LAND-SEIZING LANGUAGE: RHETORIC'S CLAIM TO TERRITORY IN ENGLISH WRITING OF THE NEW WORLD

by

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England sent its first party of settlers to New World Virginia in 1585, but it wasn't until 1607 that the budding empire founded Jamestown – the first lasting colony on the continent, following 22 years of failure to occupy the territory. In absence of physical ownership of the land, how to do the narratives that emerge out of the New World during this period attempt to assert a rhetorical claim to it? To answer this question, this thesis analyzes the writing of New World authors Smith, White, Lane, and Hariot. I've investigated the existence of the following through close reading analysis in order to pinpoint rhetorical strategies that assert possession: a) the binding of space in the New World into definable place through the theory of space and place and the practice of "narrational cartography"; b) Edenic tropes to assert a God-given right to cultivate the landscape and mark it as claimed, as explored in ecocritical theory; c) syntactical structures that infantilize native improvements and project English structures (or signs of ownership) onto the land. In combining the studies of travel writing's rhetoric and language's ability to bound space, this thesis will discern ways in which English colonists are able to claim the territory solely through their use of narrative.

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Introduction

Upon returning to the Roanoke colony three years after establishing it in 1587, former Governor John White was greeted by a smoking landscape, rotting possessions, and a mess of dismantled houses. Without knowing it, White had stepped into a curious horror story that would be carried through American lore in the decades that followed, and the mystery of Roanoke's absent colonists would join the constantly growing list of English failures to establish permanent settlements in the New World. Though what White found in Virginia was confusing at best, it was not the first time England had been unsuccessful in maintaining a colony. Instead, the charred and empty remains of the Roanoke settlement followed a series of unsuccessful forts built by the adventurer Ralph Lane and his small parties of hopeful colonists, who constructed a string of strongholds along the coast of Virginia between 1585 and 1586 only later to starve or be chased out by the indigenous population of the area. Small groups of settlers, all funded by the English crown or wealthy investors, would attempt to inhabit these empty forts in the years preceding White's colony, but each group, unequipped to sustain farms in the Virginia swampland, followed the established pattern of starvation or abandonment. Subsequent to Roanoke, the little-known Cuttyhunk Island in Massachusetts was settled in 1602, but unforgiving terrain and frigid fog drove colonists away after just a few weeks (Gidwitz 32). It wasn't until 1607 that England founded Jamestown, which became the first lasting, long-term English settlement on the continent – following 22 years of failure. Until then, as evidenced by the series of destroyed or abandoned colonies, the empire was unable to maintain a physical claim to any New World territory for long.

These multiple failed colonies, some even built on the skeletons of preceding settlements, were a direct result of the English continuously attempting to maintain ownership over the territory. Without physical structures on the land – with no houses and fences and gardens, or features that otherwise "improved" the landscape – the English would effectively have no claim to the area. As postulated by scholars like Patricia Seed, Kenneth Macmillan and Eva Botella-Ordinas, the English based much of their claim to territory on Roman ideals of prescription. A sovereign country could only truly claim ownership over an area once its colonists had "improved nature, increasing its value through the industrious labor of the virtual and rational members of a profitable… commercial society," effectively turning the "vacuum" of nature into something productive and recognizable (Botella-Ordinas 143). If the English attached importance "to the actual, effective occupation of territory as the root to possessory title," describing the ruined remains of Roanoke, as White does, is therefore effectively depicting a loss of claim (Macmillan 13).

These English ideals of ownership are perhaps best exemplified in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, published in 1689, which postulate that once man has toiled over nature, he may lay claim to it: "he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by his labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men" (28). The key to the possession of property, in Locke's eyes, lies in the transformation of a landscape. Once nature is changed sufficiently – again, once nature is elevated from a "vacuum" into something more productive – the

laborer may legally possess it. After an individual alters nature, claiming it, the nation has equal claim, as "the territorial rights of states are essentially grounded in the property rights of their subjects" (Miller 102). New World landscapes labored upon by English subjects therefore become English territories.

Among its Western European neighbors, England was the only nation to operate under such an understanding of possession. While the English empire recognized toil and transformation as representing legitimate ownership of a territory, other nations' ceremonies of claim were frequently more symbolic, with the colonists often reciting texts or brandishing documents from their respective monarchies. The Spanish performed a "ritualized speech" that demanded indigenous people submit to Spain's Catholic crown, while the Portuguese asserted that their claim to New World territory was based on their "technological achievements" that had allowed them to discover the landmass first (Seed 13, 14). English law, however, "did not require a written procedure for claiming ownership of land until late in the seventeenth century" (Seed 13). Until then, the budding empire rooted all claim to its New World territories in the colonists' ability to transform the landscape by building houses, fences, gardens, and other "improvements" upon it (Seed 13).

While these physical structures were continually dismantled throughout this period of failure, English travel and exploration narratives of the New World emerged. These texts did more than just sate a curious audience. "English… methods of settlement, together with their description in well-distributed travel narratives… were intended to show a certain *magnitude* of possession that was sufficient in Roman law to claim *imperium* and *dominium*" – that is, political and economic domination – "in the

New World" (Macmillan 115). Europeans of the period, regardless of how they perceived physical claim, could additionally assert sovereignty over an area not just by improving the landscape, but by demonstrating familiarity with the territory and "supplying evidence of their previous knowledge of the region" by publishing travel accounts, catalogues, maps, and descriptions (Botella-Ordinas 143). When England and Spain later battled over the same Virginian hillsides of precious logwood, for example, each side argued that its empire was more familiar with the territory – and therefore had more claim to it (Botella-Ordinas 146). English travel narratives from New World explorers and governors – like those published by Ralph Lane, Thomas Hariot, John White, and John Smith, analyzed in this thesis – provide adventure narratives and commodity catalogues, but also aim to establish English claim to the New World by emphasizing their knowledge of the area. In a period when England's physical claim to the landscape is often destroyed or missing, these texts asserting a sort of rhetorical claim – or claim based on knowledge – become doubly important. Published alongside maps that trace the boundaries of the English claim, the travel narratives from the New World attempt to uphold control over the landscape by highlighting how knowledgeable the settlers are, regardless of the eventual (and unfortunate) outcomes of their respective settlements.

The very existence of such travel narratives is therefore in itself an assertion of claim to New World territory. However, what about them rhetorically also creates claim? The very notion of "claim" is especially slippery, constituting something both physical and rhetorical, both an assertion and action. The English legally established ownership of a territory by building upon it and improving it, by preventing it from

lying fallow, but if claim is an affirmation of possession both physically and rhetorically, how does it also surface in the language of the narratives that emerged from the New World? What tactics do New World authors employ in order to navigate this odd intersection between physical and rhetorical contentions of ownership?

Confronting a landscape in which everything is unknown, Smith and his peers must first create borders in their narratives that outline what, exactly, is claimable. They cannot attempt to assert ownership over something that is nebulous and undefined, much less describe and defend this claim to an audience overseas. Using tactics illuminated by modern space and place theory, New World authors take the ambiguous and hazy territory of the New World and attempt to map it rhetorically in order to turn this "blurred image" of Virginia into something more recognizable – and therefore claimable (Tuan 17). To the first English colonists, the New World is a wholly unfamiliar territory that epitomizes the "space" in space and place theory: an undefined and nebulous area that has no meaning or recognition attached to it (Tuan 6). Because one cannot attempt to claim (or even inhabit) something so ambiguous, space must be transformed into "place," which is "a physically defined, secured, and established area" (Shin 84). Many English writers of the New World attempt to construct this place by creating rhetorical maps within their texts, occasionally pairing these language-based charts with physical copies of maps. Drawing upon cartographic tactics allows these writers to rhetorically separate claimable place from space. Cartography that creates place from space rhetorically binds a physical territory, bringing rhetorical and physical claim together in an attempt to assert possession of an earthly landscape solely through a narrative's language.

Once the New World becomes defined in familiar terms, once the borders of a recognizable territory have been outlined, New World authors often liken the landscape to a divine paradise: the ultimate evocation of something that would be familiar to all factions of the English audience. Not only is Eden familiar, but the trope of Paradise constructs its own claim based on divine providence and the unique beliefs of English Protestantism, as if God had created the New World specifically so that the English could live in and profit from it. Like the notion of claim, the trope of Eden is both physical and rhetorical, first described in text and then reproduced countless times by gardeners who "sought to perform a new Eden in the postlapsarian soil of mother England," meaning that gardens mirroring Eden were often constructed in an attempt to reclaim what was lost after the Fall (Tigner 18). The use of Edenic tropes therefore pertains to space and place theory, because using such an instantly familiar location immediately turns a nebulous space into a more definable place. Secondly, these tropes constitute their own kind of claim based on English Protestantism and the notion that the territory was created specifically for English profit and inhabitation.

