

PIRATICAL COLONIZATION: PIRACY'S ROLE IN THE FIRST ENGLISH COLONIES,  
1550-1600

by

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This thesis analyzes the importance of piracy to the beginnings of English overseas expansion. This study will consider the piratical climate around the British Isles in the sixteenth century, and the ways in which this context affected the participants in the first English colonial projects. Piracy became inseparably associated with nearly all of the Elizabethan overseas expeditions, contributing experienced seamen to the cause and promising to fill gaps in the financial strength of the expeditions. Ultimately, piracy proved difficult to control, and sabotaged the efforts of the Elizabethan colonial promoters.



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1550-1600

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## Chapter One: An Introduction to Pirates and Colonies

Historians have long referred to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as the “Golden Age of Piracy,” known for its host of swashbuckling characters as grounded in fiction as in fact, but the sixteenth century in England represented its own golden age for those rovers and pirates looking to make quick profits by spoiling the growing volume of international trade passing through the littoral waters of Europe. These predations were often committed under legal authorization from the English Crown through letters of reprisal or letters of marque. In both cases, Englishmen were unleashed upon the shipping of rival nations to commit tolerated piracy under certain limitations of time and scope. These ships were not part of the Royal Navy proper; rather, this process of private warfare, often called privateering, helped swell English sea power through the enlistment of private men willing to risk their lives for the sake of their country and for the hope of taking a heavily-laden prize ship.

The participants in these acts of reprisal do not fit the stereotypical image of swaggering corsairs often depicted in popular media. These creations of twentieth century cinema do a disservice to the truth of eighteenth-century pirates typically shown on silver screens and form an even greater misrepresentation of the Elizabethan pirates. The majority of these “sea-dogs,” as they are frequently called, began their careers, and often remained, simply merchants. The emerging English merchant class possessed the means to purchase and outfit ships for the dangerous business of piracy on the high seas, and while commissions for reprisals were issued for the ships and cargoes of specific nations, the large number of outstanding reprisals throughout the middle and latter decades of the sixteenth century created an environment of frequent and often indiscriminate piracy that threatened to drag England into conflict with its

Continental neighbors throughout the period. These merchant-pirates received support from prominent gentlemen hoping to profit from this favorable environment for quick profits.<sup>1</sup>

These merchant-pirates and their gentlemen supporters became the central players in the beginnings of English overseas expansion during the latter decades of the sixteenth century. Many of the perpetrators of these ambiguous acts of piracy within English territorial waters were integral participants in the first phase of English expansion beyond the confines of their immediate European surroundings. Even before England began its involvement in North America – a popular but inaccurate marker for the beginnings of English overseas expansion – English merchants were connecting with new markets throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. Men like William and John Hawkins, Martin Frobisher, and Francis Drake began their notable careers in these trades. Invariably, these expeditions abroad involved the same piratical activity plaguing English waters at home. The Hawkins family created its fame by raiding Portuguese slavers on the African coast, Martin Frobisher began his long maritime career illegally trading for pepper on the Guinea Coast, and Francis Drake’s first overseas experience came alongside his cousin, John Hawkins, in illegally trading slaves in Spanish America. It was no glorious beginning of English overseas empire, but a beginning nonetheless.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1560s and 1570s, Englishmen began to take serious interest in the prospect of planting colonies of Englishmen abroad. The first English colonies were not planted in America, but rather in nearby Ireland. The island had been nominally conquered by the Normans after their eleventh century conquest, but under the Tudor monarchs, England looked to expand its

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire: 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth’s Slave Trader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

realm of real control beyond the meager pale of settlement immediately outside Dublin into the entirety of the island. The English attempted to achieve this goal through “plantations,” literal plantings of English communities in strategic areas of Ireland. Plantations developed in Munster and Cork during the Elizabethan period, but this first experience of colonization was exceedingly bloody and unsuccessful. The native Irish had no interest in being ruled by English invaders who considered their ancient culture as a barbarous manifestation of their primitive practices melded with a firm resistance to abandoning their Catholic faith. The English relied on military conquerors to subdue the native Irish and elicited Roman precedents of conquest from colonial theorists. Thomas Smith, an intellectual and previous Principal Secretary of the Privy Council, reveled in the process of civilizing the Irish. In Smith’s mind, English culture would benefit the wild Irish just as Roman law and culture had benefited the once wild progenitors of the English nation. In the end, little civilization came to Ireland as indiscriminate slaughter came to typify English involvement in Ireland during the Tudor period. Important precedents from the Irish experience carried into the American colonization movement, and in the seventeenth century, English experiences in Virginia changed the colonial program in Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

The English began their American efforts in a sphere already exploited by the Spanish for over half a century and in lands claimed by the Spanish monarch as an extension of the authority of the pope. The beginnings of English colonization cannot be separated from the monumental religious upheaval of the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s intellectual contagion spread rapidly throughout continental Europe in the early decades of the sixteenth century, spurring competition among Protestant and Catholic confessional states. Eventually England joined the Protestant

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976); Mary Dewar, *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office* (London, UK: The Athlone Press, 1964).

cause after Henry VIII's self-serving departure from papal authority in the 1530s. The English Reformation proceeded in fits and starts throughout the century, but England's commitment to Protestantism was largely assured under Queen Elizabeth I. Her reign witnessed the beginnings of English expansion around the world and confrontation between England and the Catholic powers of the continent.<sup>4</sup>

Humphrey Gilbert and his half-brother, Walter Raleigh<sup>5</sup>, received colonial patents from Queen Elizabeth I and point directly toward the beginnings of an English-speaking America; nevertheless, the recurring theme of Gilbert and Raleigh's colonial efforts – indeed of the English effort generally – is failure. England failed miserably in its quest to secure permanent, self-sustaining settlements overseas during the sixteenth century. Compared to the remarkable success of their Spanish rivals in securing massive amounts of land and native laborers to extract resources bound for the Spanish coffers, the English effort is shown to have been even more disappointing. Despite their unique qualities, these ventures are inseparable from the climate of piracy so pervasive in English maritime culture at the time, a fact that needs further clarity in the historiography of the early English Atlantic World. The first English overseas efforts were a diverse collection of ventures not bearing many commonalities on the surface. Slave raiding and trading, a circumnavigation voyage, Arctic gold-mining operations, expeditions bent on the conquest of Spanish America, and neo-feudal manorial colonies form a cross-section of those expeditions actually attempted in the early years. This thesis argues that piracy represented the clearest strand of commonality that bound together the various English overseas expeditions in

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<sup>4</sup> Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 33-43.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Walter's last name was spelled no less than 70 different ways during his lifetime; nonetheless, this spelling of his last name is most commonly used in the academic literature since he most frequently signed himself this way. For a good discussion of the issue, and an example in contrast to the one employed here, see Raleigh Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), xiv.

its earliest stage, corresponding roughly to the years between 1550 and 1600. Furthermore, by the end of the sixteenth century, piracy had clearly done considerable harm to the colonial enterprise.

The climate of tolerated maritime violence in the emerging English Atlantic World was pervasive. Thus, Humphrey Gilbert, a military man not particularly representative of the many merchant-pirates spoiling countless vessels in the English Channel, asked the queen for the first English colonial patent merely as a cover for a massive piratical raid on the Spanish Empire in the West Indies. This expedition failed from the disorganization that should have been expected from the culmination of such a brash plan. As Gilbert embraced his colonial patent for its own sake, he composed grandiose visions for a feudal society in North America, yet ambitions of piracy persisted. Rather than securing the necessary supplies for his colony in 1583, Gilbert plundered the peaceful community of international fishermen working along the shore of Newfoundland. For Gilbert, no amount of plundered provisions could sustain his enterprise against successive strokes of bad luck, culminating in his unfortunate death on the way home to England.<sup>6</sup>

Piracy touched each of the early English voyages often as a matter of practicality, as much as a product of human greed among its promoters and participants. English colonial ventures proved very difficult to finance in the sixteenth century and beyond, especially because no English settlements had shown an ability to make a profit for themselves. To English eyes, even Spanish colonies did not advocate for the profitability of colonies apart from the extraordinary wealth of the Native American empires they conquered and the rich silver mines they exploited in Peru. Martin Frobisher's debacle in the Northwest pursuing mineral extraction

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<sup>6</sup> David Beers Quinn, ed., *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 2 vols. (London, UK: The Hakluyt Society, 1940).

did particularly serious damage to future colonial expeditions. Queen Elizabeth believed Frobisher's bold scheme to be one capable of enriching her realm, but her financial support was sorely wasted in mining worthless ore. The queen never committed serious resources to any venture unproven to bring immediate profits; thus, Gilbert and Raleigh enjoyed precious little financial support from the queen in their colonial ventures. However, the queen did fund purely piratical enterprises and voyages concerned solely with trade with considerable generosity. Drake's West Indies raid of 1586 owed about one third of its capital to the queen's investment, and the queen also supported Edward Fenton's voyage meant to build a trading relationship with the Moluccas. Acts of piracy often filled a gap in colonial promoters' abilities to raise the funds necessary to carry their plans overseas, and in several ventures, piratical loot probably covered all expenses of their associated expeditions. In the end, this exerted a deleterious influence on the outcomes of those colonial expeditions associated with piracy by resting the prospects of success on notoriously unreliable characters.

Raleigh embraced his deceased brother's colonial ambitions, modifying them for changing times in 1584 as open war with Spain seemed increasingly likely. In his Roanoke colonies, powerful economic and ideological motivations coalesced into a unified strategy to grow rich by plundering Spanish heretics. Raleigh's military expedition in 1585 aimed to establish a military outpost suitable for hiding patriotic pirates who would plunder the Spanish treasure fleet as it made its vulnerable run up the Gulf Stream along the coast of North America. Their hopes for quick profits blinded them to Roanoke Island's inability to host deep-draft vessels because of its treacherous inlet approaches, and a history of Irish violence among the colony's leadership led to bloody conflict with their Native American hosts. Raleigh's 1585

colony at Roanoke represented a natural and quintessential culmination of English overseas activity in the sixteenth century.

Despite the first Roanoke colony's failure and departure in 1586, some of Raleigh's wise decisions made it a valuable learning experience in many ways. John White and Thomas Hariot returned to England with an impressive visual and scientific testament to the potential of eastern North America for English settlements. By 1587, Raleigh had learned many of the lessons his brother had learned the hard way; he sent a colony based on incentives of land ownership that would be largely self-governing. Raleigh's second colony bore all the characteristics of successful English colonial ventures in the next century, yet the attraction of piracy in the increasingly violent sea war undercut his colony in multiple ways and relegated his Lost Colonists to a fate lost to history.

Too frequently, these early ventures of English expansion are relegated to a place of insignificance in major considerations of American colonial history. In *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* – a showcase of the leading proponents of Atlantic history – Roanoke is named once, and then only in a list of English colonial “debacles.”<sup>7</sup> Even Anthony Pagden, an esteemed historian of European imperialism, only mentions Roanoke by name once in a book dedicated to comparing ideologies of empire, and only then in an absurdly mistaken reference to John Smith as the “Governor of the Roanoke Colony from 1608-1609.”<sup>8</sup> While some historians focused closely on Raleigh's colonies in the middle and latter decades of the twentieth century,

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<sup>7</sup> Alison Games, “Migrations” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 39.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500 – c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 36.

most recent works give limited attention to them, or examine them solely for the purpose of finding new clues relating to the “Lost Colony” of popular lore.<sup>9</sup>

The actual purposes of the Roanoke colonies demand more careful attention than recent historians have given them. With no consideration of the obvious evolution of Raleigh’s colonial plans during this time and the diversity of ventures that preceded and informed their conception, the Roanoke ventures appear to be inconsequential and rashly conceived. In contrast to the bevy of works produced in recent years seeking to ascertain the fate of the Lost Colonists, the Roanoke ventures should be viewed as a culmination of English attempts to entrench themselves overseas and a testament to Sir Walter Raleigh’s ability to adjust his plans to make success more likely. Ultimately Raleigh’s scheme never realized its potential to become the beginnings of a permanent English presence in North America. Piracy undercut Raleigh’s best laid plans and belongs at the fore of any discussion of the beginnings of the English experience in America.

In viewing the beginnings of the English colonial movement through a lens of piracy, a host of characters little-known outside of field specialists become more important players in the colonial movement. Simão Fernandes, an Azorean pilot who served Spain for several years, is exemplary of such characters at the convergence point between pirates and colonizers. Fernandes also participated in a piracy of knowledge taking place in the growing rivalry between powers in the Atlantic World. His invaluable charts and shared knowledge of Portuguese and Spanish practices threatened as much harm to Iberian dominance of the Americas as any prize ship taken during the period. John Callis, perhaps the most notorious English pirate of the

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<sup>9</sup> David Beers Quinn, Kenneth R. Andrews, and Karen Kupperman wrote excellent books on Roanoke that will be discussed later in the chapter. Among the recent works centering on the Lost Colony are: Andrew Lawler, *The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2018); James Horn, *A Kingdom Strange: The Brief and Tragic History of the Lost Colony of Roanoke* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010); Lee Miller, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* (New York, NY: Arcade Publishing, 2000).

1570s, also illustrates the line between those pirates considered a nuisance worthy of the gallows and those with value to the state. These two men and others grow large in importance as piracy is given its proper place of historical importance in the late sixteenth century.

Many historians have followed convention by calling the English pirates of the sixteenth century, “privateers.”<sup>10</sup> This term is problematic for several reasons. First, the term “privateer” is anachronistic to the period, emerging in the seventeenth century to describe explicitly state-sanctioned piracy against the enemies of the state. These seamen carried letters of marque or letters of reprisal from the Crown, legalizing their actions and giving them a place in the enterprises typically reserved for England’s small Royal Navy. Second, it is not clear that many – indeed the vast majority – held such legal documentation to legitimize their predatory cruises. Many sailors claimed to have letters when convenient but were rarely able to provide one when pressed. Furthermore, many of those “privateers” that did possess letters of marque received them from leaders of questionable authority. Dom Antonio, the pretender to the Portuguese throne after it was taken by the Spanish in 1580, enlisted such help in many occasions.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the identity of these maritime warriors is one of perspective; the Spanish unquestioningly called them “*corsarios*,” sixteenth century Englishmen called them “merchants,” twentieth-century historians called them “privateers,” and recent historians seem divided between “pirates” and “privateers.” On the surface, “privateers” is unsatisfactory as an anachronism, yet it retains some utility in describing the few ventures that can comfortably be described as state-sanctioned enterprises. Precision is to be preferred over ambiguity, and the term used should always be a purposeful, intentional choice.

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<sup>10</sup> Among those who used the term despite some concern over its precision are Kenneth Andrews, James McDermott, and David Beers Quinn.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Edward Fenner and the notorious John Callice operated under Dom Antonio’s questionable authority in 1585. *Calendar of State Papers (CSP), Domestic, Elizabeth, 1581-1590*, 233.

Histories written within an Atlantic World framework have proliferated in recent years and contribute useful perspectives for understanding the emergence of England as a participant in an increasingly connected Atlantic World. In truth, many of the most important Early Americanists and English colonial scholars of the twentieth century were writing “Atlantic history” before it possessed a discrete identity as a field of history and long before it became one of the dominant paradigms in the historical discipline. David Beers Quinn and Kenneth R. Andrews considered developments throughout the Atlantic in their pursuit of understanding the beginnings of English expansion, but the expansion in academic literature situated within a framework of Atlantic History suggest the fruitfulness of a reexamination of the topic, especially considering the dearth of recent scholarly work on many of the early English enterprises.

The early historiography of English piracy is quite Anglo-centric, produced during a time of British hegemony around the world and by men directly associated with the contemporary Royal Navy. Men like Sir Julian Corbett and Michael Oppenheim often lauded the accomplishments of the sea dogs and expounded the now-challenged, if still widely accepted, view of Drake as a Protestant hero.<sup>12</sup> These works exaggerated the noble motivations of the piratical participants in these early ventures, and revisionists challenged their overarching assertions about the respectability of England’s Elizabethan heroes in the middle of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, these early works remain generally useful studies of the English pirates, and the major narrative of their importance in the sixteenth century remains largely unchanged. The most important of these early works is *Drake and the Tudor Navy, with the Rise of England as a Naval Power* [1899] by Corbett, complemented by his influential primary source collection,

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<sup>12</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy, with the Rise of England as a Naval Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1-2 (London, UK: Navy Records Society, 1899); Michael Oppenheim, *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy and of Merchant Shipping in Relation to the Navy from 1509 to 1660 with an Introduction Treating of the Preceding Period* (Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing, 1988).

*Papers Relating to the Navy during the Spanish War, 1585-1587* [1898].<sup>13</sup> It is also worth remembering that a desire to formulate modern naval strategy informed most of Corbett's many works, with historical study bearing relevance only so far as it cast light on the strategic imperatives of the Royal Navy around 1900.

Kenneth R. Andrews surpassed Corbett's importance in the historiography of English privateering during the Anglo-Spanish War with his excellent research into the peculiar issue of private warfare at sea and the beginnings of English maritime expansion, especially in the Caribbean.<sup>14</sup> Andrews's PhD thesis was later expanded into his most important book, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* [1964].<sup>15</sup> Published over half a century after Corbett's career in the field ended, *Elizabethan Privateering* first challenged many of his prior conclusions. Using an inordinate supply of previously under-considered primary sources from the High Court of the Admiralty in England, Andrews dispelled the myth that the Anglo-Spanish War was waged at sea by a group of landed, amateur, God-fearing, gentlemen privateers. In contrast, the highly-efficient "Great Merchants" pooled their resources to dispatch ships and a host of professional mariners to trade and plunder the wealth of the Spanish Empire.<sup>16</sup> The privateering environment of the Anglo-Spanish War was not unique, however, and earlier periods of widespread reprisal activity in the middle of the sixteenth century deserve the same level of close examination that Andrews provided in *Elizabethan Privateering*.

Later in his career, Andrews wrote *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* [1984], the finest synthesis to date of the

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<sup>13</sup> Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*; Julian S. Corbett, *Papers Relating to the Navy during the Spanish War, 1585-1587* (London, UK: Navy Records Society, 1898).

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean: Trade and Plunder 1530-1630* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Sea War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-123.

available literature on the topic of early English overseas expansion.<sup>17</sup> Andrews argues that the seeds of the future British Empire were sown in the unprecedented maritime expansion of the island nation from 1480 to 1630. *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement* carefully considers the economic factors that drove English merchants traditionally concerned primarily with selling their cloth wares throughout Europe to pursue new markets from Muscovy and Persia to the far reaches of the Atlantic Rim. These traders often engaged in acts of piracy to make their trading expeditions more profitable. This in turn drew the English into conflict with their continental rivals, namely Spain. Early English colonies struggled to find funding due to the state's general ambivalence and reluctance to commit resources to anything without strong guarantees of immediate profit. As a result, the first colonies struggled mightily to secure their place in the New World.

Of the existing secondary literature, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement* most closely reflects the argument of this thesis; nevertheless, the two pieces will differ in some important ways. First, Andrews's extensive time period and his attempt to consider nearly all consequential aspects of his topic make it, by necessity, a broad work primarily interested in synthesizing the most important secondary literature produced by a bevy of scholars, including Andrews himself, in the twentieth century. Given the importance of the piracy context in the first attempts at permanent English settlement in the New World, these developments need to be grounded more closely in primary sources. Second, Andrews's research focuses on the economic motivations for English empire to the neglect of equally powerful ideological motives that drove many of the participants forward. While this was probably a reaction to previous historians like Corbett who often ascribed overly idealistic, proto-nationalistic motives to these progenitors of empire,

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<sup>17</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Andrews's correction goes a bit too far. In his preface, arguing that he had no political motives in writing the book, Andrews claimed that he "ceased to subscribe to any sort of marxism [sic] nearly twenty years ago," but his arguments tend toward economic determinism.<sup>18</sup>

In opposition to Andrews's argument for the primacy of commercial issues in the rise of the British Empire, Andrew Fitzmaurice argues that humanistic impulses born out of the Renaissance were the primary drivers of the early English ventures in *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500-1625* [2003].<sup>19</sup> Fitzmaurice's intellectual history is an excellent addition to the topic and helpfully complicates traditional views that ascribe overly nationalistic or greedy motivations to the colonial promoters. Fitzmaurice strays in isolating colonial ventures from the many commercial ventures that preceded and ran contemporarily with the first efforts to plant sustainable colonies of Englishmen. By necessity for his argument, his work does not consider Drake, Frobisher, or Hawkins to be key players in early English colonial history. Both Andrews and Fitzmaurice contribute valuable perspectives, and future studies should borrow liberally from their frameworks; however, Andrews's model predicated on economic incentives and Fitzmaurice's model based in ideological developments should be synthesized to produce a more accurate picture of early English colonization.

Mark Hanna's *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire: 1570-1740* [2015] is one of the finest works on English piracy written in the twenty-first century.<sup>20</sup> Hanna primarily focuses on the role of communities on land – "pirate nests" – in supporting acts of piracy committed at sea. Only the first chapter, "The Elizabethan West Country: Nursery for English

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,viii.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism in America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500-1625* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Mark Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire: 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Seamen... And Pirates, 1570-1603," relates directly to the time period considered in this thesis, but his overall emphasis on the importance of piracy to the beginnings of the British Empire is certainly germane to the entirety of this study.<sup>21</sup> Hanna considers the West Country of England to be the earliest significant pirate nest in protecting rogue mariners during the earliest stages of English overseas expansion. While his consideration of English piracy and the futility of the Admiralty's efforts to suppress it in the late sixteenth century is excellent, he mentions Sir Humphrey Gilbert's and Sir Walter Raleigh's colonial enterprises only in passing, presumably for their impermanence; nevertheless, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire* bears striking witness to the attractions of piracy that persisted long after the Elizabethan period. Pirates would find safe havens in English colonies around the world until the early years of the eighteenth century when a dedicated effort to suppress the practice succeeded in suppressing unregulated violence at sea. Hanna's book is generally excellent in the conclusions it draws from extensive primary and secondary source reading, but the Elizabethan period represents a high-water mark in the level of state-sanction that piracy enjoyed and in the overt support that pirates lent to the English colonial mission.

John C. Appleby's *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* [2009] is the most detailed history of Tudor piracy ever written and a useful complement to Hanna's *Pirate Nests*.<sup>22</sup> As its title suggests, Appleby's primary interest is in the individual pirates that typified English piracy during the period. Using the records of England's Privy Council, Appleby exhaustively covers English piracy's evolution from the fifteenth century into the beginning of the seventeenth century. *Under the Bloody Flag* brings many of the most active pirates into sharp

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 21-57.

<sup>22</sup> John C. Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2009).

detail and presents substantiating evidence for the general characterizations of piracy made in previous works. Appleby considers piracy's role in English overseas expansion, but most of his research is limited to the expeditions of Drake and Fenton that solely focused on plunder. His limited coverage of the colonial expeditions of Gilbert and Raleigh reduces its contribution to the Elizabethan colonial literature, but the work remains an excellent assessment of the piratical climate that so profoundly affected contemporary colonial developments.

Several of the Elizabethan pirates have been the subjects of major biographies and reappraisals in the past century. James Williamson, John Hawkins's most prolific biographer, wrote the first major biography of the Plymouth merchant-pirate in 1927 and followed it with another in 1949.<sup>23</sup> Williamson considered Hawkins to be a key figure in the development of modern English nationalism and, by extension, the culture of English piracy that Hawkins represented. His biography is sparsely cited, limiting its use for modern historians. In 2003, Harry Kelsey reexamined Hawkins's life in *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* [2003].<sup>24</sup> Kelsey's book challenges some of Williamson's previous assumptions about Hawkins, particularly Williamson's firm belief that Hawkins was a dedicated believer in English Protestantism. Kelsey's biography is carefully sourced with much Spanish material relating to Hawkins's trading expeditions to Africa and Spanish America in the 1560s. Using these documents neglected by Williamson, Kelsey's account paints a fuller picture of the complicated man.

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<sup>23</sup> James A. Williamson, *Sir John Hawkins, the Time and the Man* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1927); James A. Williamson, *Hawkins of Plymouth: A New History of Sir John Hawkins and of the Other Members of his Family Prominent in Tudor England* (London, UK: Adam and Charles Black, 1949).

<sup>24</sup> Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

James McDermott's excellent biography of Martin Frobisher highlights the wonderful insights to be learned from the careful study of frequently neglected individuals in the historical past.<sup>25</sup> Frobisher attracted little attention in the centuries following his death, primarily due to the embarrassment caused to his queen by his ill-fated voyages in search of the Northwest Passage and Arctic gold. In *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* [2001], McDermott follows all scraps of evidence pointing to the character and exploits of the most frequently forgotten English sea-dog. His exhaustive research into Frobisher's life and times is as valuable for its incisive picture of the context of Elizabethan England as it is for its thorough assessment of its title character. In this way, his book is one of the most useful for understanding the culture of piracy flourishing around the British Isles and throughout the developing English Atlantic World.

Hawkins's second cousin, Francis Drake, has probably inspired as many biographical treatments as any Englishman, but only a few stand as major contributions to knowledge of the quintessential Elizabethan pirate. Julian S. Corbett's *Drake and the Tudor Navy* remains one of the most important works on Drake. Even though its emphasis on the sea-dog's nationalistic motivations shifted out of mainstream academic opinion during the twentieth century, much of Drake's story is well-told in Corbett's esteemed two-volume treatment. Kenneth Andrews's first published book, *Drake's Voyages* [1970], reinterpreted Drake in light of Andrews's immersion in the primary source material relating to his many voyages.<sup>26</sup> Drake emerges from Andrews's books as a great deal more self-interested than he does in Corbett's earlier work, but he remains an ardent defender of the English overseas enterprise nonetheless. In Harry Kelsey's excellent

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<sup>25</sup> James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Drake's Voyages* (London, UK: Panther History, 1970).

biography from 1998, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate*, Drake is portrayed in a largely negative light, as a man not to be trusted.<sup>27</sup> In more recent years, Wade Dudley's moving biography, *Drake: For God, Queen, and Plunder* [2003], helps redeem the image of Drake promulgated in Kelsey's book, highlighting the mixed motivations of the most-feared man in the Spanish mind during the latter decades of the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

While detailed studies of Elizabethan piracy and its primary participants have proliferated in recent years, equally important books on the English colonies founded during the period are quite dated. Illustrating the trend, serious studies of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's life are regrettably few, despite his large impact on the genesis of British overseas expansion. William Gilbert Gosling's 1911 book, *The Life of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, England's First Empire Builder*, was Gilbert's first widely accessible biography.<sup>29</sup> Gosling's study of Gilbert's life was deep and systematic; he added considerable detail to Hakluyt's sixteenth century accounts of Gilbert's late-life colonial exploits. The work reflects historiographical trends of the early twentieth century, especially in its consistent praise of "the genius of the (English) race," and Gosling's insistence that Gilbert's atrocities in Ireland "must not... be attributed to any specially bloodthirsty proclivities on his part."<sup>30</sup>

Gosling's boast in 1911 that he could "conscientiously confirm that every possible source of knowledge has been explored" was proven false by David Beers Quinn's two volume work, *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert* [1940].<sup>31</sup> The work solidified Quinn's scholarly ascendancy and signaled the beginning of his sixty-year tenure at the forefront

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<sup>27</sup> Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Wade G. Dudley, *Drake: For God, Queen, and Plunder* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> William Gilbert Gosling, *The Life of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, England's First Empire Builder* (London, UK: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1911).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, v; David Beers Quinn, ed., *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, 2 vols. (London, UK: The Hakluyt Society, 1940).

of English colonial studies. Published in 1940, Quinn's outstanding biographical introduction and large collection of relevant documents remains the preeminent piece of Gilbert scholarship today. He reproduced the relevant sections from Hakluyt's works and contributed a massive collection of previously unpublished letters, depositions, and notes on colonization. Using these sources, Quinn composed a concise Gilbert biography as an introduction to the volumes that remains the finest biographical sketch to date.

Quinn's two volumes were nicely supplemented in 1972 with the publication of *The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583*.<sup>32</sup> Parmenius accompanied Gilbert on his final voyage to America with plans to compose an epic poem describing the first English colony in America. Thirty years after his original work on Gilbert, Quinn worked alongside Neil M. Cheshire, a literary scholar, to publish Parmenius's surviving writings. The Parmenius volume also included recently discovered correspondence to and from Maurice Browne, Captain of the *Swallow* and later the *Delight* in Gilbert's 1583 expedition. The Browne correspondence, located in the private papers of the Marquess of Bath, adds considerable detail to the preparations of the 1583 voyage, which Quinn himself admitted were poorly understood in 1940. More collections like Browne's may exist in private holdings around the world, and dedicated scholars should continue to search for such valuable resources to advance scholarly knowledge of Gilbert's ventures.

Nathan Probasco's recent PhD dissertation, "Researching North America: Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 1583 Expedition and a Reexamination of Early Modern English Colonization in the North Atlantic World," [2013] is the best scholarship relating to Gilbert's colonial activities to

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<sup>32</sup> David Beers Quinn and Neil M. Cheshire, ed. and trans., *The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

emerge in many years.<sup>33</sup> Probasco emphasizes the extensive preparations made for Gilbert's 1583 voyage and cautions historians who tend to overlook the expedition "because no colony was established as a direct result of his efforts . . . ." <sup>34</sup> Gilbert's enterprises were sophisticated affairs, incorporating all the knowledge Englishmen had accumulated about North America through their own experiences and the experiences of other Continental nations.

Irish colonization has been well-explored by several historians and remains an important area of interest for modern scholars. Irish study has benefitted particularly from Atlantic World approaches in recent decades. As in other areas, David Beers Quinn remains an influential voice in the field. An Irishman himself, Quinn is credited with moving Irish history from amateurism into the mainstream of academic consideration in the British Isles and beyond. *The Elizabethans and the Irish* [1966] is his most important study of the topic.<sup>35</sup> He used many different sources in forming his assessment of English perceptions of the native Irish they encountered in their conquest; his use of visual material from the period, particularly popular caricatures, illustrates his leadership in employing modern, multi-disciplinary approaches in his research, an approach that served him best in his later work on the Roanoke voyages.

Nicholas Canny, Quinn's protégé, remains the most respected scholar of Irish history. His long career has expanded the profile of Irish history considerably. His most important work is *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576* [1976].<sup>36</sup> Canny argued that this crucial period determined the pattern of conquest that the English employed in

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<sup>33</sup> Nathan J. Probasco, "Researching North America: Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 1583 Expedition and a Reexamination of Early Modern English Colonization in the North Atlantic World" (PhD diss., University of Nebraska, 2013), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=historydiss>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966).

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976).

Ireland in succeeding generations. Audrey Horning's more recent book, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea* [2013], departs from Quinn's and Canny's general opinions that the Tudor conquest of Ireland had profound effects on the American efforts in succeeding years.<sup>37</sup> Horning argues that the process of influence ran somewhat backwards from this as lessons learned in seventeenth century Virginia influenced the development of Irish colonies later in that century. Both sides of this argument have some merit, but they are not necessarily self-contradictory. Events on Roanoke Island in the 1580s bear the marks of the Irish precedent in American colonization, but lessons learned far from home undeniably made themselves felt in Ireland in the years following successful ventures to Virginia. In this way, Ireland and America influenced each other through the give and take typical of many developments around the Atlantic Rim.

Following the success of his work on Gilbert, David Beers Quinn applied a similar approach in editing his invaluable two volume *Roanoke Voyages: 1584-1587*. *Roanoke Voyages* [1955] includes nearly two hundred documents from English and Spanish archives relating to Raleigh's colonies.<sup>38</sup> Quinn published many of these documents for the first time, and his thorough annotations throughout the collection make it particularly valuable. Since its publication by the Hakluyt Society in 1955, *Roanoke Voyages* remains the focal point of documentary research into the colonies and the most important scholarly work in the historiography of the Roanoke colonies.

*Roanoke Voyages* contains all the major narratives from the various English expeditions to the island during the sixteenth century. These include Arthur Barlowe's 1584 report, Ralph

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<sup>37</sup> Audrey Horning, *Ireland in the Virginia Sea: Colonialism in the British Atlantic* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> David Beers Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Sir Walter Raleigh in 1584*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1991).

Lane's account of the 1585 colony, a description of Drake's visit to Virginia in 1586, Thomas Harriot's *Briefe and True Report*, and John White's narratives of his various voyages. While these accounts were previously published by Hakluyt, Quinn included annotations regarding outside knowledge to clarify these documents. Quinn's chief contribution in *Roanoke Voyages* is the large number of documents that bridge the gaps between these larger narrative sources. Quinn scoured archives around the United Kingdom and Continental Europe, finding useful sources that were neglected by previous historians. These include a note written by the mayor of Plymouth about the number of Englishmen involved in the 1585 voyage, several letters written by Ralph Lane in 1585, some unique Danish information on the voyage, and documentation regarding Raleigh's attempts to gather the supplies necessary for the transatlantic voyages. These documents, accompanied by Quinn's excellent annotations and narrative introductions to each section of the book, greatly expanded the readily available sources of the Roanoke voyages. These documents added clarity regarding the privateering enterprises in which the returning ships engaged, how Raleigh raised money for the colonies, and contemporary international reports on the English activities in America.

In *Roanoke Voyages*, Quinn also included an important assessment of the existing watercolors of John White, a particularly valuable source in assessing the history of the English colony and the history of the Native Americans previously inhabiting eastern North America. Paul Hulton, a longtime Deputy Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings of the British Museum, worked alongside Quinn to publish White's drawings in a limited number of two-volume sets in 1964.<sup>39</sup> For the four hundredth anniversary of Raleigh's colonies, Hulton published a more accessible volume of White's drawings with introductory matter written to

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Hulton and David Beers Quinn, eds., *The American Drawings of John White, 1577-1590*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

orient readers to the context of the Roanoke expeditions and the few details known about John White himself. *America, 1585: The Complete Drawings of John White* [1984], is a wonderful primary source collection of the most lasting material from the Roanoke expeditions and helpfully includes Theodor de Bry's reinterpretations of White's images that were most widely circulated in the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup>

Employing an Atlantic World approach before it was fashionable, Quinn enlisted the help of Irene A. Wright, a historian of Cuba and the wider Caribbean, in collecting and translating the most important Spanish documents related to the Roanoke expeditions. *Roanoke Voyages* contains over fifty documents relating to Spanish knowledge, and misunderstanding, of Raleigh's colonies. Bernardino de Mendoza's many reports to King Philip II are probably the most useful of these sources. Mendoza served as the Spanish ambassador to England from 1578 to 1584, when he was expelled for his role in a plot against Queen Elizabeth's life. Irene A. Wright's own book, *Further English Voyages to Spanish America: 1583-1594*, is a useful complement to Quinn's documents from Spanish archives published in 1951.<sup>41</sup> Paul E. Hoffman's *Spain and the Roanoke Voyages* [1987] is also a well-written, concise assessment of Spanish knowledge of Raleigh's enterprises based on many of the sources published by Quinn and Wright.<sup>42</sup>

During the 1980s, America's Four Hundredth Anniversary Committee commissioned several excellent works relating to the Roanoke Voyages. Karen Ordahl Kupperman published *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony* under the auspices of the committee in 1984.<sup>43</sup> Hers is a

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<sup>40</sup> Paul Hulton, ed., *America 1585: The Complete Drawings of John White* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Irene A. Wright, *Further English Voyages to Spanish America: 1583-1594* (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1951).

<sup>42</sup> Paul E. Hoffman. *Spain and the Roanoke Voyages* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony, Second Edition* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007).

concise telling of the events from 1584 to 1590, and the book's greatest contribution is its emphasis on the few issues that are most important in understanding the successes and failures of the colonies. Kupperman effectively argued that the marriage of colonialism and piracy proved unable to establish successful colonies.<sup>44</sup> While historians like Kenneth R. Andrews did in-depth studies of privateering across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Kupperman made Roanoke's role in this period of tolerated lawlessness her focus.<sup>45</sup> Kupperman also aptly explained the complicated relationship between Native Americans and Englishmen at Roanoke. While Thomas Harriot and John White believed in the benefits of building good relationships with the Indians, many in the colony served previously in the brutal Irish conquests of the 1560s and 1570s.<sup>46</sup> While the colonists desired peaceful relations with the natives, their worldview made them unable to trust outsiders, preventing them from pursuing whatever goals of toleration they may have brought with them from the Old World to the new one.

In celebration of the colonies' anniversary, Quinn wrote *Set Fair for Roanoke* in 1985, a full overview of the Roanoke voyages informed by his decades of study.<sup>47</sup> The book fluidly employs narrative and analytical sections to communicate the complexities of the topic, making it the ideal starting point for new students of the expeditions. In *Set Fair for Roanoke*, Quinn also includes an assessment of the archaeological research on the island considerably updated from the limited information he was able to convey with confidence in 1955. He understood that future breakthroughs in studying Roanoke will almost certainly come through archaeological discoveries; therefore, he dedicated considerable attention to the archeological developments that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585-1603* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 192.

<sup>46</sup> Kupperman, *Roanoke*, 65-67.

<sup>47</sup> David Beers Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

occurred during his career. His detailed look at the few archaeological remnants of the colony updates his assessment in *Roanoke Voyages* by including studies performed by J. C. Harrington in the 1960s and David Phelps in the early 1980s.<sup>48</sup> *Set Fair for Roanoke* remains the most complete assessment of Raleigh's Roanoke colonies today.

Although this thesis does not focus on the fate of the fabled "Lost Colonists," works exploring their possible fates are an important piece of Roanoke historiography that deserve some discussion. As in the other areas of Roanoke scholarship, Quinn's assessment of the documentary evidence remains the most widely accepted theory regarding the probable fate of the 1587 colonists, but his theory is losing its appeal among more popular authors. Quinn believed that some colonists relocated to Croatoan to hail any English ships sailing on the coast, in keeping with the enigmatic message discovered on a tree and in the palisade wall on Roanoke Island in 1590.<sup>49</sup> He argued that the main body of the settlement journeyed north to the Chesapeake Bay in keeping with Raleigh's intended destination for the colony.<sup>50</sup> This theory reconciles the disparity among Raleigh's instructions, White's comment that settlers hoped to relocate "fifty miles into the main," and the "CROATOAN" carving at the settlement site.

More recent works on Roanoke have departed from Quinn's opinion on the eventual destination of the colonists. James Horn and Lee Miller take White's insistence that the settlement should relocate "fifty miles into the main" quite literally and argue that the head of the Albemarle Sound is their most likely destination.<sup>51</sup> Horn believes that the colonists likely assimilated with Indians in peace before being killed in the 1650s by Indian tribes coming south

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 344-345.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> James Horn, *A Kingdom Strange: The Brief and Tragic History of the Lost Colony of Roanoke* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 224-227; Lee Miller, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* (New York, NY: Arcade Publishing, 2000), 229.

from Virginia, while Miller argues that the colonists were likely dispersed and enslaved in the service of the Eno tribe deep in North Carolina's interior.<sup>52</sup> Most recently in 2018, Andrew Lawler's *The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke* presents several hypotheses about the likely racial mixing of Native Americans, Africans, and the European colonists.<sup>53</sup> The continuing allure of the colonists' story and the dearth of reliable archaeological information discovered so far guarantees that many more books exploring the mystery of the Lost Colony will continue to proliferate in the future.

While interest in the Lost Colony is understandable for its mystique, a broad view of historiographical trends relating to piracy and the first English colonies suggests the need for new emphases. Early modern English piracy has been explored in considerable depth by several historians in recent years, contributing new insights on the nature of English maritime culture during the sixteenth century and the diversity of possibilities open to British seamen looking to secure their fortunes in the rapidly changing economic environment of the sixteenth century British Isles. Given the scope of the studies by Appleby and Hanna, they have chosen to focus primarily on incidents of piracy around England itself during the Elizabethan period or those expeditions that focused solely on plunder. This emphasis is justifiable, but expeditions of mixed motives typified the period. Many colonial expeditions engaged in the same type of piratical behavior that historians of piracy have emphasized in the English Channel. The Elizabethan colonial literature mostly produced by Quinn and Andrews retains its value as a body of detailed information on the first English colonial enterprises, but the expansion of scholarship on piracy needs to be coupled with new approaches to these early ventures. A return

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<sup>52</sup> Horn, 231-232; Miller, *Roanoke*, 255-260.

<sup>53</sup> Andrew Lawler, *The Secret Token: Myth, Obsession, and the Search for the Lost Colony of Roanoke* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2018).

to the primary sources of the period bring new characters into the forefront of England's overseas expansion from the period and further erode the national histories of the early twentieth century. The first English attempts to make colonies abroad would be a piratical affair.

## Chapter Two: “Sundry and Divers Piracies and Spoiles”: English Piracy and the Beginnings of English Overseas Expansion under Elizabeth I<sup>1</sup>

Sixteenth century England had a piracy problem. Far from being a new phenomenon at the time, piracy had long been a part of English maritime culture. The English state found it difficult to secure justice in a fragmented realm in which influential Englishmen supported illicit acts at sea for their own profit. These landmen often protected and resupplied pirates, the sources of great wealth and cheap goods taken from unwilling merchantmen traversing the waters around the British Isles. These pirates and their abettors formed the main body of promoters and participants in growing English engagement in the wider world through trade expeditions and colonizing enterprises in the later years of the sixteenth century. English maritime culture involved a great deal of ambiguity in the sixteenth century: legitimate spoil to some was illegal to others, and the backing of the state often served as a shield of convenience in self-interested acts of plunder. This culture of piracy fueled English depredations in the Atlantic World and served as the context of early English expansion in the last decades of the sixteenth century.

Although piracy troubled many medieval English monarchs, acts of piracy seem to have escalated rapidly at the end of the fifteenth century and continued to grow throughout the sixteenth century. Historians are in general agreement that diminishing English sea power under Henry VI and VII left a vacuum at sea that pirates exploited.<sup>2</sup> Piracy always thrives in areas of limited state control, but the momentous disintegration of the medieval economic order may also explain the rise of depredations at sea. Core tenants of feudalism – a system largely in its death

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the minutes of the Privy Council regarding Queen Elizabeth’s letter sent to the vice admirals in reference to piracy originating in the West Country. John Roche Dasent, et. al., eds., *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, New Series, (hereafter cited as *APC*), vol. VII, (London, 1893), 182.

<sup>2</sup> Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag*, 22-27.

threes by the start of the fifteenth century – lingered in English consciousness in the form of a “feudal ideal” that prized chivalric virtue and a steeply hierarchical class structure, but the medieval world fundamentally changed, giving rise to a powerful merchant class and currency wealth instead of simply landed wealth.<sup>3</sup> These developments, coupled with the rise of conspicuous consumption among elites looking to highlight their access to the increasingly far-flung areas of European exploitation, created an ideal environment for large-scale piracy. Merchants at the forefront of a changing world could supply the demand of the wealthy through illicit activity at sea. The collapse of the medieval order also increased vagrancy within many communities, and contemporaries understood the role that this had on piracy. In 1584, Richard Hakluyt complained of “many thousandes of idle persons... within this Realme... often fall to pilferinge and thevinge and other lewdnes.”<sup>4</sup> Such offences led England to be “infamous for our outeragious, common, and daily piracies.”<sup>5</sup>

Piracy’s prevalence in the middle decades of the sixteenth century is evidenced by the large volume of piracy-related complaints found within the proceedings of England’s Privy Council during the period. Composed of the most important ministers and officials in the English government, the body gave advice to the monarch on the exercise of royal prerogative, heard various complaints from English citizens and foreigners, and helped dictate national policy toward the realm’s most pressing issues. Given the council’s power and its member’s high standing, only serious grievances went before the body. Surprisingly, among the many

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Past* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 53-61.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, eds. David Beers Quinn and Alison Moffat Quinn (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1993), 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

challenges facing England in the sixteenth century, piracy dominated the council's meetings during the century.

In the 1540s, England and France fought much as they had for centuries. England simultaneously found itself at war with Scotland to the north. Facing adversaries on both sides, Henry VIII focused on improving the sparse Royal Navy he inherited from his father, but even this was insufficient for the task. Henry turned to the old practice of issuing letters of reprisal and letters of marque to attack enemy ships.<sup>6</sup> Letters of reprisal were issued to recuperate losses suffered from another nation in satisfaction of an Augustinian understanding of *justa causa*, while letters of marque were also issued to private citizens to allow them to wage maritime warfare against a declared enemy.<sup>7</sup> This legal distinction produced little bearing on the behavior of the merchant-pirates employing their privileges, or alleged privileges, against the merchantmen of Europe.

By using private vessels to accomplish the state's goals, English naval power swelled to a formidable level. The reprisal system wrought particular havoc on French commerce during the war, but its legal ambiguities and the clear ways it lent itself to abuse by unscrupulous seamen unleashed as many problems as it solved. During the 1540s, merchant-pirates frequently seized French vessels bearing the cargoes of other nations. For example, Thomas Wyndham, William Hawkins, and a host of others became regular defendants before the Privy Council for their questionable prizes. In May 1545, Wyndham possessed two Spanish ships he claimed were harboring French goods, though his claