but the wear of that initial printing took some fidelity away from the woodcut, for it is much less distinct in the Montanus edition.

What likely occurred was a partnership between Ogilby and van Meurs. Ogilby would supply the initial text, while van Meurs would procure the woodcuts. When the woodcuts arrived in London, Ogilby printed his initial edition and shipped them back to van Meurs along with the text. While the Dutch edition was being printed, the demand for America far exceeded Ogilby’s initial expectations. Getting the woodcuts back after van Meurs had finished, Ogilby issued an additional four printings in succession until the demand was satisfied. Upon completion, he sent the woodcuts back; van Meurs would wait until 1673 to issue the German edition. While the English, Dutch, and German versions each use similar material, the texts are tailored to each particular buying group. The English historical material is highlighted in Ogilby’s edition, and English exploits are pointed out in sections about Spanish America. This material is either minimized or not reproduced in both the Dutch and German versions. The Montanus edition contains more material on Dutch activities in the New World. The Dapper version is edited and slightly shorter than the other two. This was an international collaboration between two printers who sought to combine their assets for a large project to maximize the potential profits. And while the

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32 I was able to consult the first edition of America and three of the four subsequent editions, along with the Dutch and German editions, side by side at the John Carter Brown Library. There are no substantive changes amongst the English editions, save minor corrections.
woodcuts were produced in the Dutch Republic, the construction of the text was
certainly done in England by Ogilby, as his voice is evident throughout the work.

Transforming the Spanish Atlantic World

We have already seen the evolving nature of English thought regarding
Spanish America. Early sixteenth century English writers and thinkers used the
history of America emanating from the Iberian peninsula to grapple with their own
ideas about how history should be written and understood, finally using it to
imagine the ideal English empire. By the middle to the end of the sixteenth
century, Spanish American history was utilized to imagine what an English
America might look like and to justify establishing an Anglo-American colonial
presence. The construction of English colonies in the early seventeenth century
saw writers and thinkers use the examples of Spanish colonization to improve
their own designs and goals in America.

By the last half of the seventeenth-century, the English again changed
how they used Spanish American history. Oliver Cromwell’s Western Design of
the 1650s played a large role in the change. Spain and Spanish America were
corrupt, in Cromwell’s estimation, and it was England’s obligation to use its
foothold in America as a stepping stone to control the entire hemisphere. While
Cromwell’s ultimate goals of invading the Spanish main failed, the conquest of
Jamaica helped in this ideological shift, becoming “a matter of national interest as

167. Also see Armitage, “The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of
Empire,” in Historical Journal, XXXV (1992), pp. 531-555
well as pride.”

The English were responsible for the souls of the oppressed indigenous peoples of America, and in order to save them, they would need to conquer Spanish America. The Commonwealth of the 1650s, as David Armitage and Anthony Pagden have pointed out, “was to be a new Rome in the West and, as John Milton observed after its final collapse, a new Jerusalem.” In spite of the return of the monarchy in 1660, this attitude continued to be prevalent in the Anglo-American historical literature of the late seventeenth century.

The evolution of English thought regarding Spanish American conquest is most striking. The influence of Bartolomé de las Casas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was such that many writers took great care when writing about Spanish America. The English would be successful, this line of thought surmised, because they would save Indian souls through kindness and not cruelty. But in order to justify the conquest of Spanish America, Anglo-American writers would need to view Spanish conquest through a new perspective. An anonymous pamphleteer, writing in 1655, noted that “the Spaniard we have hinted is the Popes supporter, and the Treasure of the West-India’s is the Spaniards strength.” A war for Spanish America was just and even prophesized by God, as William D’Avenant wrote in his historical musical


35 Pagden, “The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of Empire in the Atlantic to c. 1700,” in Ibid., p. 35. Also see Armitage, “The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire.”

on the Spanish conquest of Peru. “Yet th’English Lion now | Does still victorious
grow,” D’Avenant charged in the voice of the Inca, and “When we extoll our
liberty by feasts, | At Table shall serve, | Or else they shall starve; | Whilst
th’English shall sit and rule as our guests.”\(^{37}\) The Indians were sick of Spanish
rule and were ready for the English to serve in their stead. Several years later,
after Charles II had been restored to the throne of England, William Hamilton
begged him to continue Cromwell’s schemes for Spanish America. In dedicating
his translation of Blaise François de Pagan’s history of the Amazon to Charles II,
Hamilton implored him to “consider of that great Empire [South America], as if it
were already your own; as it may be with much ease, if your applications be
seasonable, and suitable to its worth.”\(^{38}\) The English had the military means and
the backing of God to complete the mission, so long as the King would give his
blessing.

Ogilby’s Spanish American history is perhaps the most detailed and
complex version printed in English before the eighteenth century. He firmly
believed that the Western Hemisphere would eventually be entirely in English
control, and he structured his history to suggest such throughout. Introducing
Columbus’ second voyage to America in a pseudo-prophetical fashion, Ogilby
posited a conversation between the explorer and a naked and crazy old man.

\(^{37}\) William D’Avenant, The cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru (London: Henry

\(^{38}\) Blaise François de Pagan, An historical & geographical description of the great
country & river of the Amazones in America, trans. by William Hamilton (London:
John Starkey, 1661), pp. 3-4 of “The Epistle Dedicatory.”
Speaking through an interpreter, the old man stated, “you have to all admiration come to see this Countrey from another World, my advice to you is, That you hurt none; for the Souls of evil-doers go to dark places: But on the contrary, they shall enjoy the heighth of all Pleasures that are Friends to Peace.” In other words, success in the New World was ensured through Godly conduct. Columbus agreed with the old man, but qualified his statement, noting “that he came a Scourge for the cruel Cannibals, but a Shield to protect the quiet and well-


40 Ogilby, America, p. 50.
meaning Indians.” In conquest, there was a place for peaceful assumption of power and subjugation by the sword. For “the quiet and well-meaning Indians,” Columbus brought but peace and happiness. But for those who were evil, such as “the cruel Cannibals,” he would seek to destroy them. The “Cannibals” Columbus referred to here were not simply those who ate the flesh of humans, but the name was a generic term that signified all who lived outside the laws of God. Just as the Requerimiento justified the slaughter of those who refused to convert to Christianity, so too did Columbus’ words validate the later conduct of the Spaniards. Ogilby utilized Bartolomé de las Casas at a variety of points in America. Surprisingly, however, Ogilby justified Spanish violence on numerous different occasions. In a section describing the trials and tribulations of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, he consistently validated any of the violent acts the Spanish inflicted upon the Indians they met during their travels. Later recounting the Spanish conquest of the Incas, Ogilby noted that “Attabaliba looking upon it [the Bible], turn’d it over Leaf by Leaf, then look’d more intently upon the Print, which done he clap’d it to either Ear, and at last as altogether unsatisfi’d, in disdainful manner threw it away.” Pizarro, in Ogilby’s estimation, should be

41 Ibid.

42 For an account of the Requerimiento’s origins in Spanish society, see Perry, The Handless Maiden.

43 Ogilby, America, pp. 69-76.

44 Ibid., p. 97.
absolved for the bloodshed he inflicted because Atahualpa refused to accept Christianity. Where the Indians lived in harmony with God and European traditions, the Spanish allowed them to live in peace. Writing about the province of Tlaxcala in New Spain, Ogilby pointed out that “The People of this Countrey, when the Spaniards came first amongst them, liv’d in the form of a Common-wealth, or Free-State, refusing to be subject to the King of Mexico ... [and] assisted Cortesius in the Conquest of the Kingdom ... They enjoy therefore many special Priviledges and Immunities more than other Americans do.” 45 The necessity of violence and the importance of indigenous acquiescence is a recurrent theme in America, and it demonstrates a definite transition from the English trope of conversion through kindness.

In spite of his admiration for the Spanish conquest of the New World, Ogilby stressed that they were mere interlopers in a part of the world that the English were meant to occupy. At numerous points in America, Ogilby highlighted evidence that the Madoc legend was true and gave the English dominion in the New World. During a discussion of Cortez’ expedition through Mexico, he recounted a meeting with an indigenous group who presented the Spaniard with “some of their own Volumes, Books, whose Leaves were made of the innermost Rind of a Tree, and a kind of Paste, made of their Meal, glew’d together; the Characters stood at some distance one after another, rang’d like

our Christ-Cross Row, or A, B, C. In the Yucatan, Ogilby found evidence “that the People of the Countrey us’d generally, and long before the Spaniards came thither, a certain Ceremony of Religion, not much unlike to our Baptism, and which they call’d by a Name that in their Language signifi’d Regeneration, or A Second-Birth.” This type of baptism, amongst a host of other pseudo-Christian traditions, led Ogilby to believe the facts confirmed that the Madoc legend was true; indeed, he noted that Madoc “transported thither as many as he could carry in ten Barques full fraught” more than three hundred years before Columbus made this Atlantic voyage for Spain.

It was imperative that the English worked to retake what was rightfully theirs. Ogilby pointed out that “Mexico is thought to be one of the richest Cities of the World, abounding (if reports be true) in all kind of voluptuous gallantry and bravery, even to excess.” The wealth that was passing through Spain could easily be England’s, in Ogilby’s opinion, and he did not miss an opportunity in America to describe the efforts the English were taking to destabilize Spanish American interests. He was particularly incensed at Cromwell’s Western Design. While this might be understandable given his allegiance to the Stuarts, Ogilby probably would have had some kind words for the Lord Protector had he handled his assault on Spanish America better. Writing about Hispaniola, he lamented

46 Ogilby, America, p. 82.
47 Ibid., pp. 222-223.
48 Ibid., p. 223.
49 Ibid., p. 246.
that "it might as easily have been taken as at first, had not the Business been rashly and indiscreetly manag’d." According to Ogilby, the Spanish were ready to be conquered. Printing a letter sent to him from a correspondent in Providence Island by Major John Smith, he concluded “That within a short time the English will as freely walk the Streets of Havana, as the Spaniards now do; which indeed had been easily perform’d with a third part of the English Army sent to Jamaica, and a far greater [sic] advantage to the Nation.” Thus in writing a history of Spanish America, Ogilby sought to demonstrate the dominion of the English, the wealth of the land, and the ease with which the English could conquer the Spanish should they choose to.

**The English Imperial Version of American History**

While Ogilby spent a considerable amount of space writing about the history of Spanish America, *America* is a thoroughly English text. The book begins with a discourse on the discovery and right of possession in America, and then progresses vertically from north to south, moving through each portion of the known New World. He took great care to comprehensively describe the entire Western Hemisphere from the largest colony to the smallest island outpost. While it is true that Ogilby gave more space in his text to Iberian controlled areas, but this is due more to fact than preference. The order of areas discussed is not arranged according to European control but location within the New World. Indeed, Ogilby goes to great lengths to make demonstrate the right

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50 Ibid., p. 323.

51 Ibid., p. 336.
of the English to be in America and points out their successes whether large or small at any chance he gets. The text is littered with references to the English in the New World; if an English individual visited a colony anywhere in America, Ogilby mentioned it. The existence of an English empire in America was important to Ogilby, and it was important for him to demonstrate to his readers that the English were completely entrenched in the New World.

From the very beginning of the text, Ogilby focused on Anglicizing the American landscape. A substantial map of the Western Hemisphere follows the title page, presenting readers with the most recent American cartographic knowledge (see below). The Montanus edition used the exact same map, but the level of nomenclature is much less detailed in Ogilby’s America, and the names that he used were Anglicized to a certain extent. In particular, English areas are accentuated. The northern portion of California, the entirety of which is portrayed as an island, carried the moniker of “Nova Albion,” under which reads “P Sir F Drake.”52 The name “Nova Albion” is printed in a much larger font than in the Montanus edition, and the Drake text only appears in Ogilby. Everywhere in America that the English might have a claim to sovereignty, Ogilby made sure to point it out. Indeed, the subtle differences between America and the Montanus edition can be explained by the Ogilby’s persistence in accentuating English claims to the New World. Where the difference in the level of detail is most pronounced, the North American east coast, the lack of abundant description.

52 “Novissima et Accuratissima Totius Americae Descriptio,” in Ogilby, America, inset title page and “Catalogue of the Authors.”
allows the Englishness of that area to stand out on Ogilby's map. As much as it was a Spanish, Portuguese, French, or Dutch domain, so too was America under the dominion of the English.

Ogilby's historical style was very Herodotian in nature; throughout the entire text, he presented several different accounts the same story, interspersed with his own commentary. Like Herodotus, who would allow his readers to view multiple different accounts of an event before guiding them towards an

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53 Ibid. Image from the John Carter Brown Library.
interpretation, so too would Ogilby try to present America’s audience with multiple different perspectives before making his own understanding known. Discussing the existential nature of America in antiquity, Ogilby marveled at the fact that the ancient Greek and Roman scholars, as gifted as they were, did not know about the New World. “This watry part of the World,” Ogilby noted, “that almost through all Ages lay Fallow, hath in these later times been Furrow’d by several Expert and Stout Captains.”54 Unlike many sixteenth and seventeenth century American historians, he refused to present an account of the speculative ancient writings that may have referred to the existence of America, preferring in its place to complement the ingenuity of modern writers and explorers. Instead of connecting antiquity to America, Ogilby was very interested in connecting England to America. Presenting a selection of theories on how the New World was peopled, he remarked, “the Americans can give but a little better Account of their first Original; and indeed it is no wonder, because for want of Books they can relate nothing certain.”55 As such, it was up to Europeans to search for evidence regarding their origins. While some believed that they had arrived from Asia or were a lost tribe of Israel, Ogilby scoffed at the ridiculousness of those notions.56 However, he was very convinced that at least some of the indigenous population were of British origin, especially in North America, owing to the Prince Madoc account. “Now, some will say, that this Worship of the Cross is no

54 Ogilby, America, p. 1.

55 Ibid., p. 17.

56 Ibid., p. 21.
argument to prove, that the *Brittish* Christians first Planted in the North of
*America*; but what will not time and change of place do, where Transplanted
People keep no Records, so they forget not onely Religion, Laws, and Customs,
but who they were, and from whence they came, Oblivion first mutilating, and at
last swallowing up all; of which, take this one late president.⁵⁷ Regardless of the
fact that time had destroyed their memory of their British ancestors, a Welsh
prince had settled portions of North America and thus gave the English dominion
in those realms.

Although late in taking advantage of their right of dominion in the New
World, the English became just as active as any other nation by the end of the
sixteenth century. He discussed a number of sixteenth century English
exploratory voyages, using Samuel Purchas as his source, focusing on their
intent during their travels. The goal of the English during this period was to find
the perfect area to plant their permanent settlement in the New World. A strong
patriotic sentiment runs through Ogilby’s prose. The English ventured to America
because that act made England a great nation. Describing an approach to a
“desperate” French colony in Florida, Ogilby wrote “John Haukins, a great Sea-
Captain, came thither with four English Ships, who pitying their misery, furnished
them with Nessaries, and having onely four Vessels, lent them one, because
Laudonier was at that time too weak to endure Vessels.”⁵⁸ The English are

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 37. In the Montanus edition, this passage is reworked to insinuate that
the indigenous population of America had some Dutch origin! See Montanus, *De
Nieuwe en Onbekende Weereld*, pp. 35-36.

described as heroic, kind, and charitable, even when faced with the misfortune of a sometime enemy. And it was that purity of spirit that allowed the English to succeed in America where others had failed. The New England colonies, though scorned by some in England because of the role supposed separatists played in their founding, now was an important part of English America. While there had been “many disappointments and misfortunes the several Companies sent over met with,” Ogilby argued, “in all probability New England would have been but thinly peopled to this day, had not a great Tide of People, possess’d with an aversion to the Church-Government of England ... eagerly taken hold of this opportunity to make themselves Masters of their own Opinions, and of a Place where they might erect a Government suitable thereunto.”

Regardless of the initial reasons for settlement, the colonies could be considered successful because they had been founded by the English; regardless of any initial separatist tendencies, they were thoroughly English colonies.

Now that an Anglo-American colonial enterprise was in operation, they could begin establishing new colonies. In the most current information Ogilby provided in America, he exhorted his readers to consider supporting the newly planned Carolina colony. While it was highly unlikely that any of his wealthy patrons would consider transplanting themselves, investment and promotion of the new venture should be deemed a patriotic act. Indeed, perhaps some of their children could find their fortunes in America. “The Lords-Proprietors, for the comfortable subsistence, and future enrichment of all those who shall ... transport

59 Ibid., p. 142.
themselves and servants thither,” Ogilby noted, would “allow every Man a
hundred Acres per Head, for himself, his Wife, Children and Servants ... paying
onely one Peny an Acre.”60 He then proceeded to print the entire constitution of
the Carolina colony, demonstrating that this was an organized operation that
those involved could trust. The English had mastered the art of colony building
and their ventures henceforth would be triumphant. As he pointed out when
describing New England, “although the Colonies at first sent over succeeded not
according to expectation, yet in a short time there Plantations were brought to
very great perfection.”61

A great deal of space in America is devoted to a description of the
geography and commodities of each of the English colonies. Having taken
possession of the New World and established organized colonies, the English
could now begin to reap the rewards of their work. This is the most important
part of the imperial vision of American history that Ogilby was trying to convey.
Possessing a New World empire not only gave the English power and prestige,
but abundant natural resources. The initial goal of replicating the Spanish’s trove
of precious metals had been tempered by reality; however, there was more than
gold and silver to fill England’s coffers. Certainly building the colonies was an
expensive process both in material and personal resources. But once
established, the colonies would begin to supply England with a limitless supply of
American commodities that could not be found elsewhere. Echoing more than a

60 Ibid., p. 211.
61 Ibid., p. 140.
century and a half of Anglo-American historical writing, Ogilby reminded his readers of the colonies’ purpose: to enrich England’s wealth and power. But unlike previous American histories, Ogilby had more than fifty years worth of accounts of English colonial experience in the New World to draw upon to combat the opponents of American colonization. The Imperial American history that Ogilby put forth worked to prove that American colonies were vital to England’s future time and again using evidence of past success; though anti-American advocates had some valid points, the sheer volume of wealth that had already been gained because of the American colonies, and would be gained in the future, trumped all of their arguments.

Other metropolitan writers agreed with Ogilby’s imperial sentiments, although not always for the same reasons. Ferdinando Gorges believed that the American colonies were important components in an English empire. However, he was incensed at the New England colonies because they had ignored a claim to the territory he believed his family held. New England was a wealthy area full of commodities, but it would certainly be better administrated from London. Only from the metropolis could the wealth of the New World be put to the “great honour and advantage to this nation.”

Samuel Clarke was mainly concerned with describing the enormous natural wealth of the colonies in *A true and faithful account of the four chiefest plantations of the English in America.* England was

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63 Samuel Clark, *A true and faithful account of the four chiefest plantations of the English in America to wit, of Virginia, New-England, Bermudus, Barbados*
in America to gather resources, and he surmised that was what his readers should concern themselves with. Edward Ward recounted a fictitious journey he made from London to New England and back with perplexed bemusement. The colonists, it seems, at come to New England to escape “Bishops, Bailiffs, and Bastards,” and were quite the backwards lot. Playing upon Puritan stereotypes, Ward remarked that while the women of New England were quite pretty, “the Men, they are generally Meagre; and have got the Hypocritical knack, like our English Jews, of screwing their Faces, into such Puritanical postures that you would think they were always Praying to themselves.” Even though he had never been to America, he considered himself an expert on the type of people one could find there. The colonies needed London to both cultural lead and govern them, and could not be left to their own devises.

The most popular Anglo-American history of the late seventeenth century was Nathanial Crouch’s The English Empire in America. Crouch’s history was marketed in an affordable edition that allowed readers of modest means to afford its contents. The work proved extremely popular, enjoying thirteen separate


64 Edward Ward, A trip to New-England with a character of the country and people, both English and Indians (London, 1699), p. 3.

65 Ibid., p. 7.

editions and a publication run well into the eighteenth century. Over a little more than two hundred pages, Crouch surveyed all of the English American colonies, from Newfoundland to the Caribbean islands. He made his purpose plain in a short introduction, noting that he was “induced ... to proceed upon those Gallant Atchievements of our English Hero’s in this New World, and to give my Countrymen a short view of those Territories now in possession of the English Monarchy in the West-Indies, of which many have only heard the names.” By exposing the true nature of the colonies and the wealth they held, more of the English public would begin to support their continued existence and understand why they were important to the health of the nation.

Crouch, like Ogilby, stressed the English right of possession and dominion in the New World, using the story of Madoc to demonstrate that the English had arrived in America before the Columbian encounter. He then spent a substantial amount of time on the history of Spanish discovery and colonization in the New World, focusing on Columbus, Cortés, and Pizarro. But Crouch was much less concerned though with the people who lived in English America than the commodities that could be found there, a perfect approximation of the Imperial American history. From the metropolitan standpoint, the colonists had achieved very little; their importance lay in what they could provide by way of natural resources to England. Investment in the colonies would lead to further

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67 The English Empire in America was last published in 1739. For the complete publication history, see EA, Vols. IV-VI.

68 Crouch, The English Empire in America, p. 2 of “To the Reader.”
development, which would in turn lead to more commodities and profit. This new way of writing American history, though likely unintentional, discounted the accomplishments of colonists. Although the omission likely seemed innocuous to the writers themselves, colonists would respond by writing their own histories in which they played a more substantial role, thereby presenting an alternative to the vision espoused in the imperial histories.

**Alternative Anglo-American Histories**

The imperial version of Anglo-American history saw the colonies as resources in the larger vision of empire, dependent upon England culturally, economically, and militarily. Earlier histories did demonstrate the importance of having American colonies in the context of constructing empire, but the level of their dependence was something new. The imperial histories were less concerned with the people who lived in the colonies and more interested in the commodities they produced. Indeed, most afforded very little agency to or credit for the accomplishments of the colonists. But these were English people who lived in the colonies, each of whom believed that they carried their rights as Englishmen with them to the colonies; they expected that their contributions to the construction of an English empire in America would be noted and valued. Therefore, when Anglo-American colonists failed to see a more thorough accounting of their activities presented, they constructed alternative historical examples that demonstrated the strengths of the colonies as they saw them. The colonists did value the commodities that they produced and service they were providing to the nation and empire. However, they wanted to be known for
more than just their commodities. The vision of English empire that relegate
ted them solely to the status of economic servants was one they wished to contest,
and they did so in a variety of ways.