However, the New World was not as empty as Eden was for Adam and Eve, and the natives who occupied the territory disrupted this notion of an untouched paradise. English writers of the New World are able to counter this interruption rhetorically by describing the native improvements in a way that infantilizes them – that is, making them seem incorrect or childish – and therefore lessens their claim to the land. Again, rhetorical claim rises to meet the physical, and language deconstructs the possession a tangible structure has asserted. Though improvements erected by the indigenous population stood on the land – and therefore, in England's own definition, marked it as

owned – New World writers attempt to diminish this claim by utilizing rhetoric that colors these improvements as somehow "wrong" and wasteful (Seed 13). This infantilizing rhetoric is paired with ambiguous syntax employed specifically to separate the laborers from their improvements. Throughout these English narratives, the indigenous population is either equated with wastefulness or obscured entirely through unclear syntax.

Each of these strategies constitutes an attempt to meet physical with rhetorical claim, either by constructing a claim through language when a physical one doesn't exist or, oppositely, by rhetorically dismantling the claim already exerted by physical structures. Further, each rhetorical strategy is framed and legitimized by a sense of English national identity. The collective consciousness of what it means to be "English," largely shaped by Protestantism and aspirations to empire, helps to define exactly what constitutes both physical and rhetorical claim, and therefore also shapes the strategies used to construct these assertions of possession.

The rhetoric and rhetorical strategies of New World writing often exemplify certain cultural or religious qualities of the English settlers and their desires for an empire overseas. Their whole conception of "claim" is rooted firmly in – and legitimized by – English nationalism and national identity. The English explorers' sense of place, for example, draws on images that would be familiar to a collective English citizenry. Readers back in England would all recognize what Lane means when he compares a river in the Chesapeake area to the Thames, for instance (839). The bounding of New World space is therefore reliant on a shared recognition of certain cultural elements, symbols, and standards all unique to the English populace and framed

by English national consciousness – that is, what it means to be "English." Even the idea of Eden is framed by a perceived national identity, as the English version of Protestantism asserted that the English were God's chosen people, and they "came to feel that they alone had been favoured by God, and had been singled out from the general run of mankind" (Claydon 11). It makes sense, then, that as God's chosen, the English described the New World as their own personal paradise. Further, the English notion of claim informed the way in which indigenous improvements could be perceived as "wrong" or as representing waste, as the perception of a correct method of cultivation was dictated by agricultural practices successful in England.

In response to this question of how rhetorical claim intersects physical claim, this thesis will be analyzing the texts of Ralph Lane, Thomas Hariot, John White, and John Smith, whose narratives each feature the aforementioned tropes and strategies in order to assert sovereignty over a territory their fledgling empire had not yet physically conquered. Ralph Lane's *Discourse on the First Colony*, written between 1585 and 1586, is the first account England received of the ill-fated Roanoke settlement and is one of the first English texts that describes the New World itself. It was originally published to help quell rumors following Lane's then-famous failure to maintain England's first attempt at a colony, as upon his arrival back on English soil, it seemed as though everyone had heard of the hostile indigenous population, the struggle to maintain an English fort, and party members forced to eat mastiffs and sassafras leaves on their way up the river – all true happenings, even if Lane attempted to state otherwise. Lane's narrative was meant to account for his failure in Virginia to both his investors and the general English public, and the report was "expected not only to

deliver the facts but also to halt the rumors and to justify this dismal showing" (Donegan 3).

Following this initial failure in Roanoke, Thomas Hariot (also written as Harriot or Heriot, depending on the text or scholar), an "Elizabethan scientist," mathematician and astronomer who is sometimes even credited with planting the first potato in the British Isles, was sent on the expedition to Virginia following Lane's, charged with categorizing the commodities that could help sustain a colony and bring riches to the budding English empire (Sokol 1). His *A Briefe and True Report*, written in 1588, has both a "commercial and political motivation": it delineates what, exactly, the English could profit from in the New World, and it additionally attempts to promote the colonization of Virginia by illustrating it as a prosperous land (Sokol 3). It was also written at least in part to quiet the fears Lane's text had prompted, acting as an assurance to future settlers that they, too, wouldn't be forced to eat their dogs out of starvation.

John White's narrative is similar to Hariot's in that it also encourages colonization, and the two were written and published at about the same time. White's *Narrative of his Voyage*, written between 1587 and 1590, effectively acts as a sequel to Lane's own text, starting with White's colonists stumbling upon the ruins of a fort Lane was forced to leave behind. White writes as Governor of the newly-founded Roanoke colony and delineates his attempts to communicate with natives and keep his settlers alive. He was ultimately forced to leave the tenuous colony in a quest for further provisions, as the English farming methods had proved unsuccessful in the Virginia swampland. Delayed for three years by the Spanish Armada, White returned to his

colony only to find it abandoned, left only with smoking ruins and the now-infamous "CROATOAN" carved into the bark of a nearby tree.

Meanwhile, Smith published his own text, *A Description of New England*, as a resume of sorts, hoping his adventurous exploits would persuade future expeditions to hire him (they didn't) (Read 430). The narrative, published in 1616, is boastful and exultant, consistently highlighting Smith's achievements in Jamestown while obscuring his failures – and because the New World was often an unforgiving environment, there are arguably more of these defeats than successes in Smith's stories. Smith's attempts to conceal his struggles in Virginia makes his narrative one of the most difficult to parse of the four here, at least partially because this camouflaging isn't particularly skillful. Smith was a soldier, cartographer, explorer, bullheaded unofficial leader of the Jamestown colony, skilled paddler and rat killer, but he was no author (T. Smith 50). His narrative thus often includes various tenses, perspectives, and tonal shifts and is generally riddled with inconsistencies, making it one of the "least coherent of major colonial texts" (Read 429). As muddled as Smith's text is, his narrative offers "what has become the archetypal colonial scene," and many of the stories that follow Smith's own use similar tropes and mirror his ennobling of the explorer (Sherman 27).

Together, these four texts make up some of the first literature from Virginia and are the most famous and widely circulated texts that emerged from the aforementioned period of failure in the New World. Perhaps more significantly, these narratives "established early models for later colonial commercial and technical discourse," and their tactics for establishing rhetorical claim would be copied in the narratives that followed them (Moran 4).

Chapter 1: Cartography's Claim to Territory and the Hopeful Future of *Terra Incognita*

To English settlers first stepping onto Virginian soil after months at sea, the New World was hugely unknown. Tales of grapes blanketing valley floors, of ponds stocked with pearls as big as one's fist, or of cannibals lurking in shaded forests had been spread by texts from the French and Spanish, whose own empires had glimpsed the territory years before the English were able to send their first ship (Macmillan 50). Though the Spanish and French may have had more experience with Virginia, for the first English colonists, the New World was wholly unfamiliar.

To these firsts colonists, the New World represented the ultimate "space." Within space and place theory, space is defined as having "no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed" (Tuan 54). While space can represent a kind of freedom, it can have more dangerous, sinister connotations as well, as space and place theorist Yi-Fu Tuan explains: "A root meaning of the word 'bad' is 'open.' To be open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable" (54).

In order to make space less threatening, then, it is shaped into place: a more definable, bounded, and familiar territory. Space can be transformed into place, as "when space is defined into a tangible and concrete object, it becomes place" (Shin 84). More significantly, humans can only reside within place, as living things cannot "physically inhabit the territory of an abstract image," and thus the need to blind place from space is "absolute" (Shin 84).

This constricting of space into place is necessary to possess territory, rather than merely inhabit it. Just as humans cannot live within an undefined region, they cannot assert a claim over an ambiguous area. Possession requires boundaries; claim requires the delineation of place. The simple act of writing about the previously unknown New World makes the space more definable to readers, since "writing holds, penetrates, delineates, and explores space," but there are further tactics English writers use in order to constrict this nebulous space into a more outlined – and claimable – place: namely, the employment of cartography (Conley xi).

In what the geographer Nicholas Howe calls "narrational cartography," travel writers of the period would often describe an area in a way that attempted to map the territory rhetorically, as the following section will explore. Using "spatial strategies" such as atlases, maps, or navigational charts, "writers borrow from a stock of geometric and cartographic commonplaces" to depict the New World in definite terms, thereby forming an exact place out of space through cartographic methods (Conley 5).

Further, cartography does not simply bound place from space, but additionally affirms a kind of possession in its very existence alone. The map itself is an "assertion of sovereignty," often created to delineate territorial borders or specify legal landholdings (Black 12). Cartography has even been called the "weapon of imperialism… used to legitimize the reality of conquest and empire" (Harley 57). Therefore, the rhetorical maps that English writers create within their narratives are not just delineating place from space in precise, exacting terms, but are additionally exerting their own kind of claim over the landscape.

This narrational cartography cannot be analyzed in isolation, however, as its presence is largely influenced by the drawn and illustrated maps that were published alongside the narratives of Smith and White. Smith continually references the map he is creating as he writes his narrative, while White's map was reproduced in several collections that followed his own (Blansett 71). The rhetorical maps that these writers are forming within their texts are created alongside – and sometimes simultaneously with – visual maps, and in order to understand how rhetoric is again countering or supplementing the physical, visual and rhetorical maps must be considered together.

Visual Maps

John White's water-colored depiction of Roanoke and its surrounding territory might be more of a promise than a map (see Figure 1). Though the coastline's dips and harbors are rendered in meticulous detail, the sketch of the land itself appears to be surprisingly empty, with vast space stretching between the few dots that indicate towns settled by English colonists or, judging from their titles, native inhabitants. White's map, as empty as it is, still serves a very specific purpose in that it provides a detailing of the harbor for incoming ships. These supply-laden vessels would have been vital to the survival of White's Roanoke colony, and White's map would allow them to navigate Virginia's coastline and its chain of islands successfully (Donegan 4). White's map is therefore empty in very specific areas. Ships would have no need for knowledge of the greater Virginia landmass, so White renders the coastline in more meticulous detail, leaving the territory that stretches out from Roanoke blank.

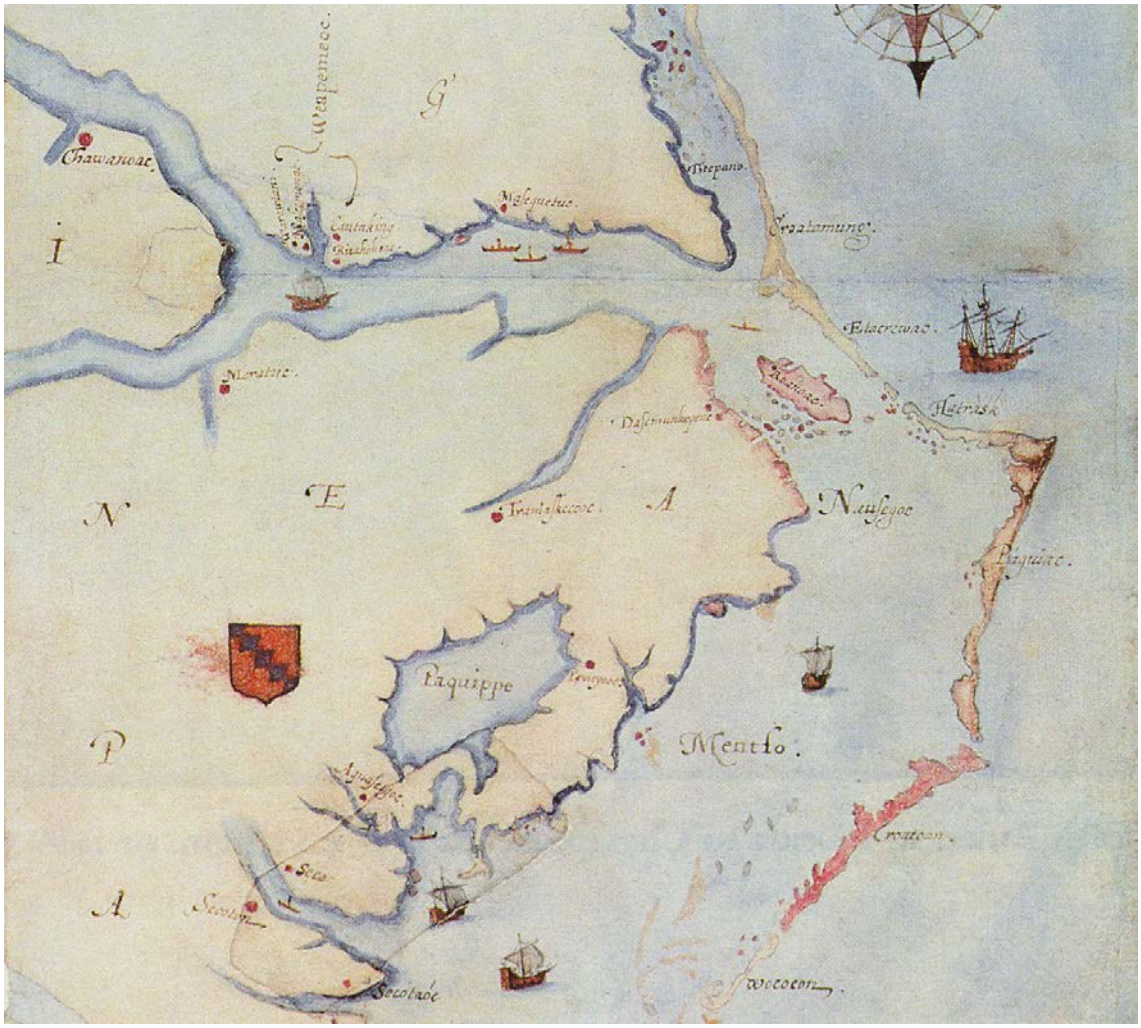

Figure 1: White's first map

White, John. La Virginea *Pars*. n.d. *Captain John Smith Writings With Other Narratives of Roanoke, Jamestown, and the First English Settlement of America*. Ed. James Horn. New York: Penguin Putnam, 2007. 917. Print.

However, if knowledge of the New World constituted a kind of claim to the territory during this period, if an empire could assert ownership over an area simply by "supplying evidence" of familiarity of the region, then White's illustration and its large swaths of unknown white space would suggest that the English could claim Roanoke island and New England's carefully-drawn coastline – and little else (Botella-Ordinas

143). This white space is included with intention, however; instead of simply asserting that the land *isn't* claimed, it details what has *yet* to be claimed. Space and place scholar Tom Conley categorizes this empty space as depicting a kind of *terra incognita* – Latin for "unknown land" – and a territory "to be conquered, or at least to become known" (8). The white space that spans between White's few illustrated settlements is not so much an indication of failure to claim, but is instead a promise of future claim. In outlining a territory that is seemingly barren or unoccupied, White is employing the "*res nullius* argument, which asserts that the land [has] no owner because it [is] a 'vacuum,' empty and vacant" (Botella-Ordinas 143). This white space is therefore an assertion that much of the New World is unowned, and can also be seen simultaneously as a declaration of future English claim. The territory may yet be unoccupied, but the white space suggests that this will soon be remedied.

This sense of the future, of territory that *hasn't* been claimed but *will* be, surfaces in Smith's narratives as well – though in a less visual form. After providing an exhaustive list of territories he knows of, Smith concedes that much of the region is still unmapped: "Thus you may see, of this 2000. miles more then halfe is yet unknowne to any purpose: no not so much as the borders of the Sea are yet certainly discovered" (135). The *terra incognita* Smith mentions, this 1000 miles of unknown territory, is framed in rhetoric that promises that it will not remain unknown for long. The "yet" Smith continually employs suggests that English settlers of the future will fill in – and potentially claim – the rhetorical "white space" of his narratives. Though this territory isn't conquered in Smith's present, the "yet" indicates that it will be in the "immediate future" ("Yet").

White creates a second map that later becomes widely circulated, and it's notable that White's later map includes so little of this white space (see Figure 2). Instead of the stretching, boundless space that he previously illustrated, White's second map fills the unknown territory between rivers with trees. Figures reminiscent of de Bry's engravings are even depicted along Virginia's coastline (see Figure 3). This map is decidedly *not* empty, perhaps oppositely to the previous starker picture, and this difference arises in part because of the varying usages of each map. Because White hopes to use his first picture to help to navigate the river and shoreline, he doesn't decorate his white space with figures or trees; this map serves a more practical purpose. The second map and its embellishments – made for circulation rather than practical use – is more in keeping with the fashion at the time, which dictated that white space should be filled with pictures in order to make the map more pleasing to the eye (Turchi 34). Though these inked trees and hillsides may be indications of popular Pre-Modern style, they may additionally be interpreted as serving a specific purpose, and can still be full of future opportunities, like the first map, even in the absence of white space.

