

The First American Defectors: Jamestown Runaways to the Powhatan Paramountcy

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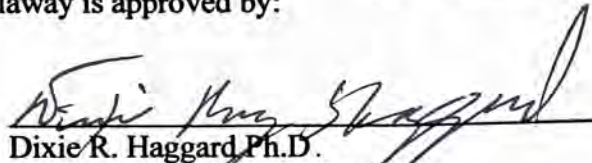
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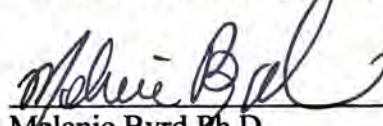
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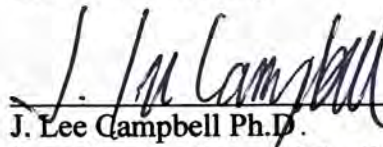


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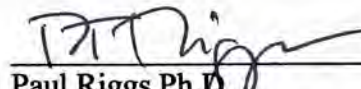
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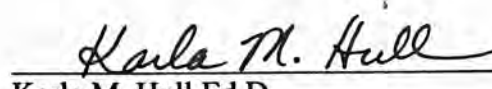


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ABSTRACT

The harsh situation faced by English colonists upon arrival in Jamestown included starvation, disease and misery. This thesis sets out to answer the question: rather than face starvation and the other hardships at Jamestown, why did not more English settlers at Jamestown run away to live among the nearby Native American groups. It is argued that the common English settlers at Jamestown, unlike their elite leaders, indeed did attempt to run away to the Powhatans with some regularity, but were rebuffed in all but a few of cases. Indeed, while upper-class English settlers might not run away, lower class settlers often did. Moreover, it appears that it was the Powhatan, not the English who prevented their being more English runaways. This thesis rests on evidence gathered from English primary source accounts from the Jamestown period as well as ethnohistorical evidence concerning the society and culture of the Powhatans.

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Chapter I

WHY NOT RUN AWAY?

The following passage from J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, published in 1782, is an account of two Europeans captured by Native Americans who chose to remain with their captors. Crèvecoeur recounts the story, noting that few will believe him because it seems so fantastic.

...there lived, about fifteen years ago, an Englishman and a Swede, whose history would appear moving had I time to relate it. They were grown to the age of men when they were taken; they happily escaped the great punishment of war captives and were obliged to marry the squaws who had saved their lives by adoption. By the force of habit, they became at last thoroughly naturalized to this wild course of life...their friends sent them a considerable sum of money to ransom themselves with. The Indians, their old masters, gave them their choice, and without requiring any consideration, told them that they had been long as free as themselves. They chose to remain, and the reasons they gave me would greatly surprise you: the most perfect freedom, the ease of living, the absence of these cares and corroding sollicitudes which so often prevail with us, the peculiar goodness of the soil they cultivated, for they did not trust altogether to hunting – all these and many more motives which I have forgot made them prefer that life of which we entertain such dreadful opinions. It cannot be, therefore, so bad as we generally conceive it to be; there must be in their social bond something singularly captivating and far superior to anything to be boasted of among us; for thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no examples of even one of those aborigines having from choice become Europeans!¹

¹ J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* 1782 (Reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1986) 241.

Many English observers of English-Native American relations in North America shared similar observations in the eighteenth century. Crèvecoeur wonders why captured English often chose to adopt the Native lifestyle, while captured Indians almost never chose to adopt English lifestyle.² In answering the question, he sets up the focus of this paper; if some English captives chose to stay with their captors because their lifestyle was easier and more free, why do not more English settlers voluntarily run away to join the Native Americans? The seemingly obvious answer was because the English had an often hostile relationship with and disdainful attitude towards the Native American they would never seek to join them. This answer is intuitive and fits in with the generally accepted theories about the English in North America. The basic theory being that the Spanish dominated, the French intermarried, the English ignored the Natives.³ This answer leaves the Native Americans out of the equation, however, and presumes that if only they had been less dismissive, the English would have been welcomed into Native society. In attempting to resolve Crèvecoeur's question, this paper looks back to a time before his observations on English captives. When the English settled at Jamestown in 1607, the

² This paper uses the term Native American when referring to the American Indians as a whole, while specific groups are referred to by their national or tribal name, sometimes anglicized, to avoid confusion. The term Europeans or European-Americans refer to white colonists in general, while specific nationalities are referenced by name.

³ The traditional view of the English settlers is that they were dismissive and disdainful of the Natives they encountered in America. This English feeling of superiority comes up in discussions of why the French have better relations with the Natives they encounter in North America. One often cited reason for the good relations between the French and natives is the French willingness to intermarry and adopt the customs of the Natives they trade with and live near. James Axtell gives the French Jesuits credit for positioning France for success in the culture wars with the English over the Indians. Unlike the protestant missionaries of the English, the French establish "flying missionaries" that travel and exist among the Indians and allow them to retain most of their lifeways keeping them separate from the corrupting influence of secular, European society. French Jesuits are better "shock troops of cultural invasion" because they can do it without alienating the Indians. James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). 254-59.

Native Americans were in a position of power over the English. The first English settlement at Jamestown existed at the pleasure of the far more powerful Powhatan paramount chiefdom. The years 1607 to 1609 were a feeling-out period for the English settlers and the Powhatans. The thesis of this paper is that the earliest English settlers at Jamestown were not disdainful of joining the Powhatans and indeed many ran away to do just that. More importantly, until the Powhatan massacre of 1622, the reason more, or even most, English settlers did not defect to the Natives had more to do with Native attitudes towards the English than with English attitudes towards the Natives. Moreover, the English settlers would, and often did, run away and live among the Native Americans. If English runaways found food and board among the Natives, their living arrangements resulted from tangible benefits for the Native Americans, not Native magnanimity towards English settlers.

This analysis begins by examining the attitudes of the English concerning the Native Americans in the first contact and early settlement periods of North America, with the goal of demonstrating that the English perception of the Native was neither set in stone nor unanimous among the English. There is also an attempt to demonstrate that the written accounts of the surviving English are largely of the leadership, not the rank and file colonists who likely had different attitudes altogether. The second section looks at Powhatan culture in the early 1600s and Powhatan attitudes about the English in an attempt to demonstrate that the adoption of large numbers of unskilled English settlers made little sense from a Powhatan point of view. The third section goes back even further to consider Walter Raleigh's famous lost colonists at Roanoke and their possible fate in an attempt to support the idea that the English were not particularly good

candidates for adoption into Native society. The final section analyzes reports of actual runaways and attempted runaways in early Jamestown with an eye towards confirming the themes of sections one and two.

Almost all of the existing research on European settlers who “go native” concerns people captured by Native Americans who refused to return to European society after being rescued or having the chance to escape. Captivity narratives written by rescued or escaped Europeans in the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are the primary sources for these studies.⁴ While they inform our discussion, captivity narratives and the history of frontier captive taking spans many native groups and many hundreds of years and may obscure our understanding of the unique situation at Jamestown. There are some studies on Europeans or European Americans running away to live among the Native Americans, but these are typically concerned with much more recent history and white people in search of an idealized, romanticized Indian lifestyle.⁵ Jamestown is unique and not covered by any of these studies. And Jamestown is ripe for analysis because runaways show up with some regularity in the sources relating to the settlement period.

⁴ Some relevant captivity narrative studies include: James Axtell, “The White Indians of Colonial America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (January 1975):55-85; Axtell, *The Invasion Within*; June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Pauline Turner Strong, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Alden T. Vaughan, “From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian,” *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (October, 1982): 917-53; Norman J. Heard, *White Into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1973); Martin H. Quitt, “Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607-1609: The Limits of Understanding,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (April 1995): 227-58; Benjamin Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 113-14; Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levermier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550-1900* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993),58-61.

⁵Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998); Shari M Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Moreover, in the early contact period with the Native Americans, English attitudes concerning the Indian were just beginning to take shape. Heathen cannibals competed with noble savages in the minds of many in England at the turn of the seventeenth century. Even though there are not many reports by runaways, we do know a little about what kind of people were likely to be runaways and that tells us something about their motivations. The English colonists who ran away were outside the norm of English culture by their contemporaries' standards, and so reports from Jamestown seldom mention them kindly.⁶ John Smith himself admits, "This deare bought Land with so much bloud and cost, hath onely made some few rich, and all the rest losers."⁷ The surviving "losers" mentioned by Smith are seldom heard from in the historical record. It is the "losers" that are the most likely runaways, so who were they?

We know from Smith that more than half of those in the original shipment of 105 men who founded Jamestown were gentlemen.⁸ Important gentry rarely stayed for long and after the first few years did not come at all, though younger sons and merchant-gentlemen types continued to arrive.⁹ Despite the high pedigree of the founding shipment, the majority of settlers in Virginia were servants and laborers from the lower middle class right down to vagrants off the streets. Servants were from a variety of backgrounds and composed a rough cross section of working-class England. The English

⁶ James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 315.

⁷ John Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", in vol. II of *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith: 1580-1631*, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 225; Stephen Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World: Perspectives on the Early Virginia Landscape* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 176.

⁸ Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 160-162.

⁹ James P. Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 28.

population grew by about a third in the last half of the sixteenth century, this growth left a great many unemployed and poor. America provided an outlet for this surplus English population.¹⁰

In addition to the official register, Smith provides a personal account of the men sent to Jamestown that suggests they were not well disposed to the harsh work of building a city in the wilderness.

All this time we had but one carpenter in the country, and three others that could do little but desired to be learners: two blacksmiths, two sailors, and those we write laborers were for most part footmen and such as they that were adventurers brought to attend them or such as they could persuade to go with them that never did know what a day's work was, except the Dutchmen and Poles and some dozen other. For all the rest were poor gentlemen, tradesmen, serving men, libertines, and suchlike, ten times more fit to spoil a commonwealth than either begin one or but help to maintain one.¹¹

Most of the English laborers who eventually arrived in America with the early English settlers did not set out with that goal. Most had set out from small villages to find work in large English cities. It was only after arriving in those cities that laborers found work with the merchant and shipping industries which in turn exported them to America.¹² Most settlers were young, male, indentured servants. The poor who went to Virginia were

¹⁰ Horn, *Adapting*, 48-50; David B. Quinn, "Colonies in the Beginning: Examples from North America," in *The History of North American Discovery and Exploration*, ed. Stanley H. Palmer (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988), 24.

¹¹ Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles . . .," 225; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Captain John Smith, A Select Edition of His Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 6-7.

¹² James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, ed. Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 95.

almost all single men: laborers looking for work, opportunity, or less restrictive social environment. (Indeed one man, Thomas Hall, appears to have been a transvestite.)¹³

The English poor who made up the rank and file colonists had little to lose and the planners and investors expected some rebelliousness. The poor laborers who had accompanied English colonial attempts in Ireland sometimes ran away to live among the Irish. Colonial planners could not have expected much better from these people in far-away America.¹⁴ The push factors that set runaways on their way were likely individualized but most probably included hunger, lack of women, harsh discipline, and factionalized English leadership.¹⁵

John Smith believed the principal lure was “to live idle among the salvages.”¹⁶ Jamestown is unique because the elements pushing people away were extremely strong particularly among the serving and bonded classes.¹⁷ Jamestown was also unique because the settlers were culturally isolated. Throughout most of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the kinds of colonists who might risk running away to the Natives had the less frightening alternative of running away to other European colonies. The likely

¹³ Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “The Standard of Living in the Colonial Chesapeake,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (January 1988): 158; Mildred Campbell, “Social Origins of Some Early Americans,” in James Morton Smith, ed., *Seventeenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959): 74-77; Nicholas P. Canny, “The Permissive Frontier: Social Control in English settlements in Ireland and Virginia, 1550-1650,” in *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*, ed. K.R. Andrews, N.P Canny and P.E.H. Hair (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 26-27.

¹⁴ Canny, “Permissive Frontier,” 33-34.

¹⁵ Quitt, 232.

¹⁶ Smith, “The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia [1606-1612.]” in vol. I of *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith: 1580-1631*, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 265.

¹⁷ Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 177.

runaway was indebted. If such settlers could escape to another English colony, they might be able to start a new life away from their old troubles, or at least escape their debt. Debtors, slaves, servants, and criminals often escaped from one colony to another hoping to use a change in jurisdiction to protect them from the law, their creditors, or their masters' legal reach. The problem of border crossing colonists was a major concern for seventeenth century colonial governments who wanted both to maintain complete control within their colony and ensure the return of escaped offenders from other colonies where they had no jurisdiction. The colonial governments turned to the crown and more importantly to informal communication networks among themselves to ensure the return of offenders. The English colonial experience rested on borrowed money, thus ensuring the repayment of debt was a top concern of colonial governments. Through communication networks, creditors and colonial courts could agree to help each other and to return escaped debtors in exchange for the same courtesy from neighboring colonies.¹⁸ In the first years at Jamestown, no neighboring European settlements existed to receive potential runaway settlers. This circumstance left unhappy settlers the choice of either staying in Jamestown or fleeing to the Natives.

The multitude of reasons one might run away are likely individualized and some went beyond simple hunger and dissatisfaction with English society or one's lot in life. Some Europeans saw Native American society as a place to implement their particular political or cultural schemes. Though their stories took place much later in the eighteenth century, it is worth noting that Englishmen like William Augustus Bowles, who lived

¹⁸ This was one of the ways links formed between colonies that would eventually help bind them together into a country. April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 167-190.

with the Creeks, and Christian Gottlieb Priber, who lived among the Cherokees, were considered subversive, odd men by the Americans and English before they left for Indian country and may have been seeking to establish utopias or Indian republics with less than altruistic intentions.¹⁹

Anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell uses the term transculturalization to describe “going native” or “indianization” among Europeans in America. Hallowell defines transculturalization as “the process whereby individuals under a variety of circumstances are temporarily or permanently detached from one group, enter the web of social relations that constitute another society, and come under the influence of its customs, ideas, and values to a greater or lesser degree.”²⁰ Hallowell’s definition covers a larger group than this analysis, but it provides a good starting point. This study is not concerned with how thoroughly or sincerely transculturalized English runaways or captives are, only with if any English settlers began down the road to transculturalization. Indeed, one expects that many English runaways from Jamestown were not interested in Native culture at all, just Native food. This thesis is interested in English settlers who voluntarily ran away to live among the Native Americans, even if only for a short time. This group neither includes traders or merchants who began as English agents and, after living and working with the Native Americans, eventually became transculturalized nor English settlers taken captive by the Natives who came to appreciate the society of their captors and did not try to

¹⁹ Theda Purdue, *“Mixed Blood” Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005) 3.

²⁰ A number of terms exist for describing Europeans who ran away to live with the Native Americans: renegade, defector, deserter, and traitor. To avoid confusion, in this discussion the common term is runaway. A. Irving Hallowell, “American Indians, White and Black: the Phenomenon of Transculturalization,” in *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976): 505.

escape or be rescued. It also does not include English people sent to live with the Native Americans in an ambassadorial role. However, all of these groups may inform the discussion. The actual act of running away from an English settlement to a Native American one is more important for this discussion than the extent of their eventual transculturalization. By running away, Jamestown settlers demonstrated that, at least for a time, living with the Native Americans was the lesser of two evils. Running away was an admonition of English society at the moment it happened, even if it did not end with the English permanently joining the Native Americans.

In one more note on runaways and transculturalization. As early as 1926, John Swanton noted that for transculturalization to take place, both cultural assimilation and physical assimilation were required; no matter if Natives or Europeans were being transculturalized. Swanton's examples are primarily of young people raised completely within their non-native societies. No matter which society, the result is the same. Swanton found that even children raised and completely assimilated culturally by their adopted societies were never fully accepted by their adopted group if they were physically very different. Swanton hints that perhaps cultural assimilation was more important than physical assimilation for Native Americans. While European societies are less likely to fully accept an ethnic Indian, no matter how educated or acculturated. Even so, no group was exempt from this prejudice against those looking different. As such, Swanton reasoned that most people, European or Native American, could never be fully transculturalized. Swanton believed physical differences and the concomitant rejection would cause most people who attempted to transculturalize eventually to seek out their birth group because there, if they could manage to re-acculturate themselves, they might

be accepted. More often, however, people who found themselves for whatever reason between two cultures, found themselves rejected by both.²¹ This may seem obvious and it certainly explains why more Natives did not transculturate and adopt European lifestyles and culture. However, Swanton noted that some Native American groups fully accepted white people and sometimes those adoptees even rose to prominence in Native American society. This may have something to do with the role of chiefs in some Indian societies as cultural intermediaries -- perhaps a white Indian had a better chance successful negotiations and trade with white traders. However, Swanton ruled this out because by his calculations the number of white captives that rose to prominence within Indian society did not indicate that their skin color gave them any special advantage. Swanton believed it was not skin color, but the knowledge about white society and trading practices that gave these white people an advantage. The number of white people that achieved positions of authority in Indian society was not remarkable, except in that it occasionally happened while it virtually never happened that adopted Native Americans rose to positions of authority in white society.²² For the purposes of this paper, Swanton's findings are encouraging. He confirms that it was difficult, but not impossible for Native people to accept the English, and later Americans, into their societies. Moreover, he confirms that Native American groups, despite traditions of adoption, were wary of adopting those who looked different.

²¹ John R. Swanton, "Ethnology – Notes on the Mental Assimilation of Races," *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 16 (November 1926): 493-502.

²² Swanton, 501.

Chapter II

ENGLISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE POWHATANS

English settlers considering running away must have weighed a number of factors. Beyond the obvious motives like hunger, loneliness, and lack of English women, the cause cited by John Smith himself was the desire to live a life of ease. Smith believed that many settlers would rather “live Idle among the Salvages, (of whom there was more hope to make better Christians and good subjects, then the one half of those that counterfeited themselves both.)”²³ Smith’s opinion suggests that the English perception of the Native Americans’ lifestyle was one of idle pleasure. The English colonists’ perceptions of the Native Americans must have influenced whether they considered running away. After all, if their perception of the Native Americans was one of a murderous savage, there would be no benefit in leaving. It is worth considering what perceptions these common English laborers at Jamestown had about the Native Americans around them as it likely influenced whether they considered defection.

After 1622, the perception of the Native Americans as untrustworthy savages was established and prevented all but the most desperate from attempting to run away. In the first quarter of the seventeenth century, English perceptions of the Native Americans ranged from delight and wonder to horror and fear.²⁴ These diverse perceptions

²³ Smith, “The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia,” 265.

²⁴ Loren E. Pennington, “The Amerindian in English promotional literature: 1575-1625,” in *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*, ed. K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny and P.E.H. Hair (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 194; Helen C. Roundtree. “The

converged after the Powhatan massacre of 1622, when English opinion solidified harshly against the Natives.²⁵ This chapter traces the changes in the English perception of the Native American and seeks to demonstrate that it remained ambiguous, at least for common people, until the massacre of 1622. Moreover, this chapter confirms that at least some English settlers might have been well disposed to the idea of living with the Powhatans.

Concerning English-Native relations, Helen Roundtree sees three conflicting problems. First, the leaders and financial backers who remained in London sought a profit without regard for the locals. Second, the local Jamestown leadership tried to carry out those orders while keeping the colonists alive. Keeping the colonists alive meant maintaining good relations with the Natives but making a profit sometimes did not. Third, ordinary colonists not in leadership positions at Jamestown sought only to survive any way they could, and thus, they sought any opportunity to trade for food with the surrounding Natives. This assessment of relations demonstrates the problem with determining how the typical English settlers viewed the Natives. Just as the typical English settler could not afford to be worried about profit when he was hungry, he likely did not spend a great deal of time considering the best Native policy for the colony. While some English were likely too frightened to conduct business with the Native

Powhatans and the English: A case of Multiple Conflicting Agendas," In *Powhatan Foreign Relations: 1500-1722*, ed. Helen C. Roundtree (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 181; Derounian-Stodola; and Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative*, 58-61.

²⁵ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "English Perceptions of Treachery, 1583-1640: The Case of the American 'Savages'," *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 2 (June 1977): 265; Wesley Frank Craven, "Indian Policy in Early Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 1 (January, 1944): 73; Ronal Takai, "The Tempest in the Wilderness: The Radicalization of Savagery," *The Journal of American History* 79, no.3 (December 1977): 903; Vaughan, "From White Man to Redskin," 941; Jennings, *The Founders of America*, 172; Wynette L. Hamilton, "The Correlation between Societal Attitudes and Those of American Authors in the Depiction of American Indians, 1607-1860," *American Indian Quarterly* 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1974): 2.

Americans, the Native Americans' ability to provide basic necessities trumped fear or racism. As David Quinn sums up the situation, "Empiricism was the deciding force in policy...not any consistent or uniform theory that Indians as such were innately inferior to English, the one civilized, the other savage."²⁶ Until 1622 in Virginia, the colonists relied on Native Americans and their successful agricultural system to survive.²⁷ Even so, a great deal of research has gone into determining just what the early English colonial policy was and how the English opinion of the Native American influenced that view.

The English settlers and explorers who came to North America were not unprejudiced, blank-slates concerning the Natives they encountered. Reports had been filtering into England from Spain and elsewhere for nearly a century describing the inhabitants of the New World. Potential travelers might have talked with sailors and promoters who shared both positive and negative accounts of the people they would encounter.²⁸ The Haklyuts and others who assembled the disparate written accounts of the New World into accessible volumes did not edit the accounts to provide either a wholly negative nor positive view of the native inhabitants of the New World. Throughout the 1500s, accounts of the New World made their way to England. Some accounts reported cannibalistic wild men, and some described friendly, gentle people living in an earthly paradise.

The wild man archetype had existed in Europe since medieval and even classical times. The wild man was a person who lived outside the confines of society. He was

²⁶ David B. Quinn, "Englishmen and Others," in *European Approaches to North America, 1450-1640* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), 170-171.

²⁷ Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World*, 46-48.

²⁸ Gary B. Nash, "The Image of the Indian in the Southern Colonial Mind," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no.2 (April 1972): 199-205.

typically naked, hairy, uncivilized, and completely free of cares outside of self-fulfillment. Thus, the wild man was free of society, civility, and God. Hayden White believes that the wild man, or for our purposes the Native American, archetype is evinced to perceptions about the wilderness. If one sees the wild as a place of struggle and violence, then the people who live there are likewise violent. If however, one sees the countryside as preferable to the violence and congestion of the city, then the wild man is a kind of bucolic ideal.²⁹ This dichotomy of thought on the virtue of people in a “state of nature,” certainly existed at the time of Jamestown. The competing political theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, especially their ideas about the character of the “state of nature,” were influenced by the discovery of the New World. John Locke presented a kinder view of the state of nature as reasonable and ruled by natural law, while Thomas Hobbes postulated a dimmer view of the state of nature as a brutish, violent struggle of all against all.³⁰ In the beginning, Europeans expected to find the savage wild man in any place where the environment was similarly free of civilization. The wild man image clouded when seemingly conflicting reports about Native Americans appeared. The Spanish discoveries of the Aztec and Inca empires and their magnificent cities were at odds with the image of the wild man. Moreover, English accounts from Roanoke and Jamestown confirmed some elements of the wild man archetype but rejected others. The early accounts led some to a kind of fascination and appreciation for Native American culture. D.B. Quinn calls this early respect tinged with superiority the “proto-noble

²⁹ Hayden White, “The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea,” in *The Wild Man Within: In Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 28.

³⁰ Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 22.

savage” ideal.³¹ For those who thought of “real” civilization as people possessed of government, permanent settlements, language, and intelligence, the image of the Indian began to change and become less dismissive. However, for those who saw civilization as only, or primarily, a function of religion, the Native Americans continued to be savages, heathens, and barbarians.³² The English were weighing their own accounts and the accounts of other Europeans as well as their prejudices and concepts about the “wild man” in order to form an opinion of the Native Americans sight unseen.

Many English saw the Native Americans simply as men deprived of the benefits of “civilization” but not as fundamentally different. That is, with time and exposure to European ways of life, the Native Americans could be brought around to European notions of civility.³³ It is important to put aside any anachronistic notions that the early settlers in America, no matter how sympathetic or kind, possessed the gentle view of nature that most westerners now share. These Europeans did not look on untamed wilderness as a thing of beauty. The age of the romantics and the naturalist was still over two hundred years away when the first Spanish and English explorers landed in North America. For early explorers and settlers, the wilderness was a serious obstacle full of wild animals and ferocious men. Nature was un-tamed and dangerous in the seventeenth century. Projecting modern values backwards tends to skew our image of early settlers. Fear, not wonder, likely characterized the settlers’ opinions of the wilderness and its human inhabitants.³⁴ Even so, many Englishmen saw the Natives of North America as

³¹ Quinn, “Englishmen and Others,” 165.

³² James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 31.

³³ Quinn, “Englishmen and Others,” 167.

³⁴ Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World*, 59-60.

representative of their own mythic, Anglo-Saxon ancestors, before the Roman invasions. English writers like Thomas Harriot mention how cleverly the Native Americans were able to provide food and shelter for themselves without European conveniences.³⁵ It is easy to forget this initial respect and in many cases admiration for the Native Americans in the accounts of English violence and Native reprisals. Even so, any suggestion that the early English settlers were all of one mind about the Natives, for better or worse, is flawed. Secondhand accounts, such as those published by Hakluyt, and art, such as the paintings of Native Americans by John White, were open to subjective interpretation by the reader or viewer. Through reading Hakluyt's accounts and seeing John White's paintings, potential settlers thought they understood how Native Americans looked and behaved, but it seems unlikely it was uniformly the same expectation.³⁶

The experience of the English during the Elizabethan re-conquest of Ireland is perhaps the formative experience for the English colonial mind in the early-modern period.³⁷ Many of the principal players in the exploration and settlement of North America cut their teeth on the bloody subjugation of Ireland. Humphrey Gilbert, Lord de la Warr, Sir Francis Drake, and Walter Raleigh all crossed the Atlantic only after crossing the Irish Sea.³⁸ From the use of joint stock companies and the use of propaganda to attract settlers to the military methods being developed for dealing with indigenous

³⁵ Adams, 166.

³⁶ Berkhofer, 16.

³⁷ See David B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, (Ithica, Cornell University Press 1966); Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (October, 1973): 575-598; Ronald Takai, "The Tempest in the Wilderness," 892-912.

³⁸ Takai, 895.

inhabitants, the English pattern in America was a more successful application of methods forged in Ireland.³⁹

Canny believes the Irish and American experiences of the English colonizers reflected an English paradigm about “barbarous” peoples. No matter what qualifications the English used to define barbarous -- lack of settled dwelling, agriculture, and Christianity -- there was a traditional English mindset that divided all “barbarous” peoples into oppressors and oppressed. The English colonial theory suggested that once the oppressors were removed, the oppressed could be redeemed and brought to civility. In Ireland, the oppressors were the traditional Gaelic leaders and Gaelic, Catholic clergy.⁴⁰ The English perception of the Native Americans was one of redeemable savages. A question of nurture, not nature.⁴¹ This falls directly in line with the English policy of winning over the common people by changing the leadership. If removal of the Native resistance leaders did not bring about the expected change, the English were justified in taking harsher measures to either bring the poor benighted Natives into civility or remove them as obstacles for English settlers.⁴² In Ireland, the English almost instantly gave up on converting the native Irish to their way of doing things and wrote them off as heretical, pagan barbarians deserving of death. This is in part because the

³⁹ Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization,” 595.

⁴⁰ Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization,” 580.

⁴¹ For a thorough discussion of the various theories about the perceived similarities and differences between Europeans and Native Americans particularly concerning the idea of race see: Vaughan, “From White Man to Redskin,” 917-953; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Presentment of Civility: English Reading of American Self-Presentation in the Early Years of Colonization,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no.1 (January, 1997): 193-228; Joyce E. Chaplin, “Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian Bodies,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no.1 (January 1997): 229-252.

⁴² Alexander Whitaker, Good News From Virginia. 1613. in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 730-731; Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization,” 595-598.

English leaders were Protestants who saw in the Gaelic Catholics a particularly distasteful religion and potential allies with hated Spain. Thus, the English did not give the Irish much time to come around to their way of doing things. The English in North America, however, faced a different kind of people.

The English expected the Natives in America to convert more quickly than the Irish. Uncorrupted by rival theologies, the English expected Americans quickly to forget their “idolatry” when they saw the clear superiority of English Christianity and society.⁴³ Moreover, the English were aware of the Spanish missionary efforts in Central America, and they felt that if they presented the Native Americans with a gentler Anglican missionary, they would flock to Protestant Christianity. To the English, this eventuality would be a gain for English Protestantism, a gain for the poor benighted Natives, and a loss to Spain.⁴⁴ Evidence of this respect for the Native Americans is apparent in the English instructions to treat the Natives well and not to antagonize them. This was in contrast to the English understanding of Spanish policy, which was far harsher in its treatment of Natives. The Spanish missionary Bartolome de las Casas’ *Relación* was published in 1552. It related what Las Casas saw as terrible abuses by the Spanish in the New World. Translated and published in English in 1583 under the title *The Spanish Colonie*, Las Casas’ *Relación* gave English propagandists a perfect example of what the English must not do in their dealings with the Americans.⁴⁵ Perhaps the English felt some moral superiority in treating the Natives better than the Spanish. However, the

⁴³ Kupperman, “English Perceptions of Treachery,” 268.

⁴⁴ Craven, 66.

⁴⁵ Craven, 66-67.

English insistence on treating the Natives better than the Spanish was not the same as treating the Natives well. Though the English were often disgusted with Spanish reports of how they reduced the Native Americans to subject status, the Spanish reports were some of the only accounts of the Native Americans that most English colonizers had read. Thus, the Natives represented in the Spanish accounts were the only impressions many English colonizers had.⁴⁶ Moreover, some saw the Spanish policy of heavy handed oppression of the Americans as the correct position, citing its effectiveness.⁴⁷ On the whole, it appears Spanish accounts such as Las Casas' had some effect on the English colonial policy or perception of the Americans at least among politicians and policy makers, but probably not with typical colonists and adventurers.⁴⁸

This raises an interesting question, did the English really care about converting and civilizing the Native Americans, or for that matter the Irish, or did they simply use such language as standard boilerplate to allay their conscience and protect the shareholders or government's international reputation?⁴⁹ This question is relevant to this thesis because if there was no religious conviction, it seems more likely that the colonists might go native. On the other hand, if colonists were truly concerned on an individual level with the spread of Christianity and the improvement of the natives they encountered, they would certainly be less likely to divert from their self-assuredly

⁴⁶ Pennington, "The Amerindian in English promotional literature," 178-181.

⁴⁷ Pennington, 183.

⁴⁸ Quinn believes the Spanish influence is important in forming English colonial policy while Pennington, does not believe Spanish reports were taken seriously into account in policy decisions. Quinn, "Englishmen and Others," 163 and Pennington, 183.

⁴⁹ For a thorough discussion of the differing religious theories of colonization in England see: Alfred A. Cave, "Cannanites in a Promised Land: The American Indian and the Providential Theory of Empire," *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1988): 277-297.

superior ways once in the new world. Alfred Cave points out that it is nearly impossible to separate the English cultural package from English religion, or Christianity. That is, the English expected that the Native Americans would, as reasonable people, accept English culture in full once exposed to it. When Native Americans did not conform, the English saw them as unreasonable heathens at best and tools of the devil at worst. Thus, there was no need to feel any remorse about killing them.⁵⁰ While the English may not have really cared very much about the religion of the Native Americans on an individual basis, religion so permeated their culture that when a religious excuse was found for removing Native Americans from coveted land it was accepted, particularly after the revolt of 1622 gave a less abstract reason to feel hostile.

Gary Nash suggests that because the Elizabethan English were interested primarily in building an economic empire through trading with the Natives, the English had to believe that the Native Americans were at least somewhat civilized and friendly in order to be capable of trading. For Nash, the thing that defined the nature of the English-Indian relationship was land.⁵¹ Before Jamestown, the English were only looking to trade with the Native Americans, and explore in search of new water-routes, riches and outposts for anti-Spanish raiding. After Jamestown, the English focus changed from one of an outpost in Indian land to recreating English society in the New World. Roanoke embodied the old plan, Jamestown the new. As the English plan began to require more land, the English opinion of the Natives began to decline, whereas when the English wanted the Native Americans primarily as trading partners, the perception of the Native

⁵⁰ Cave, 292.

⁵¹ Nash, 205, 209.

Americans remained mostly positive.⁵² English settlers in latter seventeenth century Virginia lived in dispersed farmsteads or in small towns connected by the rivers and creeks of eastern Virginia. Farmsteads were rather isolated and relatively self-sufficient enterprises. The Powhatans of the Chesapeake however, lived together in towns, even if those towns moved from time to time. Roundtree and Turner argue that this difference in population density was one reason why English settlers were so edgy and suspicious of the Native Americans in their region, even after native military power was visibly declining. The Natives lived all together and might, at any moment, be planning any number of attacks or surprises for the English.⁵³

Howard Mumford Jones looked at early English opinions of the Native Americans and saw a similar change of opinion but gives it a slightly different cause. Where Nash sees a changing economic system, Jones saw a changing diplomatic situation where the Natives were victims of international circumstance: “it was not until the eighties of the sixteenth century that schemes for founding plantations become important, and even then they are subordinate to the larger aim of defeating Spain.”⁵⁴ That is, early English settlements in America kept their eyes on the sea looking out for Spanish shipping to disrupt, not on the interior where riches were more difficult to extract. For Jones, the change in the English opinion of the Native Americans came when the English begin expanding from small raiding outposts to permanent plantations

⁵² Howard Mumford Jones, “Origins of the Colonial Idea in England,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 5 (September 30, 1942): 460-461; Nash, 209.

⁵³ Helen C. Roundtree and E. Randolph Turner, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginias Powhatans and Their Predecessors*. (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2002), 159.

⁵⁴ Jones, 462.

intended to spread English culture.⁵⁵ Jones suggested the intermittent peace with Spain forced the English to find some other use for their American outposts.

Everett York found that the reason the relatively friendly relations between the Powhatans and English broke down was because of mutual, cultural misunderstanding by both parties. That is, the ethnocentrism of both the English and Powhatans combined with misunderstandings about what each expected of the other eventually and inevitably resulted in conflict.⁵⁶ Karen Kupperman, supports this theory by arguing that the English from the beginning operated from a war-time siege mentality, while the Native Americans operated from a trade mentality. Because the two groups started with different assumptions about what the other wanted, misunderstandings and hostility were inevitable. The English could not conceive that in their vulnerable position as newcomers, the Native Americans would not try to eliminate them.⁵⁷ Kupperman suggested that the English felt guilty for usurping the land of the Powhatans and thus expected revenge at any moment. The accusation that the Native Americans were treacherous was not a particularly vindictive accusation about Native Americans, but a reflection of the English mindset about humanity. All men would seek retribution if their land was seized, so why not the Powhatans? It seems that this is the most probable theory for explaining the attitudes of poor, working class, English settlers who likely did not have much of an interest in conversion or affairs of State. It was their situation, not

⁵⁵ Jones, 459-463

⁵⁶ Everett York, "Ethnocentricity or Racism", 289.

⁵⁷ Kupperman, "English Perceptions of Treachery," 263-287.

their innate character that made the Native Americans treacherous, and thus doomed English-American relations to eventual hostility.⁵⁸

The above discussion of the English colonial theory or mindset was not applicable on an individual level, however. The theories about an English desire to bring civility and Christianity to the Native Americans are drawn out of the writings of people trying to convince the government, financial backers, and potential immigrants that investing in the North American colonies was the best thing for England, particularly the English position concerning Spain. Indeed, all pretence about bringing the Native Americans to civility evaporated after the 1622 Powhatan massacre.⁵⁹ Indeed, some English saw the 1622 massacre of one-third of the English population in the Chesapeake as a blessing in disguise as they would no longer have to be concerned with civilizing or being fair to the Natives. For these people, the massacre proved the Natives were beyond help.⁶⁰

The intellectual place the Native Americans occupied in the English mind of the early seventeenth century is distinct from the actions of their soldiers and political backers. Soldiers were trained, as soldiers must be, in the superiority of their culture and way of life. Moreover, they were facing a group of people who possessed a more complex and well ingrained civilization than they expected, and the Native Americans were not easily cowed.⁶¹ Thus, the actions of soldiers and colonial leaders did not necessarily reflect the mind of the average Englishman who might be convinced to settle in North America. Defense of the intellectual attitude of the early seventeenth century

⁵⁸ Kupperman, "English Perceptions of Treachery," 263-287.

⁵⁹ Craven, 73.

⁶⁰ Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization," 594-596; Cave, 287-289; Pennington, 192.

⁶¹ Quinn, *European Approaches*, 170.

English towards the Native Americans should not go too far. This is not an apology or attempt to paint poor English settlers as blameless and completely different from their leaders. The goal is to demonstrate that there were a variety of opinions about the Native Americans, especially among the “lower classes” of English settlers. The almost completely negative view of the Native Americans came later after many failed attempts at exporting English culture and many violent clashes between the groups.

The best example of the kind of confused and multifaceted views of the Native Americans held by the early English settlers is John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia*. Literary historians have examined *Historie* extensively as it raises some interesting questions about the reliability of seventeenth century colonial documents.⁶² John Smith wrote his history many years after he returned to England. It is self-aggrandizing and based on his sometimes selective recollection of events, other colonists’ notes, and editors’ suggestions. Even so, it does not tell a one-sided story. The work is somewhat confused, praising and then damning the Natives for the same traits. Literary historian David Reed suggests this is because Smith was not sure himself what he was seeing and experiencing.⁶³ The conflicted and contradictory nature of John Smith’s writings later in life suggest that he is a confused person, as indeed anyone in his position may have been.⁶⁴ The complete “otherness” of what he experienced likely made it difficult for him to determine what he really thought about Virginia’s land, people, and

⁶² Smith, “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...,” 25-48.

⁶³ For a thorough discussion of the nature of John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia* and the arguments surrounding it both as a work in itself and as a paradigm of 17th century colonial writing see: David Reed, “The Incoherent Colonist: Troubled Knowledge in John Smith’s General Historie of Virginia,” in *New World, Known World: Shaping Knowledge in Early Anglo-American Writing* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 7-42.

⁶⁴ Berkhofer, 19.

his own colonial brethren.⁶⁵ This is important point for this discussion because it demonstrates that the English settlers in the earliest days of colonization were confused about what they were seeing in the New World. If someone as well-traveled and experienced with other cultures as Smith was confused about the Americans, the less experienced settlers must have been at least equally confused. While this confused notion does not demonstrate that the English were open to running away and transculturalization, it does demonstrate that preordained notions about the savagery or civility of the Americans were not strong enough to preclude considering it. One other area where English opinions diverged was the area of sexual relationships with Native women. For the English at Jamestown, “miscegenation seemed the lesser evil to war which was still costly in human and resource material.”⁶⁶ This attitude changed after the relative costs of war declined.

The dearth of English women in Jamestown must have contributed to the desire to run away. The first English women did not arrive in Jamestown until 1619, and even then, they were a small proportion of the community until mid-century.⁶⁷ As white women were in short supply, the men in early Virginia had to turn to the Indian women for companionship. But unlike French and Spanish colonists, the English were reluctant

⁶⁵ Reed, 38-42; Namias, *White Captives*, 88.

⁶⁶ Dagmar Wernitznig, *Europe's Indians, Indians in Europe: European Perceptions and Appropriations of Native American Cultures from Pocahontas to the Present* (Lanham, University Press of America, 2007), 11.

⁶⁷ Lois G. Carr and Lorena S. Walsh. “The Planter’s Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” in *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, 5th Edition, ed. Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin, and Douglas Greenberg (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001); Namias, *White Captives*, 87.

to marry Native women, even if the women consented to convert to Christianity.⁶⁸

English men were sexually attracted to Indian women based on more than simple loneliness. English descriptions of both male and female Native American physiques were almost always flattering and exotic, sometimes even dangerously so. Though apparently attracted to Native women, English men did not very often marry them. Interestingly, the English infatuation with the Indian's physical form may explain why English men were so protective of English women once they arrived. The English men feared that English women would feel the same way about Indian men as they did about Native women. Even so, this does not explain why English men, at least in the time before white women became available, did not marry Native women.

June Namias suggests English men were simply taking advantage of the decidedly more relaxed sexual mores of the Native Americans. That is, they did not need to marry them so why bother.⁶⁹ Even John Rolfe's marriage to Pocahontas, the most famous example of marriage between English and Indian, is atypical because it is so intermixed with politics and captivity.⁷⁰ The English outlawed interracial marriage Virginia in 1691, and it did not become legal again for more than 250 years. Not that it happened that often anyway. Roundtree and Turner found only three instances of English-Native marriage recorded in the entire seventeenth century, including Pocahontas and John Rolfe.⁷¹ One possible explanation for the small number of marriages is a fear of

⁶⁸ Namias, *White Captives*, 87.

⁶⁹ Namias, *White Captives*, 87-89.

⁷⁰ Hallowell, 524.

⁷¹ The other two marriages were John Bass, a minister who married a Native woman called Elizabeth in 1638 and a Native woman called Sue who married an Englishman in 1688. Roundtree and Turner, 121, 145, 169, 190-192.

miscegenation or fear of Indian culture eroding the settlers' Englishness. In England itself, this was certainly a concern. For example, when some young men in London began to wear their hair long in imitation of the Native Virginia men, conservative elements of London society condemned this practice as akin to the encroaching French fashions which they viewed as eroding the masculinity and Englishness of the young men of England.⁷² Even if elites feared miscegenation or the eroding of the essential "Englishness" of young men, these hardly seems like things that would concern a working-class, single young man far from home presented with a pretty girl. In the subsequent section, it is demonstrated that rather than English men being unwilling to marry Powhatan women, it was the Powhatan women who were not interested in English husbands.

In sum, the typical settlers coming to the Chesapeake were likely not interested in questions of colonial policy. They sought individual gain and had given up everything familiar to seek an improvement of their station in life in America. The kinds of people who came to the Chesapeake were not all of one religious persuasion and were mostly single men, thus they were essentially individualistic.⁷³ The attitudes of the officers and soldiers in Virginia were likely different from the attitudes of their working class co-settlers concerning the Native Americans settled nearby.⁷⁴ Nicholas Canny posits that the working class English only came to have a poor opinion of the Native Americans based

⁷² Kupperman, "Presentment of Civility," 225-226.

⁷³ Michael Zuckerman, "Identity in British America: Unease in Eden," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 118-119, 129, 133, 144.

⁷⁴ The same impulses that drove English men to risk adventure in Virginia made them difficult to rule from the beginning. Zuckerman, 140.

on fear, especially after the 1622 massacre, not on any innate sense of superiority. Moreover, they certainly had no missionary drive and may have supported the Natives in debates about rights to land.⁷⁵ However, this does not suggest that all, or even most, settlers were interested in running away to live among the natives, no matter how bad things got in Jamestown. Indeed, many of the early English settlers found the wilderness and Native inhabitants so alien and foreign that they would never have sought to join them.⁷⁶ Even so, because it was not impossible for some settlers to consider defecting, the often presumed English sense of superiority might not have been as far reaching as some suggest.

⁷⁵ Canny, "Permissive Frontier," 34-35. This is in opposition of Kupperman's suggestion that they felt guilty about taking Native land.

⁷⁶ Zuckerman believes many of the complimentary accounts of Native Americans that appear in the early period are the result of the need for colonial promoters to encourage recruiting. Zuckerman, 135

Chapter III

THE POWHATANS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ENGLISH

Clearly, English settlers in early Virginia held multiple opinions of the Natives of Virginia. Many discussions of European runaways to join or live with the Natives presume Natives met runaways with open arms. This may not have always been the case. The most often cited work on Europeans who run away and live among the American Natives is James Axtell's *The Invasion Within*. Axtell's work deals primarily with captives taken by various Native groups who then elected to remain with their captors instead of returning to English/White American society. However, he also discusses voluntary runaways, though not specifically in the early contact period. Axtell's work is less useful for the purposes of this paper because it generalizes the Native groups into "Indians" and makes rather general statements about the phenomenon of Europeans or European-Americans who Native groups adopted or who converted of their own will after being captured. Even so, it is a good starting point and does inform the discussion.

While this discussion is more concerned with voluntary runaways, when it comes to adoption practices, Axtell gives some guidelines for the kinds of Europeans that were successfully adopted and transculturalized that are useful. Axtell suggests that the Native Americans were successful at transculturalizing Europeans if the Europeans in question: (1) were children or married into the tribe, (2) gained genuine acceptance by the tribe, (3) were politically disenfranchised in their European community and saw a chance for a

voice politically, or (4) had libertarian beliefs or behaviors.⁷⁷ All of the points in this list are useful for this study.

While there were no children in the early Jamestown settlement, there were single men who would surely have enjoyed the company of Native women. Colonial leaders disenfranchised the majority of Europeans who came to the New World. As discussed in the previous chapter, it seems at least possible that many of them had libertarian beliefs as well. After all, many had abandoned the safety of their home country, with no guarantee of success or survival to attempt to make it rich or at least better their condition on the frontier free from meddlesome governments or religions. It seems that when one examines the Jamestown settlers, the only element of Axtell's requirements for successful Indianization not present is "acceptance by the tribe." By examining the Powhatan social and cultural situation in the early colonial period we may see why "acceptance by the tribe" was not forthcoming for the Jamestown settlers. The following discussion of the Eastern Algonquian (Powhatan) groups surrounding the Jamestown settlement gives some background on the politics, society and culture of the Chesapeake Algonquians, as well as their opinion of the invading English and their adoption procedures.

As discussed in the introduction, the very name Powhatans is controversial but serviceable for discussing the shared culture of the Chesapeake Algonquians. Powhatan or Wahunsonacock reigned from about 1572 until 1617. As a hereditary ruler, he inherited somewhere between six and nine territories in the Chesapeake region and expanded his power through conquest and intimidation until the Powhatan domain encompassed most of the Chesapeake tidewater region and its Algonquian groups. By the

⁷⁷ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 302-327.

time the English arrived, Powhatan had about thirty chiefdoms under his control and was actively expanding his influence through warfare and intimidation.⁷⁸ Some groups which were not included in Powhatan's domain but were nearby and strongly influenced by it were the Patawomeckes, Accomacks, and Occohannocks. The Chichahominies, another independent group, remained independent and separate from Powhatan.⁷⁹

Tsenacommacah was the Powhatan word for the area under Powhatan's control.⁸⁰

Tsenacommacah was composed of about thirty-four villages each ruled by a werowance who served at the pleasure of Powhatan. A mixture of incentives and threats occasionally backed up with violence, from the top-down and among subordinate werowances, defined Powhatan politics.⁸¹ The Powhatan paramount chiefdom style of leadership was more centralized than the council-tribal style of leadership often associated with Native American groups.⁸² Powhatan himself served as paramount chief or Mamanatowick and exerted power through military conquest, trade, perceived spiritual power, appointing

⁷⁸ James D. Rice, "Escape from Tsenacommacah: Chesapeake Algonquians and the Powhatan Menace," in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 109-111.

⁷⁹ Stephen R. Potter, "Early English Effects on Virginia Algonquian Exchange and Tribute in the Tidewater Potomac," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood and Tom Hatley, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 218-219. The independence of the Chickahominies was noted by the early English who sought them out as trading partners when negotiations were tough with Powhatan. Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 514-15; Rice, 110.

⁸⁰ Gleach gives a discussion of the debate among concerning what to call Powhatan's area of influence, especially the debate between confederacy and empire. His solution is to refer to Powhatan's realm as Powhatan himself did and call it Tsenacommacah, that is the convention followed here. Frederick W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 22-25.

⁸¹ Martin D. Gallivan, "Reconnecting the Contact Period and Late Prehistory: Household and Community Dynamics in the James River Basin," in *Indian and European Contact in Context: The Mid-Atlantic Region*, ed. Dennis B. Blanton and Julia A. King (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 24.

⁸² For a thorough discussion of what constitutes a chiefdom level society see: Christopher S. Peebles and Susan M. Kus, "Some Archaeological Correlates of Ranked Societies," *American Antiquity* 42, no.3 (July, 1977): 421-433.

local werowances, and intermarriage. While Powhatan exerted considerable influence, he was not an absolute ruler, and the political landscape in Tsenacommacah was somewhere between a confederacy and a paramount chiefdom.⁸³ Technically, the constituent parts of Powhatan's realm were chiefdoms, not tribes, making him a paramount chief. Few of the constituent chiefdoms under Powhatan identified themselves as or became "ethnically" Powhatans. Instead they retained their individual identities.⁸⁴ Thus it follows, semi-independent chiefdoms on the fringes of Powhatan's influence and any relatively powerful chiefdom that had joined Powhatan's realm, if they sought to regain their independence or join another neighboring group, would have tried to reduce Powhatan's power.⁸⁵ Indeed, some of the groups on the edges of Tsenacommacah disobeyed Powhatan's foreign policy by trading with the English when groups closer to the core of Powhatan's sphere of influence could not.

Powhatan society was stratified with chiefs or werowances at the top, advisers, priests and elite warriors next, and finally commoners and war captives at the bottom. Besides the local werowances, there was a division between peace-chief and war-chief. Powhatan was the peace, or internal chief, while his brother Opechancanough was the war, or external-chief. The peace-chief was of higher rank but depended on the war-chief for information and advice.⁸⁶ While the position of werowance was hereditary and matrilineal, rank and status in Powhatan society depended on maintaining wealth.⁸⁷ The

⁸³ Gleach, 28.

⁸⁴ Gallivan, "Reconnecting the Contact Period and Late Prehistory," 25.

⁸⁵ Rice, 110-111.

⁸⁶ Gleach, 34-36.

⁸⁷ Potter, 215-241.

Powhatans acquired wealth through a tribute system with goods flowing upwards. Corn and deerskins flowed upwards from the common people to the local werowances and from there to Powhatan. Powhatan himself may have received as much as 80% of all produce and skins.⁸⁸ Surplus was stored in mortuary temples and tapped for religious ceremonies, entertainment, or whatever ceremonial or civic function the werowances deemed appropriate. Powhatan's storehouse and primary residence was at Orapak, near the center of Tsenacommacah. In most of the English accounts however, Powhatan was in residence at Werowocomoco, a regional capital nearer to Jamestown.

While corn and animal skins were typical tribute items, special prestige goods were distributed only among the Algonquian leadership and visiting leaders.⁸⁹ Copper was the most valuable prestige good. John Smith remarked about how much the Natives around Jamestown were "covetous of copper."⁹⁰ Copper's rarity, reddish color and reflective properties made it a prestige good and spiritually significant to Powhatans. In addition to its rarity, copper came from far away, and because it was from outside the ordinary Powhatan experience, it could only be obtained by those with both spiritual and economic power. Copper and more generally any rare items acquired by long distance trade were inherently spiritually powerful, and they conveyed spiritual power on the werowances who could get them.⁹¹ The English quickly picked up on how much

⁸⁸ Gleach, 25.

⁸⁹ "Their manner of trading is for copper, beades, and such like, for which they give such commodities as they have, as skins, fowle, fish, flesh, and their country come. But their vicutall is their chiefest riches." John Smith, "A Map of Virginia," in vol. I of *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith: 1580-1631*, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 168.

⁹⁰ Smith, "A Map of Virginia," 160.

Powhatans coveted copper. Excavations at Jamestown have revealed over 14,000 pieces of copper, likely the scraps left over from English cutting of larger sheets of copper into shapes desirable to the nearby Powhatans.⁹²

In addition to copper, beads were especially popular prestige goods among the Powhatans. Powhatan beads were usually made of shell; distant coastal groups provided the most valuable colored shells. Beads took a long time to make out of shell using Powhatan tools, and when produced, they were usually white. The English brought blue beads, a rare thing in the Powhatans world, as colored shell beads only came from the small colored part of mussel shells where the animal attaches to the shell.⁹³ The possession of rare, spiritually significant prestige goods like copper and beads demonstrated a werowance's power and his contact with the dangerous and powerful outside or "other" where those goods came from.⁹⁴

In Virginia Algonquian society, it was the werowances who conducted the trade and exacted tribute from their subordinates. Powerful werowances like Powhatan who acquired prestige goods like copper gifted them to their subordinate werowances as they saw fit. Gifts of prestige goods conveyed spiritual power and may have been both a way of keeping subordinate chiefs loyal and giving them the tools to keep their people loyal.⁹⁵ For the Powhatans, social rank had to be maintained by cultivating and maintaining

⁹¹ Gleach, 56-58; Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hamell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade," *Journal of American History* LXXIII (1986), 311-328; Rice, 92.

⁹² Helen C. Roundtree and E. Randolph Turner, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia's Powhatans and Their Predecessors* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2002), 137.

⁹³ Roundtree and Turner, 178.

⁹⁴ Gleach, 57-59; Daniel Richter, "Tsenacommacah & The Atlantic World," In *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 32-33.

⁹⁵ Rice, 116-117.

wealth.⁹⁶ Wealth meant prestige goods, and copper was an especially prestigious good. After the arrival of the English, copper ceased to be a rare commodity. However, at least for the first few decades of the seventeenth century, Algonquian werowances were able to limit the spread of copper and maintain its value as a prestige good, despite the vastly increased amount flowing from English sources.⁹⁷

The arrival of the English skewed the Powhatans trade and prestige good exchange system quickly, with negative repercussions for the English and Native leadership. Because the English could get copper cheaply, and traded it for virtually all their food, the English soon flooded the local market with copper in efforts to buy food. English colonial leaders noted that they needed more and more copper to purchase less and less food and attempted to stop the unauthorized spread of copper. However, individual Englishmen, particularly sailors who expected to leave soon, engaged in trade with whatever Natives they could find, disregarding the Powhatans' system for prestige good and commodity gift giving and trading by werowances and the English restrictions on trading with the Natives. The flooding of the market was initially worse for the English than for the Powhatans. Because copper and beads did not need replacing, the amount of food the English could purchase for a small amount of copper dropped drastically. Besides unauthorized trading, the English did not understand how to carry out official trading with the Powhatans properly.⁹⁸ Market flooding and uncontrolled trading of prestige goods like copper eroded the spiritual and political power of

⁹⁶ Potter, 217.

⁹⁷ Potter, 231; Seth W. Mallios, "Exchange and Violence at Ajacan, Roanoke, and Jamestown," in *Indian and European Contact in Context: The Mid-Atlantic Region*, ed. Dennis B. Blanton and Julia A. King (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 146.

⁹⁸ Gleach, 108.

Powhatan, as he was no longer the sole source. Powhatan society was not as affected by the influx of English copper as one might expect. It appears copper remained in the hands of the Powhatan elite so the society's appreciation of prestige goods was not eroded; however, the fringe chiefdoms that benefited most from English gift giving increased in power relative to Powhatan.⁹⁹

The English system of commodity trading was at odds with the Powhatans' system of gift giving and reciprocity. In the Powhatans' system, werowances demonstrated their wealth by giving extravagant gifts to other werowances and receiving gifts in return. Gift exchanges were supposed to be equitable, but they were not commodity exchanges with set prices. Politeness and reciprocal gift exchange were key elements of the Powhatans' trade network. The English were not completely in the dark and grasped this concept somewhat. However, their frequent abuses of the system and reversion into accountant mode strained relations with Powhatan. Indeed, the English perceived the Natives seeming delight with English trade goods as signs that they were pleased with the trinkets they offered and thus felt the Powhatans saw the exchanges as equitable. It is possible that the delight the Natives showed was a kind of politeness, not necessarily genuine enthusiasm. In the Powhatans' system, the act of gift giving was almost as important as the item given and to appear satisfied and happy with a gift was important for establishing trade relationships.¹⁰⁰ To refuse a gift or demand a gift would cause hard feelings between two potential trading partners. It appears the English often misinterpreted the trading system and both demanded and refused too much. Seth Mallios' examination of the European experiences at Ajacan, Roanoke, and Jamestown

⁹⁹ Rice, 118-120.

¹⁰⁰ Quitt. 246.

finds that the Native Americans' changing relations with the Europeans was because of the Europeans constant gift-exchange violations. The Native Americans were initially eager for trade, while the Europeans depended on it for survival. Even with this mutual interest, the challenge of dealing with a different culture and language, as well as the precarious position of the English, made them desperate and violent, and the Native Americans responded with violence.¹⁰¹ Mallios finds a pattern when looking at early European trade-relations and violence: "gift giving is interrupted by a European exchange violation and followed by commodity trading. Additional economic transgressions then prompted violence. In situations where the hostilities do not result in the complete annihilation of one of the groups involved, gift giving is used to bring about peace and the sequence repeats."¹⁰²

The last chapter demonstrated that the English perception of the Powhatans was mutable, but what about the Powhatans' perceptions of the English? Europeans began visiting the Virginia region by the latter 1500s. Reports of the European presence had likely filtered into the Chesapeake region well before that time.¹⁰³ The Powhatans were thus not as unprepared to deal with the English as it might appear. Other European ships that had stopped for a small time had provided some valuable trade goods, but some had been violent. Powhatan's first opinion of the English, then, was that they were

¹⁰¹ Mallios, 127.

¹⁰² Mallios, 147.

¹⁰³ Roundtree and Turner, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia's Powhatans and Their Predecessors*, 51.; James Horn, "Imperfect Understandings: Rumor, Knowledge, and Uncertainty In Early Virginia," in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 516.

potentially useful and potentially dangerous.¹⁰⁴ They possessed items of great power. In addition to the copper and beads mentioned, the Powhatans were impressed with guns and cannon as well as items like grinding stones to make domestic life easier. However, the English must have appeared strange. The settlement was unable to feed itself, did not know how to act in trade relationships, and did not have any women. Moreover, the English men refused to marry the Powhatan women. Indeed, the Powhatans may have seen the almost all male population as hostile.¹⁰⁵ In Powhatan experience, groups of men usually meant either a trading party or a war party; as it turned out this was not far from the truth.

Predictably, Indian opinions of the Europeans declined after years of interaction with Europeans, some becoming as dismissive of European culture as the Europeans were of theirs.¹⁰⁶ Even prior to this diminution of opinion about the English generally, no one in Powhatan society wanted to join English society. The English personally repulsed the Powhatan; the English did not bathe, were hairy, and could not even feed themselves. On the other hand, the Powhatans bathed every day before dawn, even in winter, and spent hours removing excess body hair to satisfy their conceptions of purity and beauty.¹⁰⁷ These personal hygiene habits may seem superficial, but they represent deep cultural differences between the two. Moreover, the influx of European trade goods and

¹⁰⁴ Roundtree and Turner, 179.

¹⁰⁵ Quitt, 234.

¹⁰⁶ A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff, "Reversing the Gaze: Early North American Images of Europeans and Euro-Americans," in *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*, ed Gretchen M. Bataille (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 214.

¹⁰⁷ Bathing every morning, even in the cold served to help make the Powhatans hearty and more tolerant of the cold. Helen C Roundtree, "Powhatan Indian Women," : The People Captain John Smith Barely Saw." *Ethnohistory* 45, no. 1 (Winter, 1998): 8; Roundtree and Turner, 88; Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 9;

copper did more than simply flood the market and bring about a reduction in the relative value of previously rare goods. The more English settlers distributed copper and other trade among the Powhatans, the less they thought of European goods as conduits of spiritual power. The decline in perceived spiritual power meant there was a decline in the commensurate esteem the Powhatans had for the English.¹⁰⁸

So, the Powhatans saw the English as physically repulsive providers of trade and prestige goods, with no other positive characteristics. That there were no attempts by the Powhatans to run off and join the English speaks volumes about the Powhatans perception of the English newcomers. The few Powhatans who did live with the English were captives or envoys who had little initial choice, like Pocahontas. Indeed, the only Native that comes to mind as a true, non-coerced, convert to the English way of life was Manteo of the Croatoan tribe during the earlier Roanoke Island settlement attempts. Manteo, though not his compatriot Wanchese from the neighboring Roanoke tribe, voluntarily elected to help the English colonists.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, the English were not attempting to settle on Manteo's people's land, but on that of Wanchese, a fact that helps explain why the two Native Americans took different opinions of the newly arrived English.

Gender roles and marriage practices of the Powhatans are important to understand in the adoption of new members into Powhatan society. Powhatan men were warriors and hunters when they were young and became politicians when age slowed them. Powhatan

¹⁰⁸ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Alden T. Vaughan, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Indian Interpreters, 1584-1618," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (April 2002): 354-356, 373.

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men had little to do with the lives of their wives or women in general.¹¹⁰ From a young age, boys learned how to hunt and how to be warriors. While they helped with some of the more laborious aspects of domestic life like clearing land for agriculture and erecting houses, the domestic world, including agriculture, was primarily the realm of Powhatan women. Powhatan women raised and prepared food and children. Powhatan women converted the raw animal skins provided by men into usable materials. The male and female spheres were fairly well defined and separated. The two realms united in the institution of marriage.¹¹¹

Marriage was largely an economic arrangement, and if women were not cared for properly, they would leave their husbands. Marriage provided the economic and material benefits that men or women could not provide for themselves, produced children, and sometimes formed diplomatic alliances. Men were expected to provide materially for their wives and instruct any male children that might arise from their union. Partnership marked typical Powhatan marriages. Some men had many wives. The only limit on number seems to have been how many wives one could or wished to be responsible for supporting. Werowances likely had more wives than typical Powhatan men as they could decide how many wives they would have and paid whatever they wanted for them. It is unlikely that noble wives lived a life of luxury as a werowance's power stemmed from his ability to produce and distribute goods. Therefore, an elite wife was still a working wife.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Roundtree and Turner, 110.

¹¹¹ Roundtree, "Powhatan Indian Women," 9-20.

¹¹² Roundtree and Turner, 111-113; Roundtree, "Powhatan Indian Women," 21-22.

According to Axtell “Generally in Native society an unattached person was *persona non grata*. To be accepted was to be related-biologically or fictively. When a European wanted to exercise any sway over native life he had to become part of an Indian family, either by adoption or marriage.”¹¹³ Moreover, elaborate gift-giving, exchanges and bestowal of names marked the newcomers’ adoption as fictive kin. For the reasons described above, marriage seems an unlikely scenario for the English at Jamestown.

Robert Beverly’s contemporaneous account of the Powhatans claims “in the beginning Native Americans frequently proposed marriage, were rebuffed, and concluded that the English were not their friends.”¹¹⁴ Beverly’s account, written after the fact, relied on stories from earlier settlers and seems only partly true. Certainly the Powhatans had a hard time believing the English were their friends, but failure to intermarry was only one of many social and cultural errors the English committed in dealing with the Powhatans. Beverly’s account likely refers only to high-level alliance making marriages. The Powhatans might expect marriage between colonial leaders like John Smith or Christopher Newport and important Powhatan women, but they would not have insisted typical English settlers marry their women. John Smith recorded that he had been able to marry Pocahontas if he wanted and on many occasions recorded his self-restraint with other Native women, an action that must have confused Powhatan.¹¹⁵ Whether because of English or Powhatan unsinterest, the English recorded no marriage relationships between

¹¹³ Axtell, *Beyond 1492*, 50.

¹¹⁴ Quitt, 237.

¹¹⁵ Smith, “The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia,” 274; Nash, “Image of the Indian,” 227-8.

Powhatan and English settlers until that of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. This leaves us with adoption as the only route to acceptance for the English by the Powhatans.

In December 1607, while exploring in an area held by the Pamunkeys, one of the chiefdoms under Powhatan's control, a group of Pamunkeys captured Smith and brought him before Opechancanough, who later brought him to Powhatan. Opechancanough was one of Powhatan's brothers and served as his war chief.¹¹⁶ After his capture, the Powhatans subjected Smith to a number of rituals before and after he arrived at Werowocomoco where Powhatan was waiting. What followed is well known; Smith describes how he was almost ritually beaten to death before "Pocahontas, the King's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save him from death: whereat the Emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper."¹¹⁷ Powhatan later told Smith that they were now friends, and that he would support the English with food if Smith would send him two cannons as well as a grindstone and the copper, hatchets, bells, beads and other trade goods. Moreover, he requested that Smith and the English should move to Capahowasic, a location further inland and closer to Powhatan.¹¹⁸

It appears that while Powhatan might have initially considered adopting the English into his paramountcy, he quickly realized the English would make poor Powhatans. However, Powhatan was left with a problem. He wanted English trade goods but could find no good way to incorporate them into his world. There is a great deal of

¹¹⁶ Strong, *Captive Selves*, 48; Rice, 113

¹¹⁷ Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 151.

¹¹⁸ Smith, "A True Relation, [1608]," in Vol. I of *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith: 1580-1631*, ed. by Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 57.

evidence that Powhatan was willing to adopt the English as a subordinate chiefdom and with John Smith as the werowance. Frederick Gleach believed that Powhatan's allowing the English to settle in Jamestown constituted acceptance of the settlers into his world as subordinates.¹¹⁹ Remember, in the first years at Jamestown, the English relied upon the Powhatans for most all their food and the Powhatans could have easily destroyed the English. However, toleration is not the same thing as adoption. Beyond toleration, Nicholas Canny adds that the Powhatans were initially welcoming to deserters from Jamestown, citing Powhatan's reluctance to return escaped fugitives and the notion that Native Americans in general are willing to adopt runaways.¹²⁰ However, a closer look at Native adoption practices and the Powhatans' perceptions of the English suggests Powhatan was never so simple-minded to think that the English could or should be adopted like any other chiefdom. Moreover, the Powhatan were not willing to accept just any Englishman who wandered away from Jamestown and wanted to live among the Powhatan.

Before discussing runaway adoption, a look at the most famous adoption by Powhatan is in order. Powhatan's ritual adoption of John Smith was the official ceremony through which Powhatan attempted to place the English as a subordinate chiefdom within Tsenacommacah, with Smith as the werowance. Powhatan gave John Smith a fictive kinship to himself and wanted the English to move their settlement from Jamestown to Capahowasick, a location closer to the center of his power as well as to provide trade

¹¹⁹ Gleach, 199.

¹²⁰ Canny, "Permissive Frontier," 33.

goods.¹²¹ In return, Powhatan would protect and feed the English. Powhatan's offer to provide food and asking Smith to move closer to his center of power can be interpreted a number of ways. Smith thought Powhatan wanted him closer so Powhatan could keep an eye on the English. However, it seems Powhatan saw the English as artisans, not as a group similar to his other subject tribes. It is possible that Powhatan knew from the beginning that the English were not like his other chiefdoms. One interpretation is that Powhatan was treating Smith as a kind of priest with spiritual power, owing to his ability to acquire prestige goods. The protection Powhatan offered Smith was similar to protections he offered other perceived spiritual leaders who could provide supernatural help and goods. Pauline Turner Strong describes Smith's position in the Powhatans hierarchy as "kinsman, tribute-paying artisan, and power-enhancing priest."¹²²

In general, the Native Americans who incorporated captive-taking into their societies as a common event had a number of tools they used to ensure captives converted and remained loyal. They gave captives moccasins right away to aid in woodland travel. There was a taboo in most Indian societies against rape, so female captives were spared that indignity. Captors fed captives as well as the rest of their group. Once the Natives considered their captives were truly converted and had accepted them as part of the tribe, and they granted them equal status within the tribe, captive-converts might even eventually achieve positions of authority in their new tribe. In some cases, captives were taken to replace, both spiritually and physically, a deceased compatriot. In these cases, the Native Americans treated captives as they had treated the

¹²¹ Rice, 120-121.

¹²² Pauline Turner Strong, "Captivity in White and Red," in *Crossing Cultures: Essays in the Displacement of Western Civilization*, ed. Daniel Segal (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 59-60.

people the captives were supposed to replace, for better or worse. When European captives were taken, they were given gifts and instructed in Indian ways. After conversion, European converts were granted equal status and were left to do as they pleased, go where they liked and had no compulsion to marry.¹²³ In many European captivity narratives, the adoption ritual of running the gauntlet appeared. This appears to have been a Native conversion/adoption ceremony where the captive ran through two rows of captors and received a severe beating. The beating served as a kind of ritual death after which the converts were reborn into their new society. This is similar to the threatened beating John Smith describes before his supposed salvation by Pocahontas.

There is some debate as to whether Pocahontas saved John Smith and whether he was actually ever in danger of being executed by Powhatan.¹²⁴ At any rate, the result of Smith's capture was that Powhatan began to prop up the English settlement with food in exchange for trade goods, particularly copper. The relationship between the English and Powhatan had become, for Powhatan, a formalized trade relationship. Powhatan saw Smith and the English in the roles of "kinsman, tribute-paying artisan, and power-enhancing priest."¹²⁵ Powhatan provided food, so long as the English provided him with goods that he cannot provide for himself: hatchets, beads, etc. Powhatan expected labor-

¹²³ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 324.

¹²⁴ The debate about whether Pocahontas actually saved Smith from execution arises because of a difference in Smith's two accounts of his captivity by the Powhatan. In Smith's *True Relation* (1608) he makes no mention of nearly being killed or being saved by Pocahontas. In his *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), Smith gives the well known version where Pocahontas saves him from certain death at the hands of Powhatan. Smith, "A True Relation," 45-61 and Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 145-153. See also, Strong, *Captive Selves*, 43-71 and Kupperman, *Captain John Smith, A Select Edition of His Writings*, 3-4.

¹²⁵ Strong, *Captive Selves*, 60.

saving and prestige goods from the English. He did not expect tributes of grain or deer as with other subject groups.

If Powhatan expected the English to act as providers of prestige goods in exchange for food, a runaway English settler seeking to live among the Powhatans was violating the trade agreement. Powhatan only allowed the English settlement to survive because they provided something he wanted. Carried to the individual level, this suggests that runaways were completely useless to Powhatan. Powhatan knew they were no good at raising food; indeed, they had nothing at all to offer except trade goods. A runaway would have neither a steady supply of trade goods nor any skill in traditional Powhatan lifeways. Thus, with the exception of some few English who played a role as informants, hostages, or some other novel use, there was no reason for Powhatan to accept or desire English runaways.

Hallowell suggests that as adoption was typically practiced by Native Americans before the Europeans showed up, they had only to extend it to the Europeans.¹²⁶ The problem with this suggestion is that it presumes potential Indian and English adoptees are starting from the same place. While there are considerable differences between and within the Iroquoian, Siouan, and Algonquian Native groups in the Chesapeake, they are slight compared with the differences between all Native Americans and newly arrived, urban, English settlers. The English at Jamestown were not frontiersmen who were adept at living in the Virginia backcountry but unskilled European laborers. The suggestion that the English could be easily taught how to live among any Native American group seems unlikely whether they sought to be accepted or not.

¹²⁶ Hallowell, 512.

This is confirmed when we look at what kinds of people were adopted into Native societies. In later centuries, traders were often adopted into the Native American groups they traded with. The transculturalization of these traders was, to a degree, necessary for success among the Native Americans. Native societies thrived on intermarriage and considered themselves economically and spiritually better off when they successfully acculturated outsiders because they had access to the material and spiritual goods of another region or group of people.¹²⁷ By marrying and acculturating a European trader, the Native Americans gained access to trade goods and sometimes affiliated spiritual power just as they would if they intermarried with and acculturated a member of any other group.

For example, in the eighteenth century, the Creeks of the Southeast were eager to marry their women to English traders, and traders were eager to marry them. Marriage, along with quality and quantity of trade goods and generally decent and trustworthy character, assured the Creek leadership that a trader was worthy of trust and a good trading partner. Once a trader married, he had an in-law relationship with all the members of his wife's clan throughout Creek society.¹²⁸ A trader's relations throughout the Creek world ensured he had customers and protectors throughout the Creek world, not just in the town where he took a wife. Moreover, a Creek wife was necessary on a more basic level because no one else would take the time to help a trader learn the language and customs of the Creeks or help him with the everyday business of tanning

¹²⁷ Purdue, "*Mixed Blood*", 25.

¹²⁸ Kathyne Braund describes the in-law relationship traders acquired upon marrying a Creek woman as something like "honorary membership" in his wife's clan. Creek men maintained membership in their own clan when marrying creek women. Kathyne E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 81-84.

and transporting hides and trade goods, collecting debts, and all the related clerical and menial duties of a successful trader.¹²⁹ For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that the traders would not likely defect or “go native” entirely; they were still traders after a profit. Consider too that the Native Americans who hosted a trader did so because of the goods he provided. They would not want him to get too acculturated and lose interest in his original purpose of supplying trade goods. On the other hand, the Native Americans were not concerned that the Europeans might simply be using his Indian wife as a business asset, as surely many traders did because Native Americans would have expected it, and in the case of the Creeks, they might have been using the trader as well. In Creek society, material goods in the home, or trading post, were technically the possessions of the woman. Thus, the Native Americans, in supplying a trader with a local wife were doing more than simply providing a warm bed to keep traders devoted to the town. The wives of traders were often advisers to the highest levels of Creek society in matters of trade and foreign affairs. Thus, the Native Americans had not simply given a wife; they had planted a spy in the trader’s house. Moreover, as the Indian wives of traders owned the trade goods stored in their houses, they lived better than many other women in Creek society. It is unlikely that they would allow their husbands to forget their role as suppliers of said trade goods and go completely native, abandoning their trading business for hunting and living as a typical Creek man.¹³⁰

While based on the experience of the English among the Creeks mostly in the eighteenth century southeast, the above example informs our look at Jamestown and the

¹²⁹ Braund, 81-84.

¹³⁰ Braund, 84-87.

Chesapeake Algonquians. The English traders who joined the Creeks served a role as providers of goods and intermediaries between the Creeks and English. The Native societies were gaining something (trade goods) by having traders keep at least some connection with their European-American trading companies. These traders had a kind of dual citizenship. However, the English in Jamestown who sought to live among the Powhatans were not traders and did not serve a role as middle men.¹³¹ Trading took place between the leaders and on a small scale between the everyday English people. Native society relied on interconnectedness and reciprocity between tribes and clans. If traders acculturated completely, they would cease to be important members of the Native society and likely become little more than light-skinned, inadequate Native Americans unskilled at the ways of Indian life and serving no real purpose. While it is unclear if the Jamestown runaways sought to stay with the Powhatans or simply escaped there looking for something to eat, the runaways were likewise useless to the Powhatans if they could not provide trade goods. In sum, it seems likely that English settlers at Jamestown did not runaway to join the Powhatans with any regularity because they were not wanted and would not have been useful. Powhatans' opinions of the English were as important as English opinions of the Powhatans if not more important as the Powhatans were in the position of power. The English failure to provide for themselves combined with their failure to intermarry with Powhatan women and their failure to carry out trade relations properly all conspired to make the English unattractive adoptees.

¹³¹ Actually one group of runaways were illicit middlemen and facilitated the stealing of trade goods for Powhatan after they ran away, they are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

JAMESTOWN'S SIMILARITIES WITH ROANOKE

Before discussing the specific examples from Jamestown which illustrate the attempts by English settlers to defect to the Powhatans and what the runaways' fates say about the prospect in general, it is useful to mention an earlier English experience with the Natives of the North American coast. Some recent scholarship on the possible fate of the lost colonists at Roanoke may illuminate the discussion on Jamestown. The English experience at Roanoke was the only other prolonged contact the English had with the Native Americans before Jamestown. The settlers at Jamestown were certainly well-aware of the lost colonists of Roanoke and finding them was one of their initial goals. Speculation about what happened to those English who had come before them must have added to the anxiety in Jamestown. Little evidence remains about what became of the Roanoke colonists. The common answer is that some of the Eastern Algonquian tribes likely either killed or assimilated them. Because of the dearth of evidence, historians and archaeologists have continued to search for a definitive answer to the Roanoke problem. One possibility may lend some support to this discussion of Jamestown runaways: the Roanoke settlers were enslaved or adopted and put to work mining and smelting copper.¹³² While the Natives closest to the Roanoke colonists were not members of the Powhatan confederacy, they were Algonquian speakers and possessed a similar culture.

¹³² Lee Miller, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000), 258.

Thus, if we know how the Roanoke settlers, who would have had little choice but to seek to live with the Natives, were treated by the Natives, we may have a clue as to how these people received the Jamestown settlers that sought to live among them.

Keeping in mind there are many theories and it is difficult to prove any of them on such scanty evidence, some recent studies suggest various Native American groups assimilated some of the lost colonists and used them to mine and work copper. If this is true, it supports the theory that the Natives were only interested in adopting English settlers from Jamestown if the settlers were directly beneficial and were probably not interested in adopting unskilled English settlers simply for their manpower. To make the case for Natives adopting the Roanoke settlers, as copper laborers, a brief review of the Roanoke situation is in order.¹³³

The settlement of Roanoke Island was never supposed to happen. The English presence in the islands off North Carolina was the result of three separate incursions there. First, in 1584, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe led an exploratory mission along the North Carolina coast. Second, in June 1585, Ralph Lane led a military and exploratory mission. Lane and the men of the second expedition stayed in North America for about a year, antagonizing the Secotan and other local Native groups, before returning home unexpectedly with Sir Francis Drake's fleet that had stopped by to check on them. Because the colonies' financial backers did not expect them to return with Drake, they sent a re-supply shipment to Roanoke from England under the command of

¹³³ The following review of the settlement of Roanoke island is taken primarily from: Lee Miller, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000); David B. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).; David B. Quinn, *The Lost Colonists: Their Fortune and Probable Fate* (Raleigh: America's Four Hundredth Anniversary Committee, North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, 1984); Frederick W. Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

Sir Richard Grenville. When Grenville arrived in 1586 with his supply ship, he found the settlement abandoned. Grenville left fifteen men behind and returned to England.

Finally, in the summer of 1587 and under the leadership of John White the men and women who would become the Lost Colonists stopped at Roanoke Island while on their way to start a colony in the Chesapeake. White stopped at Roanoke to meet with the soldiers who he knew had been left behind in 1586.¹³⁴ The colonists found only the bones of one of the fifteen men. Then, because the crews of the ships were eager to proceed to the Caribbean and raid Spanish shipping, the whole company disembarked and stayed on Roanoke Island instead of continuing to the Chesapeake.¹³⁵ The colonists hoped to eventually move to their intended destination but needed more supplies as the trip across the Atlantic had taken longer than expected. Moreover, the Native Americans in the area had turned antagonistic after the abuses they suffered from the earlier English expedition under Ralph Lane. The settlers elected John White to return to England for supplies. It took White three years to return to Roanoke instead of his expected six to eight months, and when he did, he found only the abandoned settlement and the now famous message “CROATOAN” carved into a post and the shorter message “CRO” carved into a tree. Just as on his first trip to Roanoke, White faced a ship’s crew eager to leave and get on

¹³⁴ Interestingly, the plan was simply to learn what the men who had been left behind knew and continue to the Chesapeake to plant their settlement, not to take the men with them. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 278.

¹³⁵ It appears that the pilot of the ship, Simon Fernandes, who had piloted the first expedition in 1584, used the stop in Roanoke as a chance to get White and his settlers off the ships and abandon them. Fernandes claimed it was too late in the season to continue all the way to the Chesapeake. This is unlikely however, as Fernandes waited so long at Roanoke taking on supplies and re-outfitting his ship that he could have easily made it to the Chesapeake. White and Fernandes had been at odds throughout the voyage though the reasons are vague. The only record of the voyage is White’s journal, and he seems to believe Fernandes was sabotaging the mission on purpose. It is also possible that he was simply eager to use the ship for privateering instead of transporting colonists. At any rate, there is a power struggle on board ship, and in the end, Fernandes who was technically only in command of the main ship, *Lion*, not the entire expedition, triumphed and returned to England instead of transporting the colonists to their original destination. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 268-282; Miller, *Roanoke*, 69-77, 132-133.

with their more lucrative plans. White had to leave and never managed to return. The Lost Colonists were truly lost.

Before moving on, a few preliminary matters are important to make clear. First, the settlers who arrived in Roanoke with John White were not the first English people to make their presence known in the area. The military expedition that had spent a year there under Ralph Lane had ruined any good relations the English may have originally had with the Natives around Roanoke. Extortion of food, violence, and Ralph Lane's execution of a local Native leader meant that the Roanoke colonists faced an unsympathetic reception from the locals.¹³⁶ However, the Roanoke settlers were not simply dropped off in a wild land they knew nothing about. John White, their leader and possibly two more of their company had been along on the 1585 expedition and knew something about the lay of the land and the native inhabitants.

Also, since the first exploratory voyage in 1584, the English had maintained as a friend and interpreter a Native of the region called Manteo. Manteo was a member of the Croatoans, a group of Natives that inhabited islands nearby to Roanoke. He had been to England twice and would have been a useful member of the Roanoke colonial group both for practical knowledge and as a translator and diplomat.¹³⁷ Besides Manteo of the Croatoans, the English in 1584 had returned to England with Wanchese of the Roanokes. Wanchese was not as pleased with the English as Manteo, and upon returning to

¹³⁶ For a thorough discussion of the Roanoke settlement under Ralph Lane see: Miller, *Roanoke*, 97-109.; Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 121-129.

¹³⁷ Manteo was the son of the leader of the Croatoan. The original English plan had been to place him as governor of Roanoke which would be a protectorate kingdom under the English to serve as a southern buffer to the English settlement on the Chesapeake. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 234-235, 269. For more on Native translators who aided the early English explorers and made the trip to England see: Vaughan, "Raleigh's Indian Interpreters," 341-376.

Roanoke, he probably exacerbated the hostility the Roanokes felt towards the English squatters.¹³⁸ So, the Roanoke settlers were at a disadvantage because of the hostile locals, but they had one advantage in the person of Manteo.

It is at this point that the story of the Roanoke colonists begins to be of importance for the purposes of this study. There are no surviving documents from the colonists at Roanoke, excepting the word “CROATOAN” carved on a tree. Historians have speculated ever since about what became of the lost colonists. Some theories about what happened to the colonists at Roanoke include death at the hands of Powhatan, death by natural causes, death by other hostile Natives, adoption by friendly Natives, or enslavement by hostile Natives. The thesis that English men and women would have been unlikely adoptees in any capacity except as drudges or curiosities fits in with the death, adoption, or enslavement theories. After White left for England, the Roanoke colonists split into two groups, a few remained on the island, while the bulk set out for a better location “from Roanoak fifty miles into the main.”¹³⁹

The settlers who remained on Roanoke Island stayed to direct White to the rest of the colonists when he returned. It is not clear how long they waited; but it was at least long enough to erect a palisade for protection, which survived until White returned. At some point, they grew tired of waiting and removed themselves to Croatoan, as evidenced by the carving they left behind, likely to live with Manteo and his people. This group of settlers would have been small and so probably had few barriers to acceptance

¹³⁸ Vaughan, “Raleigh’s Indian Interpreters,” 350.

¹³⁹ John White, “The fifth voyage of M. John White into the West Indies and parts of America called Virginia, in the yeere 1590,” in *The Portable Hakluyt’s Voyages*, ed. Irwin R. Blacker (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), 328.

by the Croatoan as charity cases, especially with Manteo's sponsorship.¹⁴⁰ That the English who stayed behind were fully accepted by the Croatoan may be evidenced by the report of a surveyor, John Lawson, who reported in 1701 meeting Natives on Croatoan Island who "...tell us that several of their ancestors were white people and could talk in a book [read] as we do, the truth of which is confirmed by gray eyes being found frequently amongst these Natives and no others. They value themselves extremely for their affinity to the English, and are ready to do them all friendly offices."¹⁴¹ While it is certainly possible that other Europeans might have happened by sometime in the century long gap between Roanoke and 1701, it is at least possible that these grey-eyed Natives referred to the remaining Roanoke colonists as their ancestors.

If the Englishmen left behind were fully adopted into Croatoan society, they can be regarded as the exception that proves the rule. These colonists found themselves truly adopted, instead of rejected or adopted only as slaves. Importantly, the situation of the Roanoke settlers who stayed behind was much different from that of the settlers in Jamestown. Though it is unclear who stayed behind, it is likely there were at least some men, as someone built a palisade on Roanoke Island after John White left.¹⁴² There were also likely women, better candidates for adoption by the Croatoans. John White's wife and child were included among the colonists at Roanoke and it seems likely they would remain behind with the colonists who ended up at Croatoan to greet White when he returned. At any rate, there were likely both men and women, and even children in the

¹⁴⁰ Quinn, *The Lost Colonists and their Probable Fate*, 17-21.

¹⁴¹ John Lawson, quoted in Quinn, *The Lost Colonists*, 50.

¹⁴² It is certainly possible that the palisade was constructed before the majority of colonists left to go inland, but this seems like a major investment on the part of people who were leaving a location.

group that remained. Native Americans adopted women and children much more easily and with greater frequency than grown men, regardless of their ethnicity.

A second major difference between the remaindered Roanoke settlers and Jamestown was the small number of settlers. The Roanoke settlers were fewer than those at Jamestown. Moreover, new shipments of supplies and people replenished the Jamestown settlers' numbers. The Roanoke settlers' small population meant they posed no threat to neighboring tribes. Unlike in Jamestown, more Englishmen were not showing up and demanding more of the local population, indeed; no one ever showed up.

The Croatoan were not members of Powhatan's paramountcy. They were an island group, far smaller and less powerful than the Powhatans but outside the boundaries of Tsenacommacah. Thus, the English adoptees may have faced a somewhat easier learning curve to become useful to the Croatoans. For example, it likely took less skill to learn to collect marine food than it took to learn to hunt deer successfully. That is, the English could more easily prove themselves useful to the Croatoan than to the Powhatans.

Fourth and perhaps most crucially, the colonists had a friend in Manteo, who was the son of the Croatoan leader and likely able to assure the colonists some measure of acceptance, if only as a charity case. Finally, the colonists who made it to Croatoan appear to have done so of their own volition; they were not forced or enslaved. White mentions that if the colonists were in any danger when they left Roanoke, they were to carve the sign of a cross into something so that he would know. There was no cross carved nearby the word Croatoan, so it is doubtful they left under duress.

The fate of the other Roanoke colonists, those that ventured inland, was the subject of much speculation at the time of their disappearance. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to look at all the possible fates of these colonists, there is one possibility that is important for this paper. The debate over what happened to the Roanoke colonists has essentially two sides with some variation. One believes the colonists survived as a cohesive group before being killed by Powhatan at just about the same time the Jamestown settlers arrived as part of an elaborate plan by Powhatan to ensure the English settlers would ally with him and not his Chesapeake rivals.¹⁴³ This was the official line set down after the settlement of Jamestown and accepted at the time. This explanation provides an excuse to allay English guilt over taking Powhatan's lands and dealing unfairly with him. However, this explanation has a major flaw. It is based on John Smith's recollections, which did not surface until after he was back in England. Smith's early writings reveal that the local Native leaders were aware of some English survivors of the Roanoke expedition and even gave him leads on where to find them. However, once back in England, Smith reported that Powhatan confided to him that he killed the survivors.¹⁴⁴

Lee Miller suggests in her book, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony*, that Powhatan did no such thing and that a different group of piedmont Natives, the Mondoag, captured the Roanoke colonists rather quickly after their departure inland

¹⁴³ This too is controversial. The Roanoke colonists would have had to move beyond the reach of the Secotan and other groups antagonized by the earlier English settlers. If one accepts that they moved northward to the Chesapeake, Powhatan may have had them killed. However, Miller and Horn find it more likely they moved westward, into the North Carolina Piedmont to live among the Chowan. James P. Horn, *A Land as God Made It* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 145; Miller, *Roanoke*, 228-237.

¹⁴⁴ William Strachey, "The History of Travel into Virginia Britannia," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile, (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 648.

from Roanoke. After their capture, those colonists who survived were split up and sold as slaves, perhaps to work in the many copper mines in the area. This explains why there were many different reports of where some of the colonists were and why there are no Native reports of a large group of English settlers living together as would be expected had they remained with the Native groups around the Chesapeake.¹⁴⁵ Miller argues that Powhatan was given the blame in order to shift public opinion towards the Jamestown colonists in England who were facing questions about the legitimacy of their occupation of Native land and outrage at incoming reports of English atrocities, though this seems a little unlikely given the attitudes of the day.¹⁴⁶ At any rate, it is not the goal of this thesis to speculate on what really became of the Roanoke colonists. Even so, some of the sources used to help place where the Roanoke survivors wound up inform our discussion about the fates of runaways among the Natives during the Jamestown period.

As there are only a few, shadowy sources, we can not know for sure what became of the Lost Colonists after they headed inland excepting some reports that small numbers worked as slaves for various native groups. It is impossible to know how long the colonists lived together as a group before being killed, enslaved, or adopted, and there are many theories. For our purposes, we shall look at the limited number of reports on the Lost Colonists, in an attempt to demonstrate that the English were not likely adoptees.

¹⁴⁵ Horn, *A Land as God Made It*, 145-146.

¹⁴⁶ The whole argument is much more complex than this, but it essentially rests on whether or not one believes John Smith was telling the truth in his early writing, or embellished for political or literary reasons his story once back in England. This is essentially the same argument surrounding Smith's whether one believes in Smith's famous salvation by Pocahontas, his early reports say he was well treated by the Powhatan, but once in England he remembers that he was almost killed until Pocahontas saved him. Miller, *Roanoke*, 222-225.

In December 1608, John Smith sent Michael Sickelmore with some Native guides from Jamestown to search for the Roanoke survivors. Later, Nathaniel Powell and Anas Todkill also set out to search among the Mondoag for the Lost Colonists. Smith reported that neither group found anything save that the colonists were reported dead.¹⁴⁷ However, instructions given Sir Thomas Gates in May 1609 by the Council of Virginia suggest this may not have been all Powell and Todkill reported. The true report of Powell and Todkill is mentioned in the Council of Virginia's *True and Sincere Declaration*:

...some of our nation planted by Sir Walter Raleigh [remain] yet alive within fifty mile of our fort,... as is testified by two of our colony sent out to seek them, who, though denied by the savages speech with them, found crosses and letters, the characters and assured testimonies of Christians, newly cut into the barks of trees.¹⁴⁸

This is confirmed in the report of a foreign dignitary in London: "They also hold it for certain that some English are still alive there, the ones taken there some years ago by Sir Walter Raleigh, knight, and that they will be found over fifty miles from their colony. [For] they have had word and found crosses carved in trees."¹⁴⁹

There are many reasons why Smith may have wished to keep his knowledge of the Lost Colonists a secret, though it seems clear that the "two of our colony" were Powell and Todkill. Interestingly, they were denied the right to speak with, or actually

¹⁴⁷ Smith, "The Proceedings," 244, 265-66.

¹⁴⁸ The Council of Virginia, "A True Declaration of the estate of the colony in Virginia, with a confutation of such scandalous reports as have tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 367; Miller, Roanoke, 237.

¹⁴⁹ The report was filed by Emanuel van Meteren, a representative for Dutch merchants in London. Emanuel Van Meteren, "Commentarien ofte Memorien van den Nederlandtschen Staet / Handel / Oorloghen end Gheschiedenissen van onesn tyden / etc.," in *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter: 1606-1609*, Vol. 2, ed. Philip L. Barbour, trans. John Parker (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 251-252 and 279.

see their lost countrymen. This does not suggest the Lost Colonists had been adopted, but rather that they were enslaved. Moreover, the presence of carved crosses was more than a Christian pronouncement. Recall a cross had been the agreed upon symbol of distress before White left the colonists to return to England back on Roanoke.¹⁵⁰

Another piece of evidence suggesting the colonists did indeed survive is in the instructions given to Sir Thomas Gates upon his departure for Virginia regarding where he might find some valuable resources as well as the Lost Colonists.

Besides, you are near to rich copper mines of Ritanoë, and may pass them by one branch of this river, and by another Peccarecamicke, where you shall find four of the English alive left by Sir Walter Raweley, which escaped from the slaughter of Powhatan of Roanocke, upon the first arrival of our colony, and live under the protection of a wiroane called Gepanocon, enemy to Powhatan, by whose consent you shall never recover them. One of these were worth much labor. And if you find them not, yet search into this country. It is more probably than towards the north.¹⁵¹

The above passage combines the two theories about what happened to the lost colonists. They were both killed by Powhatan and enslaved by his enemies. Whether this is true is debatable as Powhatan of Roanocke may not be the Powhatan the Jamestown settlers were familiar with.¹⁵² At any rate, it seems likely the colonists were held as slaves, and considered beyond rescue. Their unrecoverability combined with their high worth as

¹⁵⁰ James Horn "Imperfect Understandings: Rumor, Knowledge , and Uncertainty In Early Virginia," 533, n.44.

¹⁵¹ Quoted by Edward Wright Haile, "Introduction," in *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter: 1606-1609*, Vol. 2, ed. Philip L. Barbour, trans. John Parker (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 23-24.

¹⁵² Powhatan doesn't necessarily refer to one person. Recall, Powhatan was English name for Wahunsonacock the leader of the Powhatan paramount chiefdom. As such, Powhatan might refer to Wahunsonacock or Powhatan or any subordinate Powhatan werowance.

laborers suggests that the colonists were not enjoying a life of leisure among the Natives.

This is supported by William Strachey in his *History of Travel*:

At Ritanoë the weroane Eyanoco preserved 7 of the English
alive-four men, two boys, and one young maid, who
escaped and fled up the River of Chaonoke-to beat his
copper, of which he hath certain mines at the said
Ritanoë....¹⁵³

Strachey goes on to maintain that Powhatan was responsible for the deaths of most of the colonists, but his acknowledgement that at least some are put to work as copper beaters is more interesting. It seems to confirm the thesis that the colonists were largely useless as adoptees except where they could do something directly beneficial for the Natives. This is true whether Powhatan or the Mandoag killed the settlers outright or put them to work beating copper. Either way, it seems clear the Natives did not treat English runaways as novelties, nor allow them to live idle lives unless they provided a real or spiritual service or trade good.

Copper both represented and innately possessed power. Its red color was especially important in the symbolism of the Eastern Algonquians.¹⁵⁴ Native Americans acquired copper, before the arrival of Europeans, through large exchange and trade networks. There were also some natural copper deposits in the Blue Ridge areas of Virginia and Maryland. The mining and refining of copper in by the Native Americans would have thus required the efforts of miners, metalworkers, and ritual specialists.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Strachey, "The History of Travel into Virginia Britannia," 596.

¹⁵⁴ Michael J. Klein and Douglas W. Sanford. "The Contact Era in the Northern Neck of Virginia," in *Indian and European Contact in Context: The Mid-Atlantic Region*, ed. Dennis B. Blanton and Julia A. King (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 52; Miller and Hamell, "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade," 311-328.

¹⁵⁵ Klein and Sanford, 53.

Axtell suggests that Native Americans looked on European mechanical and manufactured goods as possessing spiritual power and reckoned Europeans to have been given these goods through supernatural means or at least been taught how to make them by supernatural beings.¹⁵⁶ It seems likely that the Native American desire for copper, combined with the logical conclusion that because the English possessed metal wares, they were likely good at working copper was all that kept the colonists from being killed outright, especially when one considers that men were unlikely to be adopted even from other Native groups. If the English from Roanoke brought any copper to trade with the Natives, as the settlers at Jamestown did, word that they could supply copper would have quickly spread, and it seems likely that some Native American groups may have believed if they could supply it they could mine and provide it directly from local sources.

Despite the dearth of sources concerning the fate of the Roanoke settlers, the mention of work in copper mines in several different contemporary reports is a rather specific charge to be pure speculation. Even so, clearly, the evidence in this chapter is vague. However, the discussion about the possible fate of the Lost Colonists does help make the larger point that Englishmen, fresh from England, would have been of little use as adoptees by the Native Americans unless they had some special skill or were believed to have some special skill, like copper smithing. In the next chapter specific cases of runaways from Jamestown are analyzed in an attempt to arrive at some conclusions about why more English settlers did not run away to join the Powhatans.

¹⁵⁶ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 11.

Chapter V

RUNAWAYS FROM JAMESTOWN

This chapter looks at specific cases of runaways who either ran away or refused to return after being allowed to live among the Powhatans. While it may seem that running away from Jamestown was a rare act only attempted by ruffians and scoundrels seeking an easy meal and the company of women, running away in the earliest days at Jamestown happened regularly and for reasons as diverse as those who ran away. Because it reflected a rejection of English culture and leadership, running away did not often find its way into the historical record, as it would reflect poorly on those recording it. The Powhatans' willingness to accept the English runaways fluctuated with their needs, and the Powhatans' attitude had as much to do with encouraging or discouraging runaways as English push factors like hunger, lack of women, and fighting among leadership. Not all those colonists who went to live with the Powhatans were runaways, however. Gabriel Archer reported on arriving in August of 1609 "many [colonists] were dispersed in the Savages towns, living upon their almes for an ounce of Copper a day."¹⁵⁷ Some of this may have been due to deliberate policy as in the spring of 1609 Smith sent some English to live among the Native Americans as the food had run out. The comparatively good life made many English want to stay among the Natives.¹⁵⁸ The various motivations for

¹⁵⁷ Gabriel Archer, "Letter from Jamestown, 31 August 1609," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 352.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, "The Proceedings," 265.

runaways and some of the actions of the Powhatans support the thesis that the Powhatans did not accept early English runaways without condition and that it was Powhatan lack of interest that kept even more of the Jamestown colonists from running away, not English disdain for the Native Americans.

Runaways seldom show up in the historical record, and there are almost no first-hand accounts of what they thought or felt that led them to run away to join the Native Americans. However, it must have happened with some regularity because in 1612 a law was passed making living with the Natives, without permission, punishable by death.¹⁵⁹ The only first-hand account of a Jamestown runaway that survives is that of William White, who defected almost immediately upon arrival in Virginia only to run back to the English after an unspecified number of weeks among the Natives. White's original account has been lost, though John Smith, Samuel Purchas, and William Strachey make reference to his report.¹⁶⁰

William White - Runaway

White ran away at some point quickly after arriving at Jamestown and found his way to the town of Quiyoughcohannock located north of Jamestown.

Quiyoughcohannock was one of the towns in Powhatan's paramount chiefdom led by a

¹⁵⁹ William Strachey, "For the Colony in Virginia Britannia: Laws Divine, Moral, and Martial, etc.," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile, (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 32.; Woolley, 95.

¹⁶⁰ William Strachey, "The History of Travel into Virginia Britannia," 617; Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 127.; William White, "Excerpt published in *Purchas His Pilgrimage: The Black Boys Ceremony*," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007): 138-141.

local *weroance* called Chapock. While living with Chapock was probably better than living at Jamestown, White did not paint an idyllic picture. The Native Americans complained that deer were becoming scarce and food supplies were low; the entire region was suffering a drought.¹⁶¹ Because Chapock had to pay tribute to Powhatan, he was interested in acquiring some of the trade goods the English had been distributing. Chapock could substitute English trade goods for his typical tributes of food and deerskins, making life easier for himself and the people of Quiyoughcohannock, particularly if English goods could be obtained simply by asking.¹⁶² Edward Wingfield recorded the coming of Chapock to trade with the English in the initial period of white's defection¹⁶³ Chapock wanted to know when the English would be getting a new shipment of trade goods and promised to bring some corn to trade when his crop matured. The English gave him a red waistcoat and Wingfield records that he returned to trade as he said he would.¹⁶⁴

The notable thing about this encounter for the purpose of this study is that Chapock did not mention that he was harboring a runaway when he came to trade. Moreover, the English must not have known that White was living with Chapock or they would have certainly asked for him back. Indeed, Wingfield says in his *A Discourse of Virginia* right after the account of Chapock, that

¹⁶¹ White, "The Black Boys Ceremony," 141; Benjamin Woolley, *Savage Kingdom: The True Story of Jamestown, 1607, and the Settlement of America*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 97.

¹⁶² Woolley, 97. ; Richter, "Tsenacommacah & The Atlantic World," 47-48.

¹⁶³ In Wingfield's account the werowance of Quiyoughcohannock was known as Tapanah. The English also believed his town to be called Rappahannock or Tappahannock. Barbour, 1969, 147.

¹⁶⁴ Edward Maria Wingfield, "A Discourse of Virginia per Edward Maria Wingfield," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, edited by Edward Wright Haile, (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 186.

The [fifth] of September, Paspasheigh sent us a boy that was run from us. This was the first assurance of this peace with us....The rest of the werroyances do likewise send our men runagates to us home again, using them well during their being with them, so as now they being well rewarded at home at their return they take little joy to travel abroad without passports.¹⁶⁵

This passage suggests the Powhatans knew the English would like to have their runaways returned. The Powhatans obliged, either to obtain trade goods and favor with the English or simply because they did not want them. Wingfield's report also suggests that the English did not have a life of idle ease when among the Native Americans. His phrase, "using them well" suggests the Natives somehow employed runaways. Moreover, it seems clear that the Natives were not interested in housing English runaways as they sent many back. If, as Wingfield says, the Natives sent some runaways back to the English, why was William White allowed to stay with Chapock? Perhaps he allowed White to stay because he provided Chapock with a valuable service. White was an interpreter and provided information about English shipments and trade goods. When White finally left to return to Jamestown, it was as a messenger of Chapock. Chapock used William White to gain information and to send a message to the English. There is evidence of White's position in Native society in his accounts of Native ceremonies.

White's accounts of two ceremonies he witnessed while among the Native Americans have survived probably because they seemed so fantastic to English ears.¹⁶⁶ The first has come to be known as the "black boy ceremony" (though the boys in

¹⁶⁵ Wingfield, 186.

¹⁶⁶ The relevant parts of William White's account published by Purchas are culled and presented in: William White, "Excerpt published in *Purchas His Pilgrimage: The Black Boys Ceremony*," in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 138-141.

question were painted white) or huskanaw. It is beyond the scope of this paper to relate all the possible cultural and religious meanings behind the ceremony, but the huskanaw appears to have been some kind of rite of passage for Powhatan boys, though White believed it was a child sacrifice.¹⁶⁷ White's description of the ceremony is significant because the Powhatans did not allow White to see the entire ceremony. His exclusion demonstrates his position in the tribe as non-member. White was not fully accepted and the Quiyoughcohannock only allowed him to stay to provide information about the English, act as an interpreter, and hopefully, help acquire trade goods.

The second ceremony White witnessed in November or December 1607 was when the entire town of Quiyoughcohannock packed up and moved to a more remote site to engage in deer hunting. White described the camp as extremely cold, but noted that the Indians did not seem to notice it and claimed their red body paint protected them.¹⁶⁸ Many other Indians joined the group including Powhatan's brother and outside-chief Opehancanough. Later on in December, a group of Indian men came to Opehancanough's tent dragging a captured Englishman, George Casson. The Indians used White as an interpreter to question Casson. Casson claimed he had been left alone on a boat during an exploratory trip with Captain John Smith and some others and while waiting he had been enticed onto land by some native women and captured. Casson's account of the events surrounding his capture failed to impress Opehancanough, who killed Casson in front of the assembled Indians and William White, who recounted the

¹⁶⁷ Gleach describes the Huskanaw as a "vision quest," while Barbour believes those who recorded it embellished White's account. For a thorough description of the ceremony and its significance in Powhatan culture see, Philip L. Barbour, "The Riddle of the Powhatan "Black Boyes," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), 148-154; Gleach, 38-39.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, "A Map of Virginia," 161.

grisly execution.¹⁶⁹ The Natives tied Casson to a tree and his “joints” were cut off with mussel shells or strong reeds and cast into a fire. Next, they removed skin of his head and face and split his belly, spilling his entrails. This accomplished, the Indians ignited what remained of Casson and the tree supporting him. Strachey recounts this story noting that typically, the Indians “only punish and not put to death” offenders of the law by beating them severely.¹⁷⁰ Woolley suggests that the theatrical nature of Casson’s death indicates he must have done something terrible, like raping or assaulting the women who “enticed” him. Moreover, Opehancanough may have executed Casson in such a theatrical way because he wanted White to witness the event and report what happened to Englishmen who assaulted Indian women.¹⁷¹ Whatever the reason, it seems to have removed White’s desire to live among the Indians and he returned to Jamestown, where he remained until at least 1621.¹⁷² His story demonstrates one of the recurring themes of this analysis, that the Powhatans often had ulterior and complex motives for allowing English runaways to settle with them, in this case to gather information and to act as a messenger and interpreter. William White ran away to live with the Quiyoughcohannock and was kept and trained as an interpreter, until he was sent back to the English by Opehancanough. It was only the covetousness of his patron werowance, who thought he would be useful in negotiating with the English, that kept him alive. Even his return

¹⁶⁹ White, 141

¹⁷⁰ Smith confirms that this was a fairly unique punishment in his *Map of Virginia* stating that, “Their ordinary correction is to beate [offenders] with cudgels.” Smith, “A Map of Virginia.” 175.

¹⁷¹ Woolley, 114-115

¹⁷² Philip Barbour, *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1964): 146,436.

served the purposes of Opehancanough and the Powhatans. In retrospect, it seems White was extremely lucky to survive his running away.

The Dutchmen and the Disaffected

In December of 1608, as part of a deal for food, John Smith sent men to build an English-style house for Powhatan at his regional headquarters at Werowocomoco. Powhatan agreed to trade a ship load of corn for an English style house and “a grindstone, 50 swords, some peeces, a cock and a hen, [and] copper and beads.”¹⁷³ It seemed like a good deal to Smith, who reckoned on the construction of the house, without the delivery of the other items, being enough to ensure the delivery of the promised corn. Moreover, Smith admitted he was glad to have the builders of the house eating with the Powhatans, as Smith had no food or use for them at the time.¹⁷⁴

John Smith recorded the men sent to build the house as four Dutchmen who had arrived in September with Captain Newport’s second supply of colonists and Richard Savage the English interpreter.¹⁷⁵ Smith believed that Powhatan wanted to use the men Smith sent him for more practical purpose than building him another house, though it is unclear if Powhatan convinced the Dutchmen or if they offered their services to him.

Smith seems to blame the Dutchmen more than Powhatan:

¹⁷³ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 242.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 243-244.

¹⁷⁵ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 244; Most scholars assume Smith’s “Dutchmen” were actually Germans. We retain his usage here to avoid confusion. For more on the debate over the “Dutchmen’s” nationality see: Philip L. Barbour, “The Identity of the First Poles in America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January 1964): 148-154.

The next day he [Powhatan] reviewed his building which hee little intended should proceed; for the Dutchmen finding his plenty, and knowing our want, and perceived his preparation to surprise us, little thinking wee could escape both him and famine, (to obtaine his favour) revealed to him as much as they knew of our estates and projects, and how to prevent them¹⁷⁶

The Dutchmen quickly defected to Powhatan's cause and did all they could to assist Powhatan in acquiring English arms and trade goods. They revealed all they knew about the English settlement and plans.¹⁷⁷ Smith recorded that Powhatan sent two of the Dutchmen, Adam and Francis, to Jamestown with the story that Smith, who was visiting Powhatan at the time, needed more weapons and that the builders needed some more tools and clothing. "[B]y this colourable excuse, he obtained 6 or 7 more to their confederacie, such expert theefes, that presently furnished them with a great many swords, pike-heads, peeces, shot, powder and such like. They had Salvages at hand ready to carry it away."¹⁷⁸ The above passage's mention of a "confederacie" suggests there were many English conspirators helping the Dutchmen. Indeed, in the following months, Smith recorded that he noticed that the stores were being depleted but did not realize they were being stolen and given to the Indians.

Eventually, the co-conspirators living at Jamestown began to wonder why they had not yet been asked to come and live with the defectors among the Powhatans. Smith reckoned the traitors' primary reason for betraying their countrymen must have been the promise of living among the Powhatans. Smith believed Powhatan would allow them to

¹⁷⁶ Smith, "The Proceedings," 246.

¹⁷⁷ James Horn, "Imperfect Understandings," 527-528.

¹⁷⁸ Smith, "The Proceedings," 250-251

live “free from those miseries that would happen [in] the Colony.”¹⁷⁹ The conspirators sent one of the Dutchmen who remained in Jamestown (there had originally been eight), disguised as an Indian, to inquire when they would be sent for. Smith got word of this disguised Dutchman and set out to capture him, eventually succeeding. The messenger claimed the whole thing was a big misunderstanding brought on by the language barrier between himself and the English. When this argument failed, he argued that his countrymen were actually prisoners of Powhatan’s who were in danger of death if he did not help him. His pleas did not impress Smith, who had the messenger put in irons.¹⁸⁰

Now aware that there had been a plot, Smith was interested in getting the defected Dutchmen and any accomplices back to punish and make an example of them. To this end, he captured a local werowance, the “King of Paspasheigh” and tried to exchange him for the Dutchmen. The werowance sent messengers begging Powhatan to exchange him but they always came back with Powhatan’s response that the Dutchmen were with him of their own volition and did not wish to return and that he had neither the time nor the inclination to drag them back.¹⁸¹ Eventually the captive king escaped and, though Smith dispatched some men to retrieve him, they could not.

Undeterred, Smith next used William Volda, a colonist from Switzerland, as an emissary to try and extradite the Dutchmen and their companions. However, Volda proved also to be in league with the Powhatans. Of him Smith said:

¹⁷⁹ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 259

¹⁸⁰ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 260.

¹⁸¹ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 260-261.

For this wicked hypocrite, by the seeming hate he bore to the lewd condition of his cursed countrimen, having this opportunitie by his imploiment to regaine them, conveyed them everie thing they desired to effect their project to destroe the colonie. With much devotion they expected the Spanyard, to whom they intended to have done good service. But to begin with the first oportunitie, they seeing necessitie thus inforced us to disperse our selves; importuned Powhatan to lend them but his forces, and they would not onlie destroe our hogs, fire our towne, and betraie our Pinnas; but bring to his service and subjection the most part of our companies. With this plot they had acquainted manie discontents and manie were agreed to their divelish practice.¹⁸²

Volda and the Dutchmen's plan was betrayed by some of the aforementioned discontents, Thomas Dowse and Thomas Mallard. Smith wanted to use Dowse and Mallard to lead the Dutchmen to a trap, but the word got out so he decided on the decidedly less elegant plan of simply sending two men to stab the defectors. News of this plan reached Powhatan, who sent word that "it was not his fault to detaine them [the Dutchmen], nor hinder his [Smith's] men from executing his command, nor did he, nor would he maintaine them, or anie to occasion his [Smith's] displeasure."¹⁸³ Powhatan's response regarding extraditing the Dutchmen to Jamestown had thus softened slightly. When Smith first demanded that Powhatan deliver the Dutchmen, in exchange for the King of Paspaheigh, Powhatan told him they were free-agents, not subject to Powhatan's control. Now Powhatan repeated this statement, adding that of course Smith could come and get them if he liked.

Before Smith could press the matter any further, Captain Argall arrived from England and seems to have changed the subject from the need to recapture the Dutch

¹⁸² Smith, "The Proceedings," 266.

¹⁸³ Smith, "The Proceedings," 266-267.

runaways. Indeed, it is unclear what happened to the Dutchmen. They are only mentioned once more, when Smith recounts all the complaints against him saying: “The dutch-men that he had appointed to bee stabd for their treacheries, swore he sent to poison them with rats baine.”¹⁸⁴ That they were around to complain, may suggest the Dutchmen survived whatever punishment, if any, Smith had for them and returned to live among the English at some point.

The Dutchmen and their confederates were the only runaways that truly defected, in the sense of changing sides with the intent of betraying their original compatriots. They not only ran away to the Indians, but actively planned Jamestown’s destruction and gave the Indians valuable information and weapons. Smith seems to suggest this has something to do with their being foreigners. However, he admits that many discontented English were in league with them. It is interesting to note that Smith believed that the Dutchmen were not only running away to have an easier life among the Indians, but that they believed the Spanish would come along any day and destroy the colony and they wanted to be on the Spaniards good side when that day came. Thus it is clear that even minor members of the colony were actors in an Atlantic world setting. The Dutchmen and their co-conspirators were concerned about starving and Indian attack, but they were perhaps also holding out for Spanish attack and liberation from Smith’s control.

In Smith’s accounts of the defectors, he mentions the Dutchmen by their national name repeatedly, and seldom includes their English co-conspirators. Smith was writing to encourage further colonization by the English and to justify his actions as leader. With this in mind, it becomes obvious why he used the Dutchmen as his representatives of the

¹⁸⁴ Smith, “The Proceedings,” 274.

deserter/defector colonist. The Dutchmen seem naturally less invested in the venture owing to their foreignness. An English reader would be less apt to wonder what could be so bad in Virginia as to drive men away from European civilization if those men were foreign and not English. Running away is a reflection on both the country of Virginia and on the leadership of Smith. Thus, while it was probably necessary to include a few accounts of runaways in order for Smith to be taken seriously (after all everyone knew it happened), blaming defection on people who were already “other” makes it a little easier to swallow.¹⁸⁵

Powhatan allowed the Dutchmen to defect because they promised, and delivered, goods that he could not get himself. The Virginia Company and the Crown forbade the English to trade weapons to the Natives for obvious reasons. The potential to gain guns would have more than offset the cost of the runaways boarding for Powhatan. Moreover, Powhatan’s eventual returning of the Dutchmen demonstrates that they he never fully accepted into Powhatan society. They were a means to an end and once their usefulness had ended he gave them up.

Forced Exchange Students

In a much different situation, some English colonists were forced to live among the Powhatans, whether they wanted to or not. The English left both Henry Spelman and Thomas Savage with the Indians as hostages or exchange students to study the language and customs of the Indians and act as interpreters. While their experiences do not exactly fit in with this discussion of voluntary runaways, their experiences highlight some of the trends among runaways.

¹⁸⁵ Canny, “The Permissive Frontier,” 30; Kupperman, “English Perceptions of Treachery,” 282.

Far from runaways, neither Spelman nor Savage volunteered to live among the Powhatans, so it is unknown how the two felt about their assignment. At their first meeting in February 1608, Captain Newport presented to Powhatan, Thomas Savage, who was then a thirteen year-old boy. Claiming Savage was his son, Newport offered to leave him with Powhatan as a token of good will. In exchange, Newport took one of Powhatan's advisors, Namontack, to live among the English.¹⁸⁶ Namontack eventually returned to London with Newport while Savage remained with the Powhatans, and became a trusted intermediary.

Henry Spelman arrived in Virginia in October 1609; he recorded his reason for leaving as: "Being in Displeasure of my friends, and desirous to see other countries."¹⁸⁷ He quickly got his wish as John Smith signed him up to live among the Powhatans in order to learn the language and act as an interpreter.¹⁸⁸ Spelman lived with Powhatan's son Parahunt [little Powhatan] for a few days before he left and returned to Jamestown. He ended up remaining in Jamestown until Thomas Savage arrived back with a Powhatan trading envoy.¹⁸⁹ Savage arrived at Jamestown with some representatives of Powhatan to deliver a gift of venison. When the time came to return to Powhatan, Savage seems to have wanted an English friend to go with him. Spelman returned with Savage citing the scarcity of resources at Jamestown as a factor in his willingness to go: "I was appointed to go, which I the more willingly did by reason that victuals were scarce with us, carrying

¹⁸⁶ Smith, "The Proceedings," 216; Strong, *Captive Selves*, 43-46.

¹⁸⁷ Henry Spelman, "Relation of Virginia, 1609." in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 482.

¹⁸⁸ Spelman says Smith "sold" him to Parahunt without his knowledge; Spelman, 482.

¹⁸⁹ Spelman., 483.

with me some copper and a hatchet, which I had gotten. [And] coming to the Great Powetan, I presented to him such things as I had, which he took, using me very kindly [setting this Savage and me at his own table mess].”¹⁹⁰ Spelman reported that once he was among the Indians for some months, Powhatan hatched a plot to kill some English colonists but before he could act on it, Powhatan sent Spelman and a Dutchman named Samwell to a neighboring village, perhaps so they would not witness the attack. After learning of the attack, from Savage, Spelman became anxious about Powhatan’s intentions for him.¹⁹¹ “The king in show made still much of us, yet his mind was much declined from us, which made us fear the worst.”¹⁹² About six months later, the neighboring “king of Patomeck [Potomac]” came to visit Powhatan and treated Spelman, Savage, and Samwell especially well.¹⁹³ The three colluded to go away with the visiting Potomac when he left.¹⁹⁴ After leaving, however, Powhatan, apparently tipped off by Savage, sent men to retrieve the runaways. Powhatan’s men killed Samwell the Dutchman, but Spelman escaped to live with the Potomacs for a year until Captain Argyll

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ The Dutchmen were not sent to live with Powhatan until December 1608 so it must have been after this time though Spelman does not specify; Smith, “The Proceedings,” 242-243.

¹⁹² Spelman, 485; John Smith relates in his *General Historie* that a boy named Henry Spilman was one of two survivors of a trading expedition led by Captain Sickelmore just after the departure of Smith for England in the fall of 1609. Smith reported that Pocahontas saved Spilman while the Natives killed the rest. Smith, “Generall Historie,” 232. Spelman does not record Pocahontas saving or aiding him in his *Relation*.

¹⁹³ The Patawomeck [Potomac] were a group on the fringes of Tsenacommacah, it appears they paid some tribute to Powhatan but were eager to assert their independence and were far enough away from Powhatan’s center of power to remain semi-autonomous. Rice, 131-134.

¹⁹⁴ Spelman, 485; Strong, *Captivity*, 64; Roundtree, “The Powhatans and the English,” 183; Rice, 132.

heard of his existence and bought Spelman and a boat load of corn from the Potomac leader for some copper.¹⁹⁵

Spelman's story is significant for a number of reasons. First, Samwell the Dutchman must have been one of the four who John Smith sent to build a house for Powhatan. That Powhatan's men went after and killed him when he tried to leave with the Potomacs suggests that Powhatan's telling John Smith that the Dutchmen were free to do as they pleased may not have been completely true.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, Powhatan may have killed Samwell because Powhatan did not want his scheme with the Dutchmen revealed to the English or other werowances. This may seem at odds with our thesis; however, remember that the English/Dutch settlers Powhatan was interested in keeping were those that had either been formally adopted as part of a larger trade agreement (Savage) or were able to provide trade goods (the Dutchmen) through theft and deception. So, Powhatan's eagerness to retain these converts is not in contrast to our thesis. If these had been just any English settlers who had nothing to offer Powhatan, it seems unlikely Powhatan would have pursued them; indeed, he likely would never have adopted or entertained them at all.

Spelman's account also brings into question the loyalty of Thomas Savage. Spelman reports that as the three European's were leaving, "Savage feigned some excuse of stay, and unknown to us went back to the Powetan and acquainted him with our [*fleeing*] departing with the Potomac."¹⁹⁷ Spelman's account is the only mention of

¹⁹⁵ Spelman, 481-486; Strachey, "The History of Travel," 606; Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...", 236; Strong, *Captive Selves*, 63-64.

¹⁹⁶ Smith, "The Proceedings," 260-261.

¹⁹⁷ Spelman, 485.

Savage's possible disloyalty to the English. Smith mentions him only as a useful interpreter, and indeed, Savage eventually went on to have an English family and farm in Virginia.¹⁹⁸ It seems likely that Spelman is incorrect about Savage reporting his escape plans. Even so, Spelman's suspicions probably arise because Savage had lived with the Indians longer than he had. Savage likely appeared suspiciously comfortable among the Powhatans. There seems to be a feeling among the English in the early colonial period that the Indians had a powerful draw and would seduce English settlers to become like them. That Spelman could accuse a fellow defector may demonstrate how strongly he himself felt the pull of the Powhatans' lifestyle.¹⁹⁹

Driven by Hunger

Despite the more colorful reasons English settlers found themselves among the Powhatans listed above, the most common reason they sought to live among the Natives must have been hunger. Perhaps the most upsetting account of the state of things in Jamestown is the account of Henry Collins who "murdered his wife, ripped the child out of her womb and threw it into the river, and after chopped the mother in pieces and salted her for his food."²⁰⁰ Collins claimed starvation made him do it, but a search revealed he

¹⁹⁸ Smith, "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles....," 289-290.

¹⁹⁹ Canny, "The Permissive Frontier," 33.

²⁰⁰ George Percy, "A True Relation of the proceedings and occurrents of moment which have hap'ned in Virginia from the time Sir Thomas Gates was shipwrack'd upon the Bermudes, anno 1609, until my departure out of the country, which was in anno Domini 1612," In *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 505.

had “a good quantity of meal, oatmeal, beans and peas.”²⁰¹ This story was repeated and embellished by former colonists once back in England to illustrate the horrible conditions in Virginia. It must have been a popular tale as the Council of Virginia found it necessary to address and discredit it in 1610. Officials acknowledged the story but stressed it was a case of criminal insanity, not starvation. It is difficult to prove either case but it seems likely the grisly nature of the story would have had a chilling effect on recruitment no matter what the reason.²⁰²

While Henry Collins was chopping up his wife in the winter of 1609-10, George Percy was leading the colony. John Smith had returned to England in October after suffering a serious wound.²⁰³ Percy related “many of our men this starving time did run away unto the savages, whom we never heard of after.”²⁰⁴ Percy goes on to say how the natives killed many settlers who strayed into the wilderness looking for food. These accounts are confirmed in the 1624 publication, *A Brief Declaration of the plantation of Virginia during the first twelve years, ... by the Ancient Planters now remaining alive in*

²⁰¹ The Council of Virginia, “A True Declaration of the estate of the colony in Virginia, with a confutation of such scandalous reports as have tended to the disgrace of so worthy an enterprise,” in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 473-474; William Strachey, “A True Reportory” in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 440; It is interesting that the carrying out of a second search to confirm Collins’ claims of starvation seem to suggest that if he had been telling the truth it, the authorities may have considered starvation a mitigating circumstance for killing ones wife and child.

²⁰² Percy, “A True Relation,” 505-506.

²⁰³ It is amazing that Smith survived the ordeal. “Sleeping in his boat, ... accidentallie, one fired his powder bag, which tore his flesh from his bodie and thighs, 9. or 10. inches square in a most pitiful manner; but to quench the tormenting fire, frying him in his cloathes he leaped over bord into the deepe river, where ere they could recover him he was neere drownnd. In this estat[e], without either Chirurgion [surgeon] or chirurgery he was to go neare 100 miles.” Kupperman, *Captain John Smith: A Select Edition of His Writings*, 125-126.

²⁰⁴ Percy, “A True Relation,” 506.

Virginia.²⁰⁵ One telling example was that of Lieutenant Michael Sicklemore, whom the English found with his companions, dead; his Native killers stuffed his mouth with bread.²⁰⁶ The message was clear: English demands for food were not taken kindly.²⁰⁷ Percy's many accounts of Indians killing needy colonists suggest that Percy's phrase, "whom we never heard of after," meant the runaways were dead, not living with or adopted by the Indians.²⁰⁸ It is important to note, however, that Percy was recounting a horrible experience. Estimates vary, but a large proportion of the people in the colony died under his leadership in the winter of 1609.²⁰⁹ Edward Wright Haile calls Percy's *True Relation* "a piece of grimness relieved by sheer horror."²¹⁰ At any rate, it appears that by the winter of 1609, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the English to run away to the Natives.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman suggests that the high death-rates in Jamestown were related not only to malnutrition and diseases like malaria and bloody-flux, but to a hopeless English mindset akin to that of modern prisoners of war. In short, the colonists gave up on living in the face of insurmountable odds. The colonists were far from home,

²⁰⁵ The Ancient Planters of Virginia, "A Brief Declaration." in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile, (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 896.

²⁰⁶ Michael Sicklemore should not to be confused with John Sicklemore, alias John Ratcliffe, a colonial leader who also met a gruesome death. Percy, "A True Relation," 503.

²⁰⁷ Percy, "A True Relation," 503. Percy notes that the incident reminds him of a similar incident involving a Spanish general in Chile who after antagonizing the local Natives for gold, was forced by them to drink molten gold.

²⁰⁸ Percy, "A True Relation," 506.

²⁰⁹ Virginia Bernhard, "'Men, Women and Children' at Jamestown: Population and Gender in Early Virginia, 1607-1610," *The Journal of Southern History* LVIII, no.4 (November 1992): 610-613.

²¹⁰ Percy, "A True Relation," 497.

largely confined to their fort at Jamestown, wary of attack, existed on a diet of primarily corn, and not sure that any help was coming. As such, they suffered from psychological, as well as physiological diseases contributing to their high mortality rate. Their mindset led to anorexia, physical pain, and apathy.²¹¹ The misery of the early years at Jamestown cannot be overstated. As push factors go, the sickness and general ennui must have been overwhelming. Settlers in Jamestown succumbed to salt-poisoning as well as the typical fluxes and maladies associated with poor sanitation and Strachey notes that the natives were not so foolish in their city planning.

[M]any diseases and sicknesses which have happened to our people, who are indeed strangely afflicted with Fluxes and Agues; and every particular season...hath his particular infirmity too; all of which, if it had been our fortunes to have seated upon some hill accommodated with fresh springs and clear air, as do the Naives of the Country, we might have, I believe, well escaped.²¹²

The symptoms of salt poisoning are “lassitude and irritability” while diarrhea can cause a lack of folic acid leading to depression. Kupperman believes disease and apathy were the reason for the much reported laziness in Jamestown.²¹³ John Smith and Thomas Dale used harsh methods to cure the apathy that was contributing to the high death-rate in Jamestown. By forcing the colonists to work towards common goals, they prevented languishing in despair and death.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown,” *The Journal of American History* 66, no.1 (June 1979): 24-40. ; Darrett and Anita H. Rutman, “Of Agues and Fevers: Malaria in the Early Chesapeake Authors,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (January 1976): 31-60.

²¹² William Strachey, “A True Reportory,” 431; Adams, *The Best and Worst Country in the World*, 166

²¹³ Kupperman, “Apathy and Death in Early Jamestown,” 24-40.

²¹⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, “The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18,” in *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (June, 1971): 595-596.

However, the healing power of work only went so far. The earliest English colonists in Jamestown were mostly gentlemen accompanied by their attendants who were in America on what they considered a military expedition.²¹⁵ As such, they did not expect to work for their food. Indeed, Thomas Dale may have been the cruelest taskmaster of the early Jamestown period, though he only required the colonists to work “five to eight hours a day in summer and three to six in winter.”²¹⁶ One account of Dale’s reign is recounted below:

At Michaelmas then next following [29 September 1611], Sir Thomas Dale removed himself with three hundred persons for the building of Henrico Town, where being landed he oppressed his whole company with such extraordinary labors by day and watching by night as may seem incredible to the ears of any who had not the experimental trial thereof. Want of houses at first landing in the cold of winter and pinching hunger continually biting made those imposed labors most insufferable, and the best fruits and effects thereof to be no better than the slaughter of His Majesty’s free subjects by starving, hanging, burning, breaking upon the wheel, and shooting to death. Some, more than half famished, running to the Indians to get relief, being again returned, were burnt to death. Some for stealing to satisfy their hunger were hanged, and one chained to a tree till he starved to death. Others attempting to run away in a barge and a shallop (all the boats that were then in the colony) and therein to adventure their lives for their native country, being discovered and prevented, were shot to death, hanged, and broken upon the wheel; besides continual whippings, extraordinary punishments working as slaves in irons for term of years – and that for petty offenses! –were daily executed.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ John Smith, “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...,” 225

²¹⁶ Morgan, “The Labor Problem,” 596.

²¹⁷ The Ancient Planters of Virginia, “A Brief Declaration.” in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile, (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 900.

If all the above was necessary to get even the modest sum of six to eight hours of work out of the English colonists in Jamestown, then the case for running away to the Native Americans was increased. While it is unclear how often it happened, when one looks at the life of a Jamestown colonist working under John Smith or Thomas Dale and compares that to the life of a Powhatan man, an Englishman on a military expedition would be more comfortable living the life of the Powhatan man, hunting and making war.²¹⁸ This may explain why so many ran away to the Indians, despite the fear and danger that doing so entailed. Starvation, combined with a military mindset, a disdain for manual labor and a sense of abandonment might make an English colonist consider defection. However, in the case related above the defectors returned to face death by fire.

The return of the Englishmen in the above passage is somewhat ambiguous. It is unclear if the Englishmen returned on their own after being rebuffed by the Powhatans or were physically returned by the Powhatans, though by 1611 escalated hostilities would have made it more difficult to defect to the Indians. Whether returned or simply rebuffed, the return of the English runaways confirms the thesis that it was the Natives who rejected the English, not the other way around.

Women

Women are often overlooked in accounts of Jamestown, but some English women were present in the earliest settlements in America. Benjamin Woolley suggests that the runaways, if they included women and children would have had a good chance to be adopted and integrated into Indian society, provided the Indians had enough extra food to

²¹⁸ Canny, "The Permissive Frontier," 32-33.

feed them.²¹⁹ While it is true that, in general, women and children were more easily adopted into Native American society, this assumes a great deal, particularly that English women would be as accepted as Native American women, which is problematic. Woolley's example of this happening in Jamestown is a Native informant's report to some Spanish reconnoiters looking for information about the colonists in Virginia. The informant remembered "many [English] women and children who went about through the fields and houses of the neighboring [Jamestown] Indians."²²⁰ Woolley believes these are adopted English women and children. Indeed, it seems unlikely the informant would have spotted English women and children in the houses and fields of neighboring Indians unaccompanied by English men unless they had some special relationship.²²¹ However, the briefness of the Spanish informants' report could be open to any number of interpretations.

It is difficult to place exactly when the Indian visited the area around Jamestown, though the Spanish said the Indian reported it in the summer of 1609. So, the women and children must have gone to live with the Indians sometime before that. If the Indian informant's account was correct, it seems likely that at some point before 1609-1610 some women had run away to live with the Indians. Virginia Bernhard's analysis of the female population in early Virginia suggests the English leadership did not allow women simply to visit Indian towns alone. Indeed, women were probably confined to

²¹⁹ Woolley, 259.

²²⁰ Irene A. Wright, "Spanish Policy Toward Virginia, 1606-1612; Jamestown, Ecija, and John Clark of the Mayflower," *The American Historical Review* 25, no. 3 (April 1920), 464.

²²¹ Bernhard, "'Men, Women and Children' at Jamestown," 615.

Jamestown, their immobility contributing to the misery during the starving time.²²² As there are no reports in the early Jamestown narratives of Indians capturing English women and taking them away, something that would surely be recorded as a tragedy, it seems unlikely that the women seen in the fields and houses of the Indian village were captives. This raises an interesting point: The Indian informant recounted his tale in the summer of 1609; if there were runaway English women living with the Indians, then they must have left Jamestown by then. The first women did not arrive in Jamestown until the second supply of September 1608. John Smith recorded two women on that shipment: “Mistresse Forrest, and Anne Burras her maide.”²²³ No more women arrived until the third supply of August 1609. The third shipment may have contained as many as 90 women with perhaps as many as 20 surviving the starving time of 1609-10.²²⁴ The third shipment arrived at roughly the same time the Indian reported seeing English women among the surrounding Indian villages. If the Indian informant saw English women among the Indian villagers in the summer of 1609, they would have had to run away, have been captured almost immediately upon arrival in Jamestown, or be among those few colonists John Smith paid to farm out to the surrounding Native towns, none of which seem likely.

Moreover, the informant fails to mention the weakened state of the colonists in Jamestown, certainly something the Spanish would have been eager to hear about. The report containing the Indian’s account of the Colonists paints a rosy picture of Anglo-

²²² Bernhard, 613-615.

²²³ Smith, “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...,” 184 and 191.

²²⁴ Bernhard, “Men, Women and Children,” 614-615.

Indian relations, stating that the two, “associated as friends, and [the English] entertained them much.”²²⁵ Alarmed by the good relations he saw between the English and Virginia Indians, the Spanish writer urged his King to mount an attack before the Anglo-Indian alliance and friendship solidified. As evidence, he stated it was English habit to “appease and entertain them, though with things of little value, and keep them very pleased and contented and are attaching them all to themselves.”²²⁶ This does not match George Percy’s image of Indian relations in late 1609 at all. Thus, while women and children were better candidates for adoption into Powhatan society than men, there is little evidence that those who ran away in the winter of 1609 were adopted.²²⁷ It seems more likely that George Percy’s pessimism about the fate of the runaways was warranted and that if they ran away they were probably killed outright.

Moreover, even given the awful conditions in Jamestown, it seems unlikely that English women would voluntarily run away and join the Indians. The English thought Powhatan women’s lives were nothing but grueling, tedious work while the men hunted and cavorted. Indeed, this was one of the reasons so many Englishmen sought to live with them. Even though this view was incorrect, it was the one most English colonists had of Native women, and it would have retarded the desire of English women to run away.²²⁸ This view of Powhatan women, combined with the natural fear of the unknown and semi-

²²⁵ Wright, 465.

²²⁶ Wrght, 465.

²²⁷ John Smith Recounts in his *Generall Historie* an occasion when Powhatan forces surprise another native town killing the men but taking the women and children. Smith, “The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles...,” 55-85.

²²⁸ For example: “The men bestow their times in fishing, hunting, wars, and such man-like exercises without the doors, scorning to be seen in any effeminate labor, which is the cause that the women be very painful and the men often idle.” William Strachey, “The History of Travel into Virginia Britannia,” 638.

frequent Native attacks would likely have kept most women from running away to join the Powhatans.

If some English women did manage to run away to the Indians, what would they find, what would life be like? Helen Roundtree, relying on varied ethnohistorical sources, has reconstructed the life of Powhatan women at the time of first English contact. Women worked in groups segregated from the men, performing tasks that they orchestrated themselves for optimal efficiency. Women's work demanded great physical strength and endurance as well as skill. On any given day, Powhatan women might be engaged in weeding and gathering from gardens, gathering wild foods, gathering fire wood, collecting water, preparing food, building homes, tanning hides, making pottery, weaving baskets and blankets, and any number of fine arts such as embroidery or shell bead making, all while caring for children. It seems unlikely that an adult English woman runaway would be able to pick up on the learned skills of Powhatan women quickly, even if the Powhatan women found time to teach her. After some combination of these jobs were completed, the end of the work day usually meant dinner and dancing followed by sleep, with men.²²⁹ Besides requiring great skill and physical stamina, the typical day of an Indian woman would have been completely foreign to a female English runaway. Even if the Powhatan women were willing to teach her, it is hard to believe an English woman would be able to pull her weight in a Powhatan village, except by doing those jobs, such as gathering wood and water, that were truly drudgery.

It is relevant to insert a word here about women captives. The Powhatans and indeed all the Eastern Algonquian tribes practiced captive-taking in warfare. Women and

²²⁹ Roundtree, "Powhatan Indian Women," 1-29.

children were the most likely captives. However, the Powhatans could quickly adopt and convert Native American females into their new families, as they would already know how to do most of the work they would be required to do with their new families. English women captives would have lacked all the skills and understanding necessary to become a really useful member of their captor's society. Warfare and captive taking amongst the Eastern Indians related rival groups and acted as a conduit to trade and future good relations, not just violence. Once the Powhatans captured and fully acculturated Native women into their new group, they might receive visitors from their old families and thus, these captives opened up trade and friendly relations with former Indians.²³⁰ There are no reports of Powhatan's capturing English women until the 1622 Powhatan uprising. Interestingly, when the Powhatans returned the women taken in 1622, one reported a life of misery and drudgery while another was returned dressed like a Powhatan "queen."²³¹ The appearance of these two women seems to demonstrate two, very different experiences. However, the Powhatans expected even elite Powhatan women to pull their weight by providing material benefits to their husbands, something that an English woman could not do, at least not the way a Powhatan woman could.²³² Thus, it seems likely that menial laborer was the only job open to English women who ran away or were captured in the early Jamestown period.

²³⁰ Wayne E. Clark and Helen C. Roundtree, "Powhatan's Relations with the Piedmont Monacans," In *Powhatan Foreign Relations: 1500-1722*, ed. Helen C. Roundtree (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 132.; Gleach, 45.

²³¹ Canny, "The Permissive Frontier," 32.

²³² For a description of the requirements of an elite Powhatan woman married to a chief see: Helen C. Roundtree and E. Randolph Turner, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginias Powhatans and Their Predecessors* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2002), 111-123.

In sum, it seems extremely unlikely that English women in early Jamestown would have run away to join the Powhatans. If any did, it was probably only to beg for food – not to be adopted or live among them. Unlike Indian women, English women did not engage in autonomous work away from the relative safety of Jamestown’s walls, so it would have been difficult for them to run away in the first place. Moreover, they would have been of virtually no use to any of the surrounding groups of Indians except as curiosities or menial laborers even if they did run away. With none of the skills of a Powhatan woman and without even the physical stamina to prove a sturdy drudge, it seems unlikely an English woman would be a very attractive potential convert for Indian life. Also, given the English habit of demanding violently the return of even low-status male runaways, the harboring of a female runaway would have likely been grounds for immediate attack by the men of Jamestown. The English, however, did adopt one well known Powhatan woman.

Runaways feature largely in the negotiations over Pocahontas in 1614. The story is well known. Samuel Argyll kidnapped Pocahontas to use as a hostage in negotiations with Powhatan in April 1613. Conflicts between the Powhatans and the English escalated after the departure of John Smith, and Argyll expected the ransom of Pocahontas to end a period of conflict now known as the first Anglo-Powhatan War.²³³ After her capture, Governor Thomas Gates sent word to Powhatan that she could be ransomed for “our men, swords, pieces, and other tools treacherously taken from us.”²³⁴ Interestingly,

²³³ Richter, “Tsenacommacah & The Atlantic World,” 60.

²³⁴ Ralph Hamor, “A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia...” in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 804.

Hamor observes the decision must have been difficult for Powhatan: “The news was unwelcome and troublesome unto him, partly for the love he bare to his daughter and partly for the love he bare to our men his prisoners, of whom, though with us they were unapt or any employment, he made great use.”²³⁵

Three months later, Powhatan returned “seven [runaway] men, with each of them a musket un-serviceable.” Powhatan further offered 500 bushels of corn and peaceful relations, claiming the remaining arms had been broken or stolen; the English refused his offer.²³⁶ Finally, tired of waiting and spurred into action by Pocahontas’ impending marriage to John Rolfe, Thomas Dale, marshal and then governor of Virginia, undertook to exploit Pocahontas’ maiden state before it was too late. He took Pocahontas upriver to Werowocomoco and offered to exchange her for “all the arms, tools, swords, and men (that had run away), and a ship full of corn.” Besides this, Dale also demanded of Powhatan that “if any of our men came to him without leave from me, he [Powhatan] would send them back.”²³⁷ This demand may have arisen from the escape of some of the runaways already returned who on the trip upriver “ran to [Powhatan] again.”²³⁸

Dale requested two runaways in particular in his negotiations, William Parker and a man known only as Simons. Dale demanded the return of Simons because he “had thrice play’d the runagate, whose lies and villainy much hind’red our trade for corn.”²³⁹

²³⁵ Hamor., 804

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Thomas Dale to Reverend D.M., Jamestown, June 18, 1614, in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: The First Decade 1607-1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 2007), 843-844.

²³⁸ Hamor, “A True Discourse,” 806.

²³⁹ Thomas Dale to Reverend D.M., 843.

Though Powhatan denied Dale a face-to-face audience, Powhatan sent word that “Simons was run away to Nonsowhaticond” and “that the other Englishman was dead.” Dale noted, “that proved a lie” because later Simons was returned by “Mr. Hamor, whom I employed to Powhatan, brought [Simons] to me.”²⁴⁰

Indeed, in May 1614 Dale dispatched Ralph Hamor to Powhatan to negotiate for the possible marriage of one of his youngest daughters. It was the last known meeting of the English with Powhatan in his role as *mamanatowick*. Hamor recounted his chance meeting with the other runaway who Powhatan reported dead.

Whiles I yet remained there, by great chance came an Englishman thither, almost three years before that time surprises as he was at work near Fort Henrie-one William Parker, grown so like both in complexion and habit to the Indians that I only knew him by his tongue to be an Englishman. He seemed very joyful so happily to meet me there. Of him, when we often inquired, the Indians ever told us that he fell sick and died, which till now we believed. He entreated me to use my best endeavors to procure his return, which thing I was purposed so soon as I knew him, and immediately went with him to Powhatan and told him that we credibly believed that he was dead, but since it was otherwise I must needs have him home, for myself of necessity must acquaint his brother that I had seen him there, who if he returned not, would make another voyage thither purposely for him.

Powhatan seemed very much discontent, and replied:

You have one of my daughters with you, and I am therewith well content. But you can no sooner see or know of any Englishman's being with me but you must have him away or else break peace and friendship. If you must needs have him, he shall go with you. But I will send no guides along with you, so as if any ill befall you by the way, thank yourselves.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Thomas Dale to Reverend DM, 843-844.

²⁴¹ Hamor, “A True Discourse”, 835-836.

Hamor then threatened retribution if any “accidents” happened to him on his way back to Jamestown, causing Powhatan to storm off. Powhatan returned in the morning with a very particular list of trade goods that he wanted in exchange for supplying Hamor a guide home and William Parker.

When he had delivered this his message, he asked me if I will [have] rememb’red every particular, which I must repeat to him for his assurance. And yet still doubtful that I might forget any of them, he bade me write them down in such a table-book as he showed me, which was a very fair one. I desired him, it being of no use to him, to give it me, but he told me did him much good to show it to strangers which came unto him. So in mine own table-book I wrote down each particular. And he departed.²⁴²

This passage highlights Powhatan’s understanding of the English trading system. Powhatan’s enumeration of precisely what he wanted to the point of insisting Hamor write it down and repeat it to him shows that Powhatan had learned to play by English rules, right down to demanding a written receipt.²⁴³ More importantly, Powhatan bargained away William Parker for a price. William Parker was not an adopted member of the Powhatan society, but a bargaining chip – whether he knew it or not.

It seems that by this meeting Powhatan was beginning to feel the same way his English neighbors were beginning to feel; the “other” in Powhatan’s case, English, could not be converted successfully. Powhatan’s reluctance to give up William Parker may

²⁴² Hamor, “A True Discourse,” 837.

²⁴³ Richter, “Tsenacommacah & The Atlantic World,” 62.

suggest he adopted Parker as a member of the Powhatans, but it is just a likely Powhatans reluctance was part of a bargaining ploy.

The examples discussed suggest that the Powhatans do not seem to treat English runaways as members of the group. How could they? The only time the Powhatans refused to expatriate runaways is when the Dutchmen were supplying them with goods. The above discussion has attempted to demonstrate that while it was possible for some English runaways to find an easier life among the Powhatans, unless the runaways could offer something concrete in exchange for their boarding, they were just as likely to be returned to the English, to face a harsh punishment for running away, or be killed. A potential runaway might be rewarded with a nice life among the Natives or find himself killed and disemboweled. There were complex political, economic, and cultural barriers keeping the English from running away and joining the Powhatans.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis began by examining J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's observations about the relative ease American Indians had in converting white Americans to their way of life when compared to white American's attempts to convert Native Americans to theirs. Answering Crèvecoeur's question is not the goal of this analysis, but his observation suggests another question. The situation at Jamestown just after its founding was deplorable: sickness, starvation, loneliness, and possible death at the hands of Natives beset the colonists. If it was relatively easy for European-Americans to adapt to Native-American ways, why did not the earliest settlers, particularly the poor, simply run away and live with the Natives? The answer to this question is complex.

First, the traditional answer is that the English were too disdainful and fearful of the Natives to attempt to live with them. Moreover, sporadic Native attacks confirmed their fear and prevented attempts at running away. This answer is likely true for colonial leaders who were hoping to make money through colonial adventuring. However, upon first arrival the English opinion of the American Indians was contradictory. Propagandists had to make the Natives seem friendly to encourage settlers to make the journey to America. At the same time, colonial leaders and propagandists had to make the Natives seem like barbarous heathens so colonists would not mind taking their land. Combine this conflicting opinion with the incredibly bad conditions at Jamestown and the realities of indentured servitude, and it seems reasonable that some, again, particularly the poor,

English settlers might have preferred living with the Natives to starving in Jamestown. Indeed, we find several examples of English colonists running away to do just that. The historical record does not mention most runaways by name, but this is not surprising. The colonial leaders wrote most of the accounts of Jamestown that survive and the presence of runaway reflect poorly on their leadership. It is surprising any runaways show up in the record at all. Indeed, the only runaways well recorded were the Dutchmen who defect to Powhatan. Their mention was safe because they were foreigners already. Thus, it seems that in the earliest days the English could and did attempt to run away and live among the Powhatans and other surrounding Native Americans.

So, the English could and did attempt to run away. However, the majority of the settlers did not run away. It is the thesis of this paper that the answer to the question “Why don’t the English run away?” does not lie with the English but with the Native Americans. While some studies of Native American adoption practices find the Natives relatively willing to adopt European-Americans, they are almost all based on adoption procedures from later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This may not seem like a problem; after all, Native American adoption practices evolved over hundreds of years and did not change that much after the introduction of Europeans. However, even if Native American adoption practices stayed the same, the “others” they were adopting were very different. Consider that by the mid-seventeenth century and later, there were European-Americans living in backcountry regions of America who knew something about the land they lived on and could survive in that rough environment. The English settlers who got off the ships in the early 1600s, however, knew nothing about America and were not at all accustomed to living in the wilds of Virginia. Those early English

settlers would have been largely useless as adoptees for the Eastern Algonquian tribes they settled among. In every case where the Powhatans or surrounding Native tribes adopted one of these early English, there was a reason. Whether they served as interpreters, suppliers of trade goods, hostages, slaves, or simply as sources of information, the English adopted by the Natives in Virginia served a useful purpose. English settlers in these early days would be useless to their Native neighbors except as suppliers of European trade and prestige goods or as brute labor.

Returning now to the question, “Why did not the poor English simply run away and live with the Natives, rather than suffer at Jamestown?” we find a different answer. It was not English arrogance or fear, both of which were overcome, (consider the fear of potentially hostile Natives pales in comparison to the real fear of starvation) that kept the earliest settlers in Jamestown but the refusal of the nearby Natives to accept them.

If the thesis is correct, it is important for two different historiographic reasons. This thesis demonstrates the lingering tendency to look at English or European and Native American relations through the lens of only one side. If one looks only at the English experience to determine why the English did not defect, the answer is unclear. It takes consideration of both sides to show who is rejecting and who is being rejected. Also, this thesis demonstrates a tendency in the writing of Native American history to perpetuate noble-savage romanticism in regard to Native American society. In this case, if one rests on the assumption that all Native Americans are willing to adopt anyone who wishes to join them, the oversimplification misses the nuance of the Powhatans’ culture. Native American groups are often lumped together; this glosses over real differences among peoples. In this case, a closer look at the Powhatans tribute systems and society

and individual cases of runaways shows the Powhatans are not necessarily amazed by and willing to accept any and all English runaways who want to take up residence with them. Hopefully, this analysis of the earliest English runaways helps highlight the importance of looking at the social and cultural specifics of individual Native American groups as well as the historical context of the time period in question.

While this thesis has examined some particular examples of English runaways; further research remains. It would be interesting to reconstruct more thoroughly, for example, the opinions of the laboring Englishmen on the initial Jamestown voyages. The experience of the laboring English settlers seems more interesting than that of the Colonial leaders and financial backers. This research might also benefit from an examination of the different pamphlets and propaganda pieces circulating in England in the latter sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and some idea of how well known they were. This might reveal something new about English settlers perceptions of the North America and its inhabitants. In addition, it would be ideal to compile a database of all documented English, and American, runaways to the Native Americans in order to comprehensively assess what their motivations were and the different historical contexts and realities surrounding them. Such a database would no doubt be extensive but might provide a look at the ills of English and American society and culture. James Axtell suggests the same pressures that drove some European-American adults to run away and live with the Native-Americans, search for freedom, integrity and community, may have driven others to revolution.²⁴⁴ A comprehensive look at voluntary runaways and their motivations could be further used to analyze patterns in the runaway phenomenon.

²⁴⁴ Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 377.

Moreover, studies of runaways may shed some light on the colonial experience in general.

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