One moment in Ogilby’s America demonstrates how proud the colonists
were of the English societies they were building in the New World. Ogilby had
advertised for American correspondents, and the Barbados planter Robert Rich
sent him a letter trying to correct some mistakes he had seen about the history
and present state of the island colony. Rich was particularly incensed with
comments made by Peter Heylyn in the 1666 edition of his Cosmographie about
Barbados.69 First published in 1621 as Mikrokosmos, Heylyn’s popular universal
history remained in print until the early eighteenth century and enjoyed at least
sixty-one separate editions.70 The first three mistakes Rich listed were relatively
minor on the surface of things, with the last, the fact that Heylyn argued the
island was held by the English “at the Courtesie of the Spaniard,” seemingly the
only one that might draw a colonist’s ire.71 However, the problem was much
deeper than factual errors; how could a reader trust the information from an
author who could not bother to get their facts correct? Rich wrote, “This
Description of Dr. Heylin’s, in it self very false, is also much to the Dishonor of the

69 Peter Heylyn, Cosmographie, in four books containing the chorographie and
historie of the whole world, and all the principal kingdoms, provinces, seas, and
isles thereof (London: Anne Seile, 1666).

70 The last edition of Cosmographie was printed in 1703. See EA, Vols. II-V.

71 Ogilby, America, p. 378.
English Nation;" the “dishonor” was specifically with the fact that the errors could lead to bad policy making. Barbados was a civilized society whose “Government is Constituted by the Laws of England, and Laws not repugnant to them,” which in Rich’s estimation especially Anglicized Barbadian society. And

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72 “Novissima et Acuratissima Barbados,” in Ibid., between pp. 376-377
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 380
if the Spanish ever decided to invade Barbados, they would meet a “standing Militia of this Island that are in readiness to meet together on all occasion.”

Rich was proud of what Barbados had accomplished several thousand miles away from London in the hostile wilderness. In less than half of a century, colonists had transformed the island into “one of the chief of our plantations,” and Rich was willing to set the record straight by writing the history that he was intimately familiar. Rich wanted metropolitan observers to acknowledge the contributions of Barbados to the empire by the English citizens who labored there. The emphasis was on the Barbados colonists; the sugar did not grow itself and Rich wanted the English to acknowledge the work of the colonists, although he failed to mention the slaves that were doing most of the work.

Likewise, Anne Bradstreet wanted to present the Massachusetts Bay Colony as more than simply a repressive religious environment that its detractors claimed it to be. In her book of poetry, *The tenth muse lately sprung up in America or severall poems*, Bradstreet gave a sophisticated take on life and death in New England. Yet there is also a sense of history in her words as she reflected upon the difference between the old world and the new. Introducing her collection, Bradstreet wrote “From her, that to your selfe more duty owes, | Then waters, in the boondlesse Ocean flowes.” As a good wife, she left England with her

75 Ibid., p. 379.
76 Ibid., p. 378.
husband, a “duty” that she had to undertake. But from across the “waters,” the culture she seemingly left behind had travelled with her, and now was returning to England in the form of her poems. They would shed light on what she had lost and gained in the process, as well as worthiness of the endeavor.

Life in a new colony was tough on the body. Looking back upon the years of hard work she had performed, Bradstreet mused “I cannot scent, favours of pleasant meat, | Nor sapors find, in what I drink or eat. | My hands and armes, once strong have lost their might, | I cannot labour, nor I cannot fight: | My comely legs, as nimble as the Roe, | Now stiffe and numb, can hardly creep or go.”78 She had given all that she could give in building this new colony. The senses and the strength that were once assets were now gone, gifts to the land in return for safety and a measure of prosperity. The poem invites the reader to imagine what it would be like to be in America building a society out of the wilderness, and Bradstreet used words that would take advantage of the everyday lives of English people to paint a mental picture of her efforts. She wanted her readers to focus on the humanity of the colonies in addition to the commodities they provided.

Near the end of her volume, Bradstreet presented her major point in a dialogue between Old and New England. “Your humble Childe intreats you, shew your grief,” Bradstreet noted, “Though Armes, nor Purse she hath, for your relief: | Such is her poverty, yet shall be found | A supplyant for your help, as she

78 “Of the Four Ages of Man,” in Ibid., p. 54.
New England might be a poor approximation of England in terms of both wealth and development, but its destiny lie in the spiritual rather than material enrichment of the country the colonists had left. The key to the success of England was to recognize the true nature of the resource it had in New England. Remembering all of strife England had been through in the past decade, Bradstreet pointed out, “But all you say, amounts to this effect, | Not what you feel, but what you do expect. | Pray in plain termes, what is your present grief, | Then let’s join heads, and hands for your relief.”

New England had worked the previous twenty years to establish a society and government that would be an example for England to follow. Edward Johnson would reinforce that sentiment several years later in his history of New England. The American colonies were important because they could help the old world reform themselves. “Behold how the Lord of Hosts hath carried it on in despight of all opposition from his and their enemies,” Johnson claimed, “in planting of his Churches in this New World, with the excellent frame of their Government, both civil and military, already established.”

New England was producing a commodity far superior to natural resources or material wealth; they were producing the means for the old world to perfect itself through the new.

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79 “A Dialogue between Old England and New,” in Ibid., p. 182.

80 Ibid., p. 185.

The majority of historical literature produced in Anglo-America during the late seventeenth century was testimonial in nature. Considering path that Anglo-American history had taken in England from the late fifteenth century onward, this was a remarkable turn of events. The process of experiencing the place and events they were writing about made the colonists feel like they were experts. The lessons of the humanists regarding the danger in trusting the senses was forgotten thousands of miles away from the centers of learning in England. When colonists read histories produced in England that made seemingly innocuous mistakes regarding place names, the quantity of commodities produced, or dates of settlement, they lost trust in those histories. Indeed, they surmised that they could do better precisely because they lived in America and thus understood it better than someone living thousands of miles away.

Often taking the form of correspondence that found its way to Fleet Street, the news coming from America was popular with readers, judging from the numerous short publications issued during this period. They typically did not delve deeply into the history of their topic beyond the immediate concern of their prose, but they nearly universally focused on the human element rather than the commodities of their colony. An anonymous correspondent, writing about a hurricane that had ravaged Virginia, noted “This Tempest, for the time, was so furious, that it hath made a general Desolation, overturning many Plantations, so that there was nothing that could stand its fury.”\(^{82}\) The terrible storm had

devastated the region and the people who were there. Regardless of whether his readers had experienced such a thing, the writer pointed out that they could understand what had happened by reading what he wrote. They could trust her words precisely because she was there. Mary Rowlandson also used her firsthand tribulations as a captive of the Narragansett Indians in an account of the ordeal that was popular in both England and America. Considering the meaning of her captivity, Rowlandson stated, “I have seen the extream vanity of this World: one hour I have been in health, and wealth, wanting nothing: but the next hour in sickness, and wounds, and death, having nothing but sorrow and affliction.” Rowlandson had experienced all of the success that the wealth of the New World could provide, only to have seen it erased in an instant in an Indian raid. It was people who were important, Rowlandson explained; what happened to her was important precisely to remind the English throughout the empire of that fact.

King Philip’s War gave New England colonists more opportunities to contemplate their place in the empire. While the historical writing on this event as been thoroughly analyzed in recent years, it is important to think about one such history written by Increase Mather. Like his son Cotton, Mather’s works were frequent visitors to colonial and metropolitan presses. The elder Mather, however, wrote with a political savvy that was sometimes absent from Cotton

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Mather's books, as we will see below. Contemplating the reasons for publishing yet another book on the dreadful war, Increase Mather stated that while "I was not altogether negligent, in Noting down such Occurrences ... [they were] meerly for my own private use." He decided to offer his own account to the teeming stable of books on the war because he "read a Narrative of this War, said to be Written by a Merchant in Boston ... The abounding Mistakes therein, caused me to think it necessary, that a true History of this Affair should be Published." There are several things that stand out in Mather's statement. He took great pains to label himself as an amateur historian and writer, in spite of the fact that he was well published by this point in his career and a major figure in the religious life of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While prepared, he had only completed a narrative of the events for his own remembrance. This is a trope that was used frequently by writers in the early part of the seventeenth century when seeking to authenticate their story. Like John Smith, Mather wanted his readers, who he surely intended to be in England, to know that he had no hidden agendas. But more revealing was his reasoning on why he was forced to publish his own history. Mather claimed to have purchased a book printed in London that was "said to be Written by a Merchant in Boston." It is obvious from this statement that Mather believed the book was compiled by a metropolitan writer, given the amount of mistakes that were present. The mistakes did not need to


86 Ibid.
be major ones; as we saw in Robert Rich’s comments in Ogilby, any mistakes took away from the authenticity of the writing.

Nonetheless, Mather revealed his true problem with the metropolitan history in his postscript to the work. “The Governours of that Colony have been as careful to prevent injuries to him as unto any others,” Mather put forth, “yea, they kept his Land not from him, but for him, who otherwise would have sold himself out of all; and the Gospel was freely offered to him and to his Subjects, but they despised it: And now behold how they reward us! Will not our God judge them? yea he hath and will do so.”87 He believed the other history had portrayed New Englanders as savages in near approximation to the Indians they had recently battled. Mather wanted his readers to know that colonists were just as sophisticated as their countrymen in England, but simply lived in a different world. Certainly King Philip’s War was brutal and difficult decisions had been made to ensure victory, but they had given them every chance to reap the rewards of living a godly life. They were human beings making difficult decisions in the heat of battle. And that in itself is the major problem that colonial writers had with the imperial histories: they discounted the work that colonists were doing and focused on the commodities they were producing. In would be several decades before some colonists really started to question their identity as English citizen. But in pushing the metropolis to shift their histories more onto the colonists, they were recognizing that center of empire saw the periphery as

87 Ibid., p. 8 of “Postscript.”
something different. Historians on both sides of the Atlantic would grapple with what it was that was different throughout the eighteenth century.

Epilogue: History and Identity

Cotton Mather was in a celebratory mood on a Friday evening at his home in Boston, late in the summer of 1697.88 Near the end of a particularly long prayer of thanksgiving, Mather revealed the reason for his exuberance: the completion of his magnum opus Magnalia Christi Americana, a massive two volume history of God’s work in New England.89 While he liked to boast about his “unblemished Reputation,” the truth was much more complicated. Mather was a major proponent for the prosecution of witches in the colony, but the Massachusetts Bay colonists were beginning to come to grips with the fury over witches that had dominated the social, political, and religious life in the colony earlier in the decade.90 In the face of scrutiny from London and perhaps their own introspection, many government and church officials who had taken part in the persecutions realized the horrible mistakes they had made. Indeed, Mather’s own father Increase had publically stated his own serious misgivings about the

88 Friday, 20 August 1697; http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/?year=1697&country=1.

89 Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1702).

Yet Cotton Mather held true to his belief in his own righteousness in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. If he was guilty, Mather surmised, why had providence favored him “with Liberty of the Press, and publishing more of my Composures than any Man’s that ever was in America, while I am yet a young Man”? His body of works, including his 1693 account of the trials, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, were “readd, and priz’d, and serviceable, not only all over these American Colonies, but in Europe also.” In Mather’s eyes, he was a success without measure.

To commemorate the occasion, Mather liberally quoted his introduction to *Magnalia*, an homage to posterity that frequents his informal writings. He trumpeted his work and the sacrifice it took to produce it. He was a pastor “in Boston, the Metropolis of the English America,” and the duties he had to face were extraordinary. In addition to “three or four” sermons a week, Mather had to take care of his “very large Flock,” giving himself “wholly to them.” Comparing himself to ecclesiastical historians of the past who “spent thirty Years” to construct their works, he noted both ruefully and boastfully that he completed

91 Increase Mather, *Cases of Conscience Concerning evil Spirits* (Boston: Benjamin Harris, 1693).

92 “20 August 1697” in Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1708*, p. 228.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid., p. 229.

95 Ibid.
Magnalia Christi Americana:
OR THE
Ecclesiastical History
OF
NEW-ENGLAND,
I
First Planting in the Year 1620, unto the Year
of our LORD, 1698.
In Seven BOOKS.

I. Antiquities: In Seven Chapters. With an Appendix.
II. Continuation of the Lives of the Governours, and Names of the Magistrates
III. The Lives of Many Famous Divines, by whose Ministrations the Churches of
New-England have been Planted and Continued.
IV. An Account of the University of Cambridge in New-England: in Two
Parts. The First contains the Laws and the Benefactors, and Visitations of
Harvard College; with Remarks upon it. The Second Part contains the Lives
of some Eminent Persons Educated in it.
V. Acts and Monuments of the Faith and Order in the Churches of New-England,
published in their Symbols, with Historical Remarks upon those Venerable
Adventures, and a great Variety of Church-Cases occurring, and resolved by
the Symbols of those Churches: In Four Parts.
VI. A Faithful Record of many Illustrious, Wonderful Providences, both
of Miracles and Judgments, on divers Persons in New-England: In Eight
Chapters.
VII. The Wars of the Lord. Being an History of the Manifold Afflictions and
Dissensions of the Churches in New-England, from their Various Adventures,
and the wonderful Methods and Mercies of God in their Deliverance:
In Six Chapters: To which is subjoined, An Appendix of Remarkable
Occurrences which New-England had in the Wars with the Indian Savages,
from the Year 1689, to the Year 1698.

By the Reverend and Learned COTTON MATHER, M. A.
And Pastor of the North Church in Boston, New-England.

LONDON:
Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, at the Bible and Three
Crowns in Cheapside. MDCCIL.

Figure 33. Title Page from Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). Image courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

his own history in about six months. In stolen moments between his pastoral
duties and poor health, Mather produced a work, in his opinion, that others could
only imagine. And amidst all of his duties and effort to produce Magnalia, he was
able to publish “more than a Score of other Books,” as well as others “that are
not yett published.” When published, this work would be better “than all the
Plate of the Indies.”

Mather was by no means a humble man. Following in the footsteps of his
famous father, Mather was constantly trying to establish his own superior legacy.
Nevertheless, the fact that he quoted a portion of Magnalia’s text in his diary is
both fascinating and revealing. He does not treat other works he produced in this
fashion; there was something special about this book. Mather’s text was
centered in the “Metropolis of the English America,” and this gave the work its
uniqueness. In the first half century of Anglo-American colonial development,
most of the histories written in the colonies were descriptive in nature and
focused on a single topic. Mather produced a history of a more comprehensive
scale, much like the type of American histories being constructed in London at
the time. Instead of a metropolitan centered narrative, Mather argued that New
England was important outside of the context of empire; indeed, they were an
empire unto themselves, ordained by God to do his work. The miracles God

\[97\) Ibid., p. 230.

\[98\) Ibid.

\[99\) Ibid., p. 231.
produced in the New World were worth more than all the silver America had produced.

The great majority of Mather's works were published on local presses. By the end of the seventeenth century, print culture in New England had developed to such an extent that presses competed with each other and the first Anglo-American newspapers were beginning to appear. A seasoned writer like Mather would have had no problem finding suitors for *Magnalia*; he described a conversation with a Bookseller about another one of his works that he fully expected would "be greedily read throughout all New England!" On the surface, it seems as though Mather waited several months after finishing *Magnalia* to decide where to publish it, weighing his options between an English or American edition. However, in reading his diary, it becomes obvious that he intended for his masterwork to be printed in London. The book was not intended for American eyes, but was written with the English reader in mind. By January of 1697/98, the time was right to send his manuscript. Commenting on a newly published text that had arrived on the last ship, Mather was pleased to "find myself quoted in this Book; yea, very often;" he neglected to mention, however, that the book was published by his father. Mather had already arranged for his friend Robert Whittingham to deliver his manuscript to London; the way his words were used in *Remarkable Providences* was the final evidence he needed to

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100 "26 December 1697," in Ibid., p. 246.

101 "7 January 1697/98," in Ibid.
believe *Magnalia* would be well received by publishers and readers alike.\textsuperscript{102} One day later, his resolve was sealed after consulting with God, for in “sending it into Europe” and publishing it there, he was “assured, that my Supplications are heard.”\textsuperscript{103}

Mather was confident that his work would be published quickly after its arrival in London. Writing several months after sending the manuscript on its way, Mather recounted praying for its safe delivery into England, where it would be “employed for the Service of my glorious Lord.”\textsuperscript{104} His self-assuredness would quickly turn to despair over the next several years, as ship after ship arrived in Boston without a printed copy of *Magnalia* to deliver. Unbeknownst to Mather, when his manuscript arrived in London, there happened to be a young Whig writer scouring Fleet Street for Anglo-American manuscripts for use in his own history. John Oldmixon had enough credit with the London presses to borrow the manuscript for a short time. However, Oldmixon was easily distracted and a project that was supposed to reach the presses by the turn of the century would not fall upon readers’ eyes until 1708. Unfortunately for Mather, neither


\textsuperscript{103} “8 January 1697/98,” in Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681-1708*, p. 247.

\textsuperscript{104} “4 March 1698,” in Ibid., pp. 254-255.
the prospective publisher nor Oldmixon thought to send him a letter explaining where the manuscript was. 105

As the months turned into years, Mather grew increasingly desperate. He had sent the only copy of the manuscript to London, and if it was lost so too would this major work be gone. By the turn of the century, the waiting had taken its toll on Mather’s confidence. The man whose works were “greedily” devoured by New England readers now wondered “whether any Bookseller would undertake to publish” the new material he was writing. 106 The War of Spanish Succession especially troubled Mather; he feared the fighting might result in the destruction of his manuscript, which he committed into Gods “Hands” and was “now in London.” 107 A month after that entry in his diary in February 1700/01, Mather would receive some of the news he had been waiting for. His agent in London had recovered the manuscript and was currently shopping it to prospective printers. However, “the booksellers in London [were] cold about it,” and although one printer had already expressed interest, the entire operation was sure to “cost about 600 lb,” a fortune if he was forced to bear it on his

105 The evidence for the preceding scenario is circumstantial, but almost certainly true. The manuscript disappeared for several years, and the major source for Oldmixon’s history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony is Magnalia.


107 “10 May 1701,” in Ibid., p. 399.
own. While he was hopeful that the saga was coming to an end, the optimism he expressed was cautious at best.

After this letter in the summer of 1701, nearly a year went by without news on his history. “The Lord hitherto keeps me Ignorant,” he opined, “what becomes of my Church-History, a Point of extraordinary Concernment unto me.” With each ship that arrived in port, Mather expected bad news, despite assurances from God “that [his] Church-History shall not be lost.” By April 1702, he was at his wit’s end. Writing on what was certainly a chilly Boston Spring evening, Mather noted that he “was in much Distress upon my Spirit, concerning my Church History,” and “accordingly, in the Dead of Night ... [cast] myself prostrate in the Dust, on my Study-floor before the Lord, I confessed unto Him, the Sins for which He might justly reject me.” He did not elaborate on what those sins were that had incurred God’s wrath, but he did conclude that God had forgiven him and that news of publication would necessarily be coming soon. He reasoned that like Jacob, he had been “wrestling with the Lord, for the good Success of my Church-History,” and that pride was source of the trouble he was having with its publication. Less than a month later, Mather received news that his saga was finally coming to a happy end. Magnalia had finally gone to

108 “13 June 1701,” in Ibid., p. 400.
109 “4 March 1702,” in Ibid., p. 419.
110 Ibid.
111 “4 April 1702,” in Ibid., pp. 424-425.
112 “12 April 1702,” in Ibid., p. 425.
press and his agent in London believed the work would be completed “by the Month of March, which is now past.”113 Now each ship arriving in Boston could be laden with the precious cargo.

Mather would be forced to wait several more months to see the printed copy of his book. On October 30, 1702, a ship arrived and delivered Magnalia to him, upon which he expressed relief and celebrated quietly with his agent, though the mood was tempered by a smallpox outbreak in his home.114 Mather never mentioned Magnalia Christi Americana again. The epidemic that would kill his wife and nearly take his children coincided with the arrival of the book he had been consumed with seeing for years; Mather was not a man who believed in coincidences, and saw the hand of God in every facet of his life. Although we cannot be certain, it would be highly unlikely that Mather would have not have trumpeted the book’s arrival in grander terms unless he saw in its arrival some punishment from God. The book itself was not particularly successful. While historians from the nineteenth century to the present utilized it with great frequency, it only enjoyed one printing of a limited number, perhaps just enough to cover the expenses of printing it. Six years later in 1708, Mather would suffer embarrassment at the hands of Oldmixon, who used Magnalia frequently in The British Empire in America but portrayed Mather as an unsophisticated colonial.115

113 “4 May 1702,” in Ibid., p. 427.
Indeed, he finally realized what happened to his manuscript when he read the new history; Oldmixon falsely described him as a correspondent who supplied him with his material on the Massachusetts Bay Colony.\textsuperscript{116} It was Oldmixon who was responsible for absconding with his manuscript for so long.\textsuperscript{117}

Read from London, Mather's work surely raised some eyebrows among metropolitan authorities. John Higginson, Mather's friend and pastor of the church at Salem, wrote a lengthy dedication to \textit{Magnalia}. Higginson immediately set out to qualify the colonization of New England as one of the great events in the history of the world. "One of the great and wonderful Works of God in this Last Age," Higginson claimed, "that the Lord stirred up the Spirits of so many Thousands of his Servants, to leave the Pleasant Land of England ... and transport themselves, and Families, over the Ocean Sea, into a Desert Land ... [and] within a few Years a Wilderness was subdued before them."\textsuperscript{118} By the end of the seventeenth century, three generations had experienced the New World, the last of which were now "grown up, and begin to stand thick upon the Stage of Action, at this Day, and these were all born in the Country, and may call New-England their Native Land."\textsuperscript{119} While still English, New England was now

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} There is no surviving correspondence between Oldmixon and Mather that has been discovered so far, and it is highly unlikely Mather would have destroyed letters between the two given his meticulous recordkeeping and eye for posterity.

\textsuperscript{118} Mather, \textit{Magnalia Christi Americana}, p. 1 of "An Attestation to this Church-History of New-England."

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
“their Native Land;” they were English-Americans in both Higginson’s and Mather’s estimation. New England was a land, Mather put forth, discovered by the English, developed by the English, and now ruled by the English for the glory of God through the Protestant church as Mather understood it. Yet more than simply an English identity, Mather emphasized that it was English Americans who had constructed this colony and society that now prospered in the New World. Nearing the end of his history, Mather begged for understanding from his readers, exclaiming, “We have seen, and blessed be God that we have seen, the greatest Monarch that ever sat upon the British Throne, issuing out his Royal Proclamation ... wherein that Illustrious Prince declares his Royal Resolution to Discountenance all Vice whatsoever, and requires all Officers whatsoever to be Vigilant in the Discovery, Prosecution and Punishment thereof.”

Reading between the lines, we see Mather in *Magnalia Christi Americana* demonstrating that the New England colonies were the epitome of what William III wanted England to be; indeed, they had developed into more than colonies, and should be considered as such in the larger scheme of English empire.

*Magnalia Christi Americana* was, in part, a reaction by Mather to the Imperial American history developed by Ogilby and others in the late seventeenth century. Mather intended his work, as an ecclesiastical history, to demonstrate the role God played in the development and success of the New England colonies. But just as important in Mather’s narrative was the fact that the

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colonists themselves were playing an active role in the development of an English empire in America.

Ogilby's *America* truly changed the way Anglo-American history was viewed in the Europe. While De Bry's *Grand Voyages* had circulated the early history of the English in America during the first part of the seventeenth century, it did so in a manner that resembled the English experience in the New World to date: fragmented and of a small scale. Ogilby presented a grand vision of America in which England was a central player in the history of the hemisphere from before the Columbian encounter to the present. Such a narrative was a change from the one that was dominated by the Spanish, and European's latched onto it. While Ogilby's history was the only English account to see significant interest in Europe, it marked a beginning for Anglo-American history on the continent. In the eighteenth century, European translators would pay closer attention to Anglo-American histories with the intention of bring them to their customers. A new American narrative was a change of pace that European readers welcomed.
CONCLUSION

CONTESTING EMPIRE

Historiographical Warfare

"For none in England will imagine I durst offer Falsities for Fact to you [John Bromley], who from your own Knowledge could easily detect them; and none in the Plantations will be severe in their Censures upon a Work which comes forth under the Patronage of one of their greatest Names." John Oldmixon (1708)¹

“But concerning that Work of [Oldmixon's], I may with great Truth say, that (notwithstanding his Boast of having the Assistance of many original Papers and Memorials that I had not the Opportunity of) he nowhere varies from the Account that I gave, nor advances any thing new of his own, but he commits so many Errors, and imposes so many Falsities upon the World.” Robert Beverley (1722)²

Our story concludes on the plantation of an eighteenth century Virginia gentleman preparing for battle against an opponent thousands of miles away.


Robert Beverley and John Oldmixon engaged each other in a curious case of historiographical warfare, each using the other’s history of America to further their own economic and political ambitions. Yet more than a simple squabble between two writers, their fight was over two competing visions of the future of the British Empire: one that saw America as a land of colonies, and one that envisioned these colonies as a system of kingdoms in a larger empire. To articulate those visions, both Beverley and Oldmixon used the history of Virginia to demonstrate that the past pointed the way to the future.

It is easy to imagine an introspective Robert Beverley sitting in his Beverley Park library on one of those warm and humid Virginia spring evenings in 1720, the kind that hasten thoughts to the coming summer, as he prepared a second edition of *The History of Virginia, In Four Parts.* Beverley, though he likely did not know at the time, was near the end of his life, and would not live see his second edition reach subscribers’ hands before his death in 1722. At work on his plantation, Beverley looked back at the relative rashness of his younger days. The son of a wealthy but politically pugnacious Virginia planter, Beverley inherited his father’s mistrust of the colonial and metropolitan political establishment. The first edition of his history of Virginia was marked by the

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3 Robert Beverley owned a substantial amount of property throughout Virginia and spent the better part of his working years in his Jamestown home. However he enjoyed spending time at Beverley Park, a large estate 50 miles to the north in King and Queen County that he inherited upon the death of some siblings, and spent his final years there after retiring from public service. See Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1940), pp. 286-311.

THE HISTORY AND Present State of VIRGINIA, In Four Parts.

I. The History of the First Settlement of Virginia, and the Government there­ of, to the present Time.

II. The Natural Productions and Conveniences of the Country, suited to Trade and Improvement.

III. The Native Indians, their Religion, Laws, and Customs, in War and Peace.

IV. The present State of the Country, as to the Polity of the Government, and the Improvements of the Land.

By a Native and Inhabitant of the Place.

LONDON:
Printed for R. Parker, at the Unicorn, under the Piazza’s of the Royal-Exchange. MDCCV.

Figure 34. Robert Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia, in Four Parts (1705). Image courtesy of the Carolina Digital Library & Archives at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia, in Four Parts (London: R. Parker, 1705), title page. Image from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
arrogance of an individual so certain of his position that it reads with an assurance that everyone else is wrong. “I am an Indian,” Beverley famously wrote, admonishing his readers to trust him because truth “depends upon its own intrinsick Value, and, like Beauty, is rather conceal’d, than set off, by Ornament.”

*The History and Present State of Virginia* first appeared in 1705, and was both a political and natural history of the colony. Beverley argued that Virginia had come a long way from its humble beginnings in Jamestown, developing into a thriving English society on the opposite side of the Atlantic. Politically, socially, and economically organized while full of the natural resources England needed, Virginia was more than a colony to Beverley. His vision for Virginia saw a future as a partner in empire, a kingdom not a colony. Beyond his vision, the history served as a vehicle for Beverley to settle old scores. He took liberty in impugning the records of past and present family political opponents, as well as a planter aristocracy of which he was a part of, although he still felt like an outsider.

Beverley married into one of the most wealthy and powerful families in Virginia, the Byrds, and while his union with Ursula would last but one year due to her death in childbirth, Beverley would become linked to the family. Perhaps it was his relationship with William Byrd, his brother-in-law, that began to give him more political savviness. Indeed, by 1720 Robert Beverley’s political sentiments had

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6 Ibid., second page of “The Preface.”

changed. Driven to pursue political power and become one of the wealthiest planters in Virginia, Beverley was consumed with purchasing land and currying patronage. But in order to continue this project, there was the issue of Beverley’s previous youthful indiscretions, including his politically unwieldy statements in *The History and Present State of Virginia*, that needed to be corrected.

The average twenty-first century mind imagines hindsight as a clear looking glass into the past, a perfect historical method through which we can analyze decisions and events. However, historians understand that the opposite is true of hindsight. The act of autobiography is a selective process that is almost always self-serving. Actions and events are pulled from the shroud of time and placed neatly into a narrative, allowing the author to ascribe meaning to unwieldy proceedings. The line between fact and fiction can blur in trying to make sense of perceived mistakes. As Beverley put the finishing touches on the second edition of his history, he also decided to write a new preface. No longer was he an “Indian” or an innovator who wondered why “no Body has ever presented the World, with a tolerable Account of our Plantations.” By 1720, Beverley was a productive citizen of the British Empire whose “first Business in the World [was]

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8 Correspondence between Beverley and Byrd can be found in Marion Tinling, ed., *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776*, Vols. I-II (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia for the Virginia Historical Society, 1977).

9 Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia*, p. 293.

10 Ibid., third page of “The Preface.”
being among the public Records of my Country.”¹¹ As Beverley sat in his library
at Beverley Park attempting to finish revising his book before the next ship left for
London, historical study allowed him to stumble across the perfect alibi for the
production of *The History and Present State of Virginia* in 1705. Indeed, it was
now but an “Accident” that the tome even existed.¹² Beverley’s raison d’être for
his work was John Oldmixon.¹³

Oldmixon was a Whig party writer and historian from Somerset, who as a
young lad had witnessed the arrival of William of Orange as he marched on his
way towards his destiny.¹⁴ Not unlike Beverley, he aspired for greatness, yet his
family lot offered him little of the comfort and privilege that Beverley enjoyed.


¹² Ibid.

¹³ Beverley’s account was quite successful, as historians have uncritically
accepted his version of the events surrounding the publication of *The History and
Present State of Virginia*. In addition to the aforementioned works by Louis B.
Wright, see Wright, “Beverley’s History . . . of Virginia (1705), A Neglected
Classic,” in *WMQ*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan., 1944), pp. 49-64; and Pat Rogers, “An
Early Colonial Historian: John Oldmixon and The British Empire in America,” in
recently, Ernst Breisach echoed Beverley’s sentiments, noting his history “owed
its origin to the irritation [Beverley] experienced when he read the manuscript of
J. Oldmixon’s *History of the British Empire in America* [sic] (1708) for its

¹⁴ Pat Rogers is the foremost expert on the life and works of John Oldmixon.
See Rogers, “The Whig Controversialist as Dunce: A Study of the Literary
Fortunes and Misfortunes of John Oldmixon (1673-1742),” Ph.D. diss., Sidney
Sussex College (Cambridge), 1968; Rogers, “Oldmixon, John (1672/3-1742),” in
and Rogers, ed., *The Letters, Life, and Works of John Oldmixon: Politics and
Professional Authorship in Early Hanoverian England* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin
Indeed, we can only wonder if they met in London in the late seventeenth-century as Oldmixon hustled on Fleet Street and Beverley enjoyed a pleasant holiday with his brothers, away from the oppressive heat of the Virginia summer. By the late seventeenth century, having not found fame and fortune publishing periodicals, the crafty Oldmixon set his mind upon a new ambition. William Blathwayt, secretary to the Board of Trade, had made it known that a new and comprehensive history of the English plantations in America was needed, as John Ogilby’s *America* was now outdated. Oldmixon believed a new American history might be his opportunity to obtain more lucrative political backing and patronage, improving his own fortunes along the way. He began acquiring and consulting American books and manuscripts wherever he could find them, utilizing the contacts he had made in his earlier attempt at publishing, as well as corresponding with known American figures such as Cotton Mather and Beverley’s brother-in-law, William Byrd. Oldmixon’s work finally came to fruition in 1708 with the publication of the two-volume set, *The British Empire in*.

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While not the spectacular edition that Ogilby produced nearly four decades before, Oldmixon’s account enjoyed enough subscribers to warrant four separate publishers in both crown quarto and crown octavo sizes, suggesting the work was marketed for consumption by the general public and more wealthy patrons.

Oldmixon’s work was Herodotian in nature, pulling all available information he could find and presenting it to his readers, allowing them to assess which version of an event was the most trustworthy. He wrote a chapter on each British colony in America, charting their cultural, political, and economic development, as well as providing a natural history of the area. From Nova Scotia to Antigua, Oldmixon found colonies in various states of societal development, each still dependent upon Britain for its survival. He believed some colonies like Barbados had approximated British culture quite well and could function relatively autonomously, while others such as the Carolinas might need much more time to reach that level. Unlike some of his British contemporaries, Oldmixon argued that all of the colonies were valuable pieces in a growing British empire that should not be given up to pursue an eastern European trade focus. Yet unlike

16 For more on Oldmixon’s *The British Empire in America*, see Aebel, “Constructing Empire.”

17 John Nicolson, Richard Parker, Ralph Smith, and Benjamin Tooke all published *The British Empire in America*. See Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America*, Vol. I (1708), title page. There is no indication of which printer produced quarto and which produced octavo, as all editions I have seen lack a definitive printer’s mark. Both the University of Chicago and University of Illinois hold quarto versions, while the John Carter Brown Library possesses an octavo version.
Figure 35. John Oldmixon, *Het Britannische rijk in Amerika* (1720), frontispiece. While the frontispiece was created in 1720, the book itself was published in 1721. Image courtesy of the University of Illinois Rare Book Room and Special Collections.\(^{18}\)

unaware of this fact in crafting the preface to his second edition. Oldmixon even credited Beverley in his first edition, having read a copy given to him by one of his publishers, though he noted that “several old Writers and modern Papers fell into [Oldmixon’s] hands” that Beverley had not accessed.\(^\text{19}\) We cannot be absolutely sure when Beverley first encountered Oldmixon’s text, although we can be relatively certain that it was not during his 1703 trip to London; given his proclivity to deal with his enemies in print, we can be certain he would have mentioned Oldmixon had he been aware of the text and had an issue with it. Nonetheless, at some point in the construction of his new edition of \textit{The History and Present State of Virginia}, Beverley decided to place the inspiration for his book on Oldmixon’s shoulders.

After Beverley’s scathing rebuke in 1722, Oldmixon seemed genuinely confused at why he had been the object of such venom. Indeed, he began the preface of his second edition in 1741 by noting that he was “apprehensive that this \textit{Undertaking} will meet with many Censures, raised by the Prejudice of some Readers, and the Ignorance of others.”\(^\text{20}\) Having the final word on the matter, with his antagonist in the grave for nearly two decades, Oldmixon questioned the sincerity of Beverley’s attack, arguing that some of the supposed errors came directly from \textit{The History and Present State of Virginia}.\(^\text{21}\) Indeed, given the


\(^\text{21}\) Ibid., p. x.
circumstances surrounding the early years of Jamestown colony recounted in John Smith’s narrative, Oldmixon could easily counter Beverley’s criticism that “they were near spent with Cold, which is impossible in that hot Country,” pointing out that “probably there never was a Year without [a great Frost].”

Throughout Oldmixon’s chapter on Virginia in the second edition, he points out the material he used from Beverley, refuting Beverley’s charges. Read side by side and paying no attention to the quarrel between the two authors, both Beverley’s and Oldmixon’s work seem relatively complimentary and innocuous.

Why is this historiographical warfare between two eighteenth-century Anglo-American historians on opposite ends of the Atlantic important? Beverley and Oldmixon represent more than a simple metropolitan-colonial squabble; their printed duel embodies the crux of more than two centuries of Anglo-American historical writing. Both works, relatively popular in England and America, were great successes in Europe, being translated into numerous Dutch, French, German, and Spanish editions. Beverley, though more cognizant of the


political ramifications of print by the 1720s, continued to advocate for a more autonomous Virginia government. Oldmixon, on the other hand, saw a colony that needed more careful supervision from Britain. Beverley’s authority came from his place amongst the colonial elite in Virginia, while Oldmixon used his proximity to the center of power to consult the most important textual sources. Regardless of their personal ambitions, each used American history to articulate his own particular vision of empire in an eighteenth century British Atlantic world. Our examination of the development of an Anglo-American historical enterprise in the longue durée has demonstrated that this was not an isolated incident. English writers on both sides of the Atlantic used American history as a conduit to negotiate their own vision of empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at times shaping the development of the English Atlantic colonial enterprise. In doing so, they crafted a unique Anglo-American narrative that could compete in the European-American historical marketplace by the end of the seventeenth century. The process by which the Anglo-American narrative began to reflect an Anglo-American identity in the eighteenth century, as we start to see with Beverley’s work, is a subject for a future day.

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Carter Brown Library and the University of Illinois Rare Book Room and Special Collections Department. I have still not located the elusive French and Spanish versions of Oldmixon, but the search continues.
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