The trees, for example, don't appear in groves or ordered rows; they are illustrated in a seemingly random pattern, suggesting that the space White depicts – while not vacant like the first map's – is wholly wild and forested. These disordered trees are more akin to land lying fallow, therefore, than structural evidences of claim. The notion that the land of the New World was unused and raw – or "virgin," as Richard Hakluyt refers to it – creates a kind of invitation for the English, as within accepted English law, "anyone could establish a legal right to apparently unused land"

(Seed 19). This depiction of forested space is therefore equating the New World territory to disordered, wasted – and therefore previously unclaimed – land.

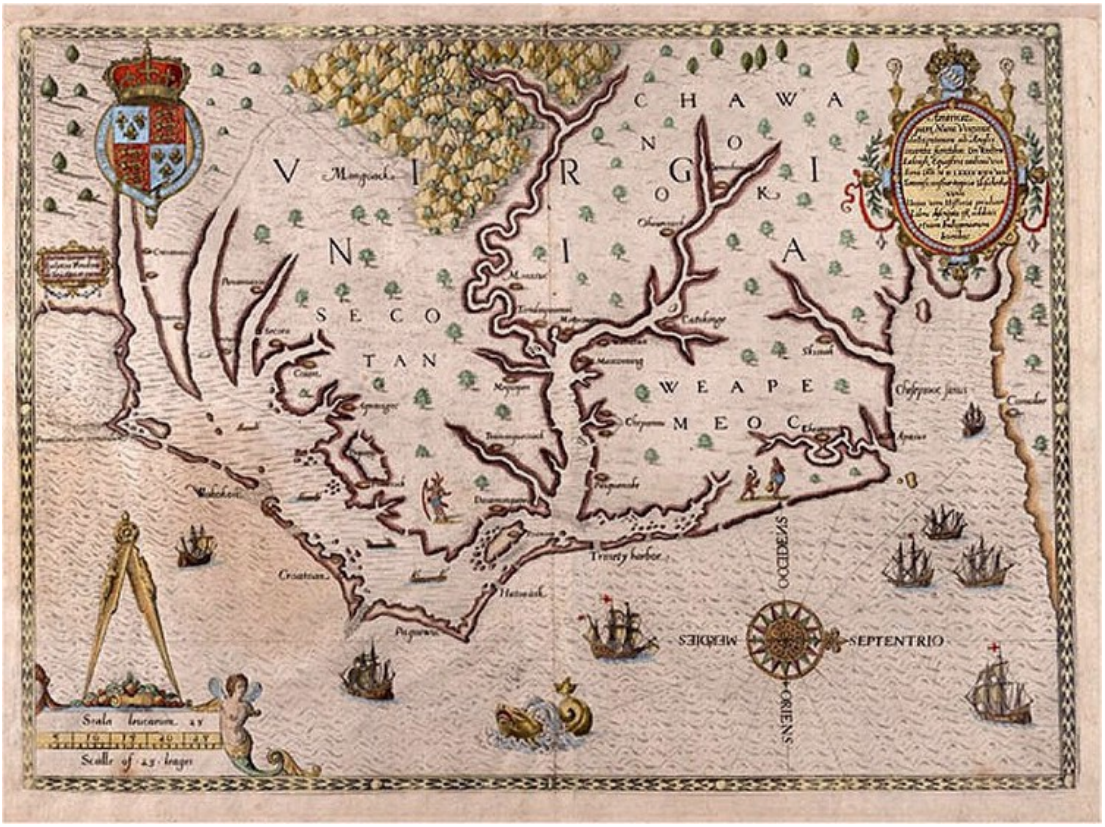

Figure 2: White's second map

White, John. *John White's Map of Roanoke Island*. Digital image. *Thomas Hariot and John White*. National Park Service, n. d. Web.

Furthermore, while the indigenous-looking figures in White's second map seem to signal the territory as occupied, their inclusion does not necessarily challenge English claim to the area. If anything, the addition of these figures pairs them with the fallow-looking land behind them, suggesting that they've allowed the land to go to waste, and therefore bolsters the English claim asserted by White's second map. Therefore, though the territory is clearly inhabited on White's map, coupling the images of indigenous people with waste weakens the native populations' claim to the land and suggests that

should the English occupy the area, their improvements – or physical signals of claim – would correct the disuse that the natives had apparently fostered.

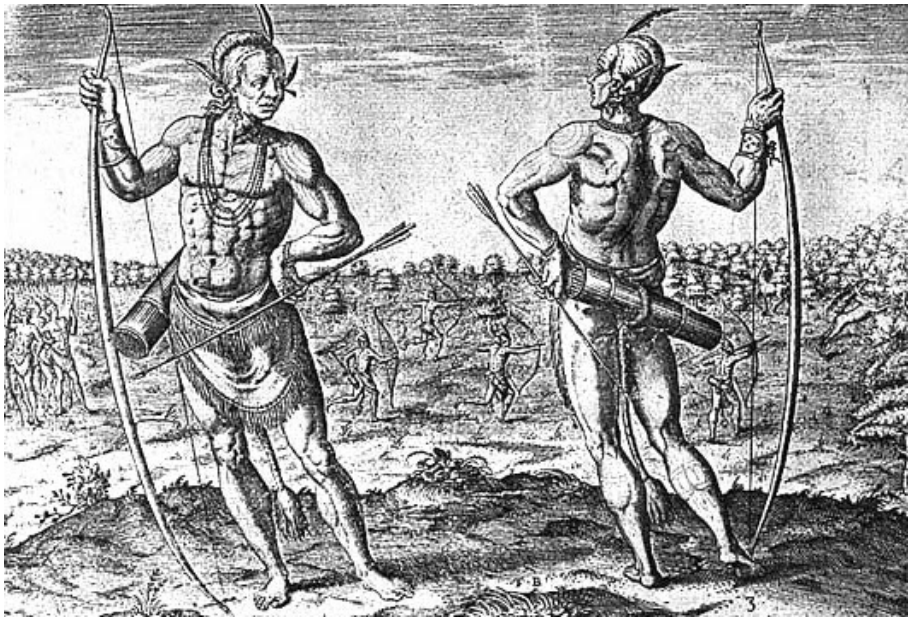

Figure 3: de Bry's woodcut

de Bry, Theodore. *III. A Weroan or Great Lord of Virginia.* Digital image. *Thomas Harriot's a Brief and True Report.* National Humanities Center, Nov. 2006. Web.

This de Bry figure surfaces again in Smith's own map, which gives the reproduction of the engraving more prominence than White's (see Figure 4). The depiction of this native figure is out of scale with the rest of the landscape, and yet the map still suggests that he occupies it, as the figure's shadow seems to bleed onto the territory (Blansett 71). Again, though both the unordered trees and this rendering of the indigenous population might be "a matter of decoration," their combined presence can simultaneously suggest that the New World natives are allowing the land to lie wasted, just as White's picture does (Turchi 34). Further, this decoration plays a much more sinister role in that it aims to characterize the indigenous population of the area in much

more damaging ways than the miniscule figures White has included. When this figure is paired with the inclusion of Smith's personal coat of arms and motto – "*Vincere est Vivere*" meaning, "to conquer is to live" – it becomes clear that Smith has inserted the figure into his landscape in order to assert dominance over it (Doherty 22).

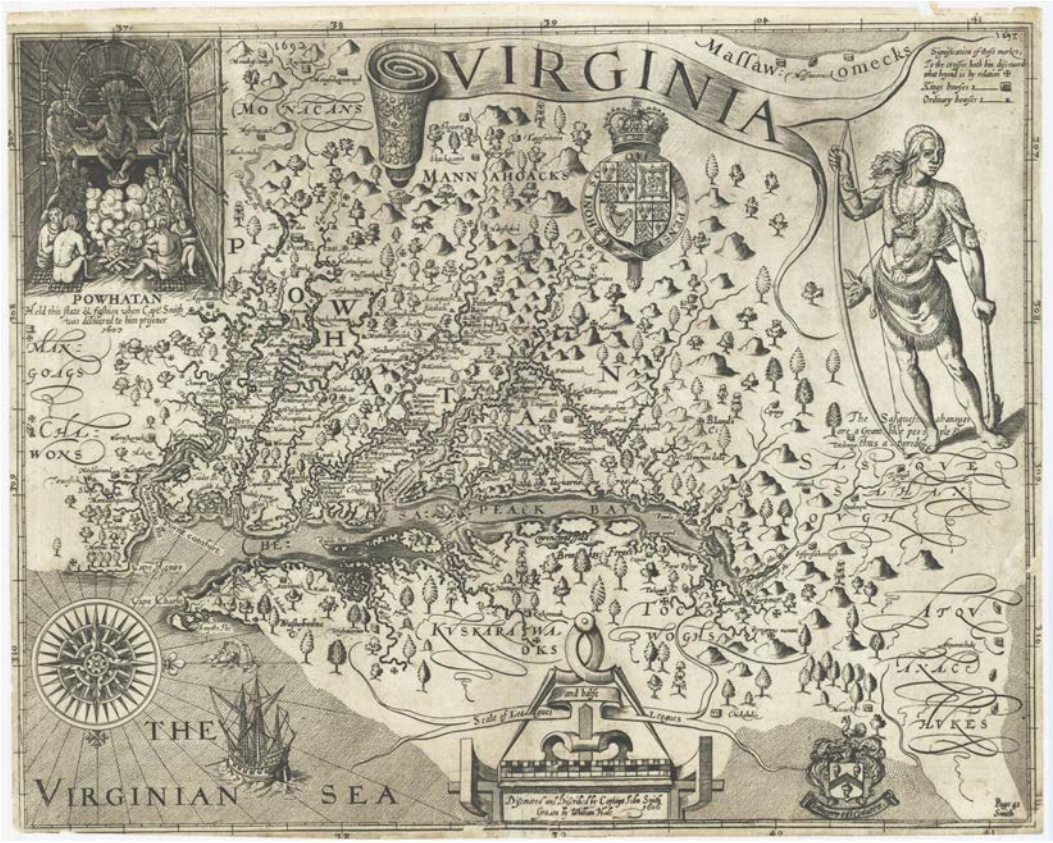

Figure 4: Smith's map

Smith, John. *Captain John Smith, Map of Virginia, circa 1606*. Digital image. *Collection: The Americas*. Library of Virginia, n.d. Web.

With the presence of these figures in the widely circulated maps of Smith and White, the white space in White's first map seems even starker by comparison. Again, the barer nature of White's first map can be attributed to its differing purpose, as trees and hillsides weren't inked onto more practical images. However, the empty space can additionally be seen as commenting on the indigenous population just as much his later

inclusion of the de Bry figures. Though White plots a handful of indigenous villages on his map, the blank territory that stretches between them fosters "the notion of socially empty space," as if the natives are contained in the small, red dots White has plotted and do not exist anywhere between them (Harley 81). In portraying a landscape so clearly empty, White effectively erases the native presence on the territory and "lessens the burden of conscience about people in the landscape"; the absence of indigenous figures further emphasizes that the *terra incognita* of White's empty space is wholly barren – and therefore ideal for English conquest (Harley 81).

Rhetorical Maps

While Lane does not provide a visual map of New World territory, he attempts to create a kind of rhetorical one, starting from Roanoke – the most known, mapped, and thoroughly discovered land to which the English first laid claim – and branching outward, often centering much of his description on the river he and his party traversed. His initial descriptions of the territory are nebulous. While they provide some sense of direction, they fail to indicate scale or where he believes the exact borders of their owned landscape to end. The ambiguous descriptions of the territory are some of the first lines in Lane's text, as if he wishes to orient the reader in the ambiguous New World. He writes, "First therefore touching the particularities of the Countrey, you shal understand our discovery of the same hath been extended from the Iland of Roanoke… into the South, into the North, into the Northwest, and into the West" (838). Here, Lane attempts to convey that his party's knowledge of the New World – and therefore suggested claim to it – has begun to stretch away from the small island of Roanoke and into the more substantial space of Virginia, but he fails to provide any exact

measurements or landmarks with which to gauge the scale of this "discovery." The nebulous nature of Lane's new knowledge is akin to the visual white space on White's map, representing a space that is to be conquered in the future, an uncharted area that promises later claim.

As the text moves from this ambiguous "discovery," Lane begins to provide more exact measurements, each stretching from the island of Roanoke and effectively painting a rhetorical map of the territory by utilizing specific distances that span from a fixed point. Again, these descriptions arise relatively early within his text, as if Lane wishes to familiarize his reader with the general Virginian landscape before plunging into the particularities of the failures he has suffered. The "uttermost place to the Southward of any discoverie," for example, is "Secotan," which is "by estimation foure score miles distant from Roanoke" (Lane 839). Meanwhile, "to the Northwarde our furthest discoverie was to the Chesepians, distant from Roanoke about 130 miles," and "to the Northwest the farthese place of our discoverie was to Choanoke, distant from Roanoke about 130 miles" (Lane 839). Lane details each new discovery as if he were describing spokes on a wheel: each town categorized here is set a specific distance and direction away from a known point (Roanoke). He has located "places not by pointing to them on an illustrative map or by setting their coordinates on a grid but by writing them in an ordered sequence that typically begins with a well-defined and isolatable site and then moves outward to other such regions," effectively creating a kind of circular map through his rhetoric alone (Howe 6). The region that he describes becomes easier to visualize, even in the absence of a drawn map, and the usage of narrational cartography roots the rhetoric itself in claim.

Lane uses similar terms of exact measurement when speaking of the rivers that run toward the coast, but their specificity is not limited to their length in miles. Instead, the rivers are continually framed in terms of their relation to the Thames. While describing part of his party's journey up an unnamed river, for example, Lane likens the width of a the water to a specific point in the Thames, drawing upon a reference that would allow his readers to visualize his surroundings: "There the River beginneth to straighten untill it come to Choanoke, and then groweth to be as narrowe as the Thames betweene Westminster, and Lambeth" (839). Similarly, when detailing the river "Mirotico," Lane characterizes it as "broad as the Thames betwixt Greenwich, and the Ile of dogges" and goes on to assert, "In some place more, and in some lesse: the currant runneth as strong being entred so high into the River, as London bridge upon a vale water" (842). Lane's use of the Thames as a frame of reference is curious in that it is only familiar to a very specific set of people. Clearly, Lane writes with only one nationality in mind: his own. Only an English citizen would find Lane's measurements familiar and interpretable, while these same references would be useless to an individual unfamiliar with the Thames. Using the Thames as a frame of measurement therefore indicates that the claim to the New World is England's and solely England's, and encourages the notion that Lane need not make his rhetorical map accessible to everyone, as only the English have possession over the territory.

Chapter 2: The English as a New World Adam and the Claim Implied by Edenic Tropes

Early versions of Hariot's *A Brief and True Report* were published alongside an image of Adam and Eve in Eden (see Figure 5), identifying "America as a new paradise that would revive England both morally and financially through the products that could be introduced into the English market" (Tigner 160). Edenic imagery and tropes, though perhaps not quite as visual as the image included in Hariot's narrative, also surface in Smith's, Lane's, and White's texts as they each describe the New World as a newfound paradise that brims with natural resources and fertile soil. The landscape is often characterized in superlative terms, an unparalleled wilderness created, apparently, for the sole purpose of maintaining a thriving English colony. Smith even goes so far as to call "Massachusets" a "Paradise" (149).

This widespread invocation of Eden serves a specific purpose. Suggesting that the New World was created by God, bountiful enough to sustain the early settlers just like the garden provided for Adam and Eve, asserts that New World's wonders were shaped specifically for England to colonize. Consistently alluding to Eden therefore augments the settlers' claim to the territory. If the New World is like a present-day Eden, then it's only right that the colonists occupy and claim the territory.

These invocations of Eden are rooted in a very specific and unique vein of Christianity. Referring to Eden is not just a reference to a Biblical place, but also originates from a sense of being "chosen" that is fostered by English Protestantism. Pre-Modern English were not just fervent believers; "Protestantism was… [at] the core of English national identity," and defined much of how the English perceived both

themselves and their future as a nation (Ihalainen 176). Through the teachings of the Anglican faith, the English were under the impression that they were God's chosen people, that "they alone had been favoured by God" and therefore had a unique and special relationship to a divine power (Claydon 11). As England's dominant faith, Anglican Protestantism was perceived to be the one "true" version of Christianity, with the English positioned as the religion's sole defenders (Mandlebrote 159). The English therefore believed themselves to be God's preferred people, stewards to the purest form of Christianity, and without equal in the eyes of the divine.

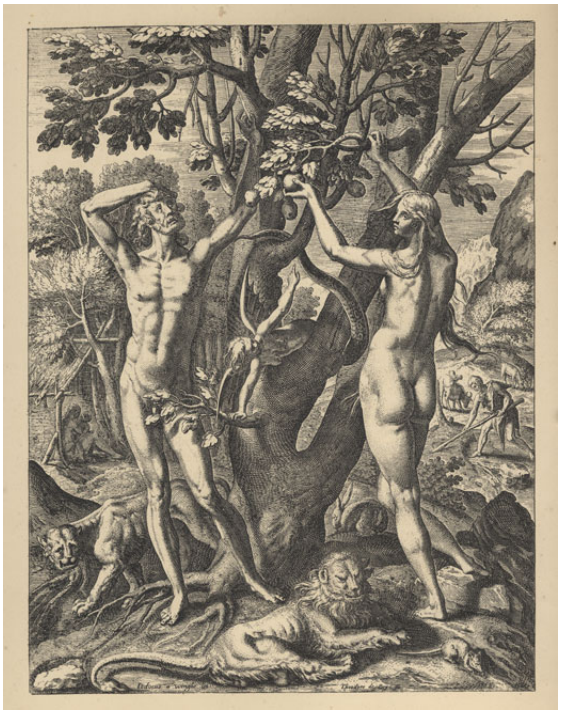

Figure 5: de Bry's rendering of Adam and Eve, published with Hariot's text

de Bry, Theodore. *Garden of Eden*. Digital image. *Thomas Harriot's a Brief and True Report*. The National Humanities Center, Nov. 2006. Web.

A kind of "missionary nationalism" was spurred by this perception of favoritism, which gave "dominant groups a special sense of themselves and their destiny. Such groups… [stressed] the political, cultural, or religious mission to which they [had] been called" (Kumar 34). Anglican Protestantism placed a heavy emphasis on this call to a higher purpose. In New World travel writing, this destiny manifests itself in the notion that Virginia was created solely for the English to possess and flourish in. Its landscape was essentially a modern-day Eden, and, further, a divine will called English settlers specifically to possess it. Allusions to Eden are therefore not simply affirmations of Protestant beliefs, but are additionally assertions that the New World is part of England's destiny as defenders of the one "true faith" (Mandlebrote 159). The notion that Eden is God's creation, paired with the English belief that they were to receive special favors and missions from God, affirms the English claim to the New World: the land exists as a part of the greater English destiny, and the empire is fated to possess it (Ihalainen 177).

New World writers equate the New World to Eden first by continually suggesting that the land is plentiful and with enough naturally occurring resources that the colonists can live comfortably even without cultivating the land – just as Adam and Eve nourished themselves in Eden before the Fall. Hariot, for example, describes Virginia's wilderness not just as fruitful but as specifically providing for the colonists upon their arrival. After including an exhaustive list of New World commodities that England could profit a great deal from, Hariot switches focus, touching upon the naturally-occurring flora and fauna that were useful to the colonists simply in order to survive. He prefaces a list of commodities the colonists have been eating, the sentence

fragment acting as a snippet of introduction that preludes the commodities. He states, "The second part of suche commodities as Virginia is knowne to yeeld for victual and sustenance of mans life, usually fed upon by the naturall inhabitants: as also by us, during the time of our aboade. And first of such as are sowed and husbanded" (883). Just as Eden was flush with food, the New World features "victual and sustenance" with which Hariot's party is able to feed themselves when their own agricultural projects prove less fruitful. As the land alone can support the English with so little cultivation, the New World is colored as the ultimate gift from God, and this further underscores the parallels between Adam, Eve, and the English as God's chosen people. Who better to possess such a territory than colonists who were apparently chosen to do so?

Meanwhile, Lane employs superlatives that characterize the landscape as unsurpassable in its fertility and bounty. Lane frequently describes the New World as unparalleled, and included in his characterization of the area is the notion that the Chesapeake Bay is unlike any other landscape on the planet. This could be perceived as overcompensation on Lane's part as he scrambles to uphold the New World as a viable place for colonization in the face of his recent failure within it. Lane must account for his struggles without outright blaming the landscape, as this would deter future settlers from venturing forth to Virginia, and his descriptions might therefore veer toward the hyperbolic in an attempt to encourage others to succeed where he could not. In one such description, Lane states, "But the Territorie and the soyle of the Chesepians (being distant fifteene miles from the shoare) was for pleasantnes of seate, for temperature of Climate, for fertilitie of soyle, and for the commoditie of the Sea, besides multitude of beares (being an excellent good victual, with great woods of Sassafras, and Wall nut

trees) is not to be excelled by any other whatsoever" (839). Here, Lane paints the landscape as unparalleled, as a kind of paradise that couldn't possibly be "excelled" by any other territory. Though he is not referencing Eden specifically, the New World becomes a similar divine oasis through Lane's use of superlatives.

This exceptional prosperity also surfaces in White's narratives, where much of the nature he depicts is often plentiful and lush with commodities – even while colonists simultaneously struggle to physically claim the land. This principle is best illustrated when White describes houses he has stumbled onto as abundant with food and populated by deer. The houses he's found, though, have a sinister past: Lane's men were forced to abandon them after a particularly violent – and ultimately detrimental – encounter with their indigenous neighbors, and shells of the structures are the only physical evidence left standing that the English were ever in the New World at all. White, however, ignores this past, instead using the houses' presence to equate English improvements with prosperity, stating, "When we came thither, wee found the forte rased downe, but all the houses standing unhurt, saving the neather roomes of them, and also of the forte, were overgrowen with Melons of divers sortes, and Deere within them, feeding on those Mellons…" (865). White had originally set out to find a fort Lane had erected before his departure, and though he finds it "rased" and missing the men that had once occupied it, he notes that the structures are "overgrowen" with Melons and deer that can feed his party for the weeks to come. Here, though Lane's men have technically failed at maintaining the fort, the lush land around and in it continues to sustain the colonists. The apparent prosperity occupying the houses appears as a divine urge to continue, a blessing even amid destruction. "How simple [it is] to harvest the

melons that grow wild and the deer that graze around human habitations," as if the land encourages the settlers to continue even after White's party has encountered previous destruction (Adams 105).

Further, this lush wilderness of the New World is often characterized as existing solely for Man's purpose, just as Eden was created expressly to serve Adam and Eve. For example, Smith often refers to the bounty of the New World as existing specifically to sustain the colonists; it is not only a prosperous area, but a lush paradise created for them. While describing the fertility of the soil, suggesting that the New World could sustain multiple farms and the colonists could profit from prosperous harvests, Smith suggests that the landscape that can do all this exists "for mans use," stating, "From Pennobscot to Sagadahock this Coast is all Mountainous and Iles of huge Rocks, but overgrowen with all sorts of excellent good woodes for building houses, boats, barks or shippes: with an incredible abundance of most sorts of fish, much fowle, and sundry sorts of good fruites for mans use" (138). The extraordinary prosperity Smith illustrates apparently exists "for mans use," the landscape and its resources created for the sole purpose of keeping settlers alive, just as Eden sustained Adam and Eve. Smith repeats this sentiment multiple times, later categorizing the fertile grand as existing to "nourish" the colonists: "For the goodnesse of the ground, let us take it fertill, or barren, or as it is: seeing it as certaine it beares fruites, to nourish and feed man and beast, as well as England, and the Sea whose severall sorts of fish I have related" (146).

Counter to the idyllic Eden of the Bible, however, the colonists' own paradise was already occupied when the settlers arrived in Virginia, and the English "did not discover a pristine landscape unaffected by humans" (Adams 33). Though the

indigenous population may occupy the territory, however, they are consistently depicted as utilizing this paradise incorrectly – and in doing so, are thereby lessening the legitimacy of their own possession.

As Hariot notes, for example, the forests and groves of Virginia are brimming with natural resources, many of which the colonists eat to survive. While extensively categorizing the commodities that occur organically in the New World's wilderness, Hariot affirms that these commodities are being underutilized by the native population, stating, "There are also Leekes, differing little from ours in England that grow in many places of the countrey, of which, when we came in places they were, wee gathered and eate many, but the naturall inhabitants never" (889). Here, Hariot describes a bountiful paradise that sustains the colonists, a paradise that the indigenous people are apparently leaving unutilized. This is similar to the notion that the native cultivation efforts are somehow leaving land wasted and "spare" – and therefore claimable by the colonists. The forest is crowded with various natural resources that the natives simply fail to recognize or consume, and the settlers' own use of these resources exerts a claim over the territory that the natives cannot simultaneously assert. Hariot neglects, of course, to mention that the natives don't necessarily *need* to eat the "Leekes" – their own methods of farming produced enough food to sustain entire villages – and instead opts to highlight the apparent waste the natives are committing by not eating the natural flora of the area.

When the natives aren't perceived as wasting the paradise that is the New World, they are noted as simply being part of God's provision for the English settlers. While narrating the colonists' hardship and time of starvation after founding

Jamestown, Smith ends his depiction of struggle with the assertion that God's providence – in the form of indigenous help – kept them alive. The colonists are suffering from a lack of clear leadership, as their acting captains have fallen ill, and their rations have dwindled to dire lows. During this period of extreme hardship, Smith asserts, "… And shortly after it pleased God (in our extremity) to move the Indians to bring us Corne, ere it was halfe ripe, to refresh us, when we rather expected they would destroy us" (8). Similarly, when a tribe of indigenous people send an ambassador to Lane's party to show the settlers how to farm, Lane interprets this act of goodwill as a "blessing" from God: "He had sowed a good quantitie of ground, so much as had bene sufficient, to have fed our whole company (God blessing the grouth)" (851).

Therefore, though the natives who populate the "garden" of the New World disrupt the notion of an untouched paradise, they don't negate the equation of the New World to Eden entirely. Instead, the authors incorporate the indigenous population into the idea that the New World – and God – provides for the colonists that inhabit it, much like the Eden that sustained the original Man. The natives who feed the colonists in Smith's text, for example, do so because it "pleased God." Similarly, the native who gardens for Lane's settlers is stated to have created a garden that is blessed by God. Both instances suggest that rather than the natives acting of their own volition, the indigenous people who occupy the New World and assist the settlers are simply part of God's providence, and are additional elements of the "Eden" God has created for England that help sustain the colonists' presence in it.

Chapter 3: Obscured Laborers and Syntax's Role in Dismantling Native Possession

Rhetoric not only creates claim, as seen thus far; it also dismantles it. When the English settlers disembarked onto New World soil, they certainly didn't find it untouched and unpopulated: "for hundreds of years Indians had been changing the land to suit an economy that combined hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture, and trade" (Adams 33). The native population of Virginia had constructed their own houses, villages, and gardens long before the English came to claim the land, and in theory, their labor would constitute a sort of physical claim to the territory. How, then, did settlers reconcile this evidence of native cultivation with their beliefs that erecting improvements upon the land asserted claim over it?

The most common tactic to discard this kind of indigenous claim to the land is simply to separate the laborer – that is, the indigenous population – from the structures or improvements they have created that denote possession. If gardens, houses, or fences represent a kind of claim to the territory, if "it was an *action* which established [the] right" to own land, then creating a divide between the laborer and the product of their toil effectively diminishes the worker's claim to the area (Seed 31). In order to separate the laborers from their existing improvements, Smith and his contemporaries often employed tangled, ambiguous syntax. In structuring their sentences in certain ways – in burying subjects or making nature itself the producer of prosperity – English writers conveniently separate the indigenous workers from their products, therefore lessening their claim to the land.

When describing an "Ile" to "the East," attempting to orient his readers in the unfamiliar landscape of the New World, Smith continually changes tenses, muddling present and future while he depicts existing improvements like gardens and groves (148). "On the East, is an Ile of two or three leagues in length; the one halfe, plaine morish grasse fit for pasture with many faire high groves of mulberrie trees and gardens" (147). Here, the "pasture" that Smith has conjured resides in the future – and an idyllic one at that, as Smith has apparently been able to turn "morish" grass into something useful – but the elements following it have a nebulous place in time (147). It is unclear if the "groves" and "gardens" Smith specifies exist presently (and have therefore been constructed previously by the natives), reside in Smith's projected future (to be built by Jamestown settlers as representations of their own claim to the territory), or occur naturally. In muddling the tenses, Smith is able to minimize labor that may currently exist – a labor that would disrupt England's asserted ownership of the landscape – and simultaneously project the colonists' own future labor onto the territory.

Extending this mingling of past and future, toil and idleness, Smith additionally chooses terms to describe this "Ile" that refer to improvements that can be either constructed or organic. A grove, for example, is "a small wood… occurring naturally or planted with a special purpose," and therefore can be either be cultivated or simply stumbled upon by Smith and his settlers ("Grove"). Therefore, though he may in actuality be describing improvements that natives have developed along the isle – physical improvements which, in England's eyes, would assert some kind of claim to the territory – Smith chooses terms that can designate features as naturally produced. If

the “groves” Smith has mentioned have in fact been constructed by the indigenous population, using terms that suggest the improvement is occurring naturally attempts to minimize native claim to the area.

Though Smith describes the prosperous cultivation of the land and the bounty that results, he neglects to clarify who has constructed these improvements. He is not alone in this exclusion of the laborer. While depicting a plentiful harvest, Hariot has a similar disregard for the workers behind it – in this case, indigenous farmers. After describing indigenous farming methods, for example, Hariot chronicles the amount of harvest the natives are able to reap, stating, “The ground being thus set… an English acre conteining forty pearches at length, and foure in breadth, doth there yeeld in croppe or ofcome of corne, Beanes and Peaze, at the least two hundred London bushels, besides the *Macocqwer*, *Melden*, and Planta [gourds, melons, and other plants] solis; when as in England forty bushels of our Wheat yielded out of such an acre is thought to be much” (885). Here, though Hariot describes farmland seemingly crowded with crops, the laborer (or the force behind all this prosperity) is curiously absent, and instead the main subject of the sentence is the land itself: “The ground… doth there yeeld in croppe” (885). The agent of action – namely, the natives who have cultivated the earth – is discarded entirely in this syntax, which allows Hariot to emphasize profit without toil – a toil that would assert a kind of claim. Smith, too, once affirms that the land beyond Jamestown is “fertill” without citing how he knows this to be true, and erases the laborers behind the fertility in order to maintain the notion that the land is fruitful without giving weight to the improvements, like gardens or groves of trees, that are evidence of this abundance (148).

Smith further leaves out the laborer by framing sentences in passive voice, which allows him to focus on prosperity without dwelling on the "physical labor on the land" that he might see as signifying a "legal ownership of a terrain" (Seed 13). While detailing the topography around the Chesapeake Bay, Smith states, "For, here are many Iles all planted with corne; groves, mulberries, salvage gardens, and good harbors" (149). Rather than structuring the sentence around a clear and active subject – that is, the indigenous population that has established these improvements and "salvage gardens" on the land – Smith opts to frame the land as simply being worked upon, a passive construction that omits the laborers and "leaves out the agent" of action (Tufte 78). Here, "salvage" is a synonym for "savage," suggesting that Smith is referring to the cultivation efforts of the native population. By using passive voice, however, Smith is able to avoid "placing responsibility" on those whom he views as territorial competitors (Tufte 78).

When syntactical constructions are active rather than passive, there is still an emphasis on waste and land lying fallow. Though the indigenous population is the clear subject (and is not obscured), they are frequently paired with land being disused. Hariot, for example, devotes space to explicitly delineating the farming habits of the native tribes he comes across and does not always separate the indigenous workers from their improvements. Yet, though he describes the natives toiling on the land, he uses rhetoric reminiscent of sparseness and waste. Though he depicts toil and therefore effectively recounts an indigenous claim to the land, he does so while simultaneously conjuring images of ground lying fallow. After conveying how the natives place their seeds in the dirt, Hariot states: "By this meanes there is a yard spare ground betweene every hole:

where according to discretion here and there, they set as many Beans and Peaze; in divers places also among the seeds of Macocquer, Melden, and Planta solis" (885). In characterizing the planting as "spare," Hariot is able to emphasize empty space and ground where crops may still be planted, conjuring images of "uncultivated, unoccupied, vacant" land ("Spare"). When the natives *do* sow seeds in these "spare" sections, Hariot clarifies that they are only "here and there" and with "discretion." Here, though Hariot describes native labor upon the landscape, he does so while still suggesting wastefulness, thereby curtailing the claim they exert through toil.

Much to the English settlers' chagrin, the indigenous populations' persistent presence in the New World is evidence of their successful cultivation efforts, regardless of how Hariot and his peers color native farms as fallow. When the English settlers are forced to steal from the neighboring natives, their own English methods of farming proving insufficient and unsuccessful in the unforgiving Virginia swampland, the rhetoric used to describe this theft is often ambiguous or falls apart completely. When White and his small Roanoke colony begin to starve, for example, they must seek the provisions of the indigenous people. Not wishing to admit failure in keeping his party well nourished, however, White neglects to mention exactly *whom* the settlers are stealing from. While White initially begins the passage by describing a planned sneak-attack gone wrong – as the natives on whom White's party had launched themselves were, in fact, their allies – he segues into stealing food (though the exact location of said provisions is unclear): "Finding our selves thus disappointed of purpose, wee gathered all the corne, Pease, Pumpions, and Tobacco, that we found ripe, leaving the rest unspoiled, and took Menatoan his wife, with the yong childe, and the other Savages

with us over the water to Roanoke" (869). As White has previously clarified that his own settlement has no "corne" or "Pease" to speak of, a reader can assume that he takes them from a neighboring village – though White never states this explicitly, instead leaving it ambiguous.

Smith must also secure aid from the natives near Jamestown, though he describes this action just as ambiguously as White. First, though, in order to recognize the true breadth of the failure Smith saw his theft to be, one must first understand the notion of a "Great Chain of Being" popular in England (and Western Europe) at the time, and the place indigenous peoples were thought to have within it. A chain of being that placed each creature within a sort of hierarchy "served as an intellectual instrument for clarifying the muddle of multitudionous earthly and social forms"; the chain was thought to bind every living thing in a kind of "orderly, graduated, and harmonious accord," and men took their place on the scale second only to God and his angels (Hodgen 396, 397). While some Orthodox Christians believed that the "savages" encountered in New World travels were equal in God's eyes to Europeans, it was more generally accepted that "there were multiple kinds of men, each with his rightful place in the natural order but inferior to European man" (Hodgen 408). Smith's dependence on the indigenous stores of food is therefore a reaching down from his perceived "link" on the chain; he is forced to seek assistance from beings he sees as having a lower rank than his own.

This effective collapse of the chain is mirrored in Smith's syntax when he describes the action of stealing, as his description of the event immediately loses a subject and even a clear line of narrative thought. Smith starts by stating that should the

colonists' farming efforts fail (as "some tender plants may miscarie" in the cold winters), he "durst undertake to have corne enough from the Salvages for 300 men" (143). His construction falls apart, however, as he attempts to describe exactly how this corn will be secured if they meet native resistance: "if they should bee untoward (as it is most certaine they are) thirty or forty good men will be sufficient to bring them all in subjection, and make this provision; if they understand what they doe: 200 whereof may nine monethes in the yeare be imployed in making marchandable fish, till the rest provide other necessaries, fit to furnish us with other commodities" (143). Here, Smith uses ambiguous pronouns to obscure who, exactly, he is bringing into "subjection," using "they" and "them" instead of referring to a more concrete population or village. Further, the "they" in the second segment of the sentence – "if they understand what they doe" – could apply to either the "men" he is employing or the "Salvages" he is stealing from, yet Smith makes no effort to clarify his reference. Like the disruption of the perceived chain of being, Smith's sentence structure similarly falls apart. His prose is constructed in such a way in order to obscure an identifiable subject or even an unambiguous course of action. Smith has shaped his syntax in an attempt to mask his failure in resorting to the natives for help; upon the first read of the sentence, for example, it is not immediately clear that Smith's men have failed in their cultivation efforts and must rely on the indigenous population – a population they perceive as beneath them – in order to survive.

Conclusion

In ending this exploration of New World rhetoric, it may be useful to visit the first occurrence of it: Christopher Columbus' letter to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain from 1493, published nearly a century before Lane's narrative. Based on the various notes in his journals at the time of his conquest, Columbus' brief letter to the Spanish monarchs details his visit to – and perceived possession of – the New World, though he believed the land to be India at the time (Wilson 155). More significantly, the letter constitutes the "first narrative glimpses afforded of America" (Wilson 155).

The letter itself acts as a kind of claim, written with the clear intention of publishing it across Europe, to let competing absolutist monarchies see what the Spanish empire had achieved outside its continental borders (Wilson 155). The text is largely dissimilar to the English New World narratives. Columbus' letter features far fewer instances of separating the laborer from the land, for example, partially because Spanish claim was not based on structural improvements. Instead, the Spanish viewed proclamations and flag planting as far more valid declarations of possession (Botella-Ordinas 145). Directly following the opening statement of his letter, Columbus clearly specifies that he has taken the actions necessary to declare Spanish sovereignty: "There I found very many islands, filled with innumerable people, and I have taken possession of them all for their Highnesses, done by proclamation and with the royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was offered to me" (13). To Columbus, this simple act of "proclamation" is enough to demonstrate his claim over the area; he doesn't need to build a fort or garden, doesn't need to specify land lying fallow, in order to assume control (or perceived control, as it were) over the territory.

With his possession established, Columbus' four-page letter makes no references to Eden and performs few syntactical oddities – as there is little information that he wishes to obscure. In fact, Columbus' letter has been lauded as one of the most "poetic" texts to emerge from the New World, partially because Columbus makes no effort to disguise elements of his venture or project the future in his text (Wilson 155). His letter instead serves as a confident proclamation of Spanish superiority and achievements, and because Columbus sees his claim established once he reads the "royal standard," he therefore doesn't perceive much of a window for failure, particularly when he states that he was met with "no opposition" (13).

Columbus does, however, seek to define a place out of the ambiguous space in which he arrives, and his methods for doing so are remarkably similar to those of the English New World writers. Just as Lane compares Virginia's rivers to specific places in the Thames – a reference specific to England – Columbus makes similar comparisons that are geared toward a single nationality. When briefly describing the foliage of the area, Columbus states, "All these islands are very beautiful, and distinguished by a diversity of scenery; they are filled with a great variety of trees… which I believe to retain their foliage in all seasons; for when I saw them they were as verdant and luxuriant as they usually are in Spain in the month of May" (13). Similarly, Columbus includes a kind of narrational cartography in order to further delineate place – as well as to assert the claim inherent in cartography. In a description that is both Spain-specific and exacting in its measurements, Columbus states, "The other island, Espanola, has a circumference greater than all Spain from Collioure by the seacoast to Fuenterabia in

Vizcaya, for I voyaged along one side for one hundred and eighty-eight great leagues in a straight line from west to east" (15).

Though some rhetorical strategies appear to be shared between empires, if Columbus' letter is any indication, the tactics used to assert claim are far from universal. While there are elements of English rhetoric that arise in Columbus' own narrative – like the creation of place from space, though the references used to bind place are nation-specific – many of the strategies that the English employ do not appear in Columbus' text. This could stem from differing purposes (from boasting prowess to camouflaging failure), religions (Catholicism versus Anglicanism), and, further, perceptions of what constitutes claim (from reading proclamations to building physical structures). This prompts the question: which rhetorical strategies are shared between empires, and which are specific to the English, Spanish, French, and so on? Moreover, to what extent does nationalism or national identity influence the rhetorical strategies of empires apart from England, as they do in the narratives of Smith and his contemporaries?

Regardless of the differences between empires, it is clear that the rhetoric within these texts has an extraordinary power. It has the ability to conceal failures, obscure whole groups of people, and project various improvements that don't yet exist physically. Lane, Hariot, White, and Smith each employ specific rhetorical strategies – from creating rhetorical maps, to employing Edenic tropes, to crafting ambiguous syntax – in attempts to compensate for England's dismal progress in the New World. Further, however, the power that rhetoric holds in these texts is riddled with consequences, as the obscuring of failures did more than just comfort a worried

audience. Interested colonists-to-be would often read these accounts of the New World to prepare for their journeys; failing to unearth the truths buried in the rhetoric themselves, these settlers were ill-prepared for the harsher realities of Virginia. “Upbeat accounts discouraged the sending of supplies and raised expectations that were dashed when people encountered hardships in Virginia” (Adams 73). Though these travel narratives allowed the authors – and the larger English empire – to assert a kind of rhetorical claim where there was none physically, they may have additionally prolonged the same physical failure they hoped to make up for (Adams 73). It can therefore be argued that while the narratives were successful in obscuring this physical failure, their rhetoric could have also been at the root of its long-lasting nature.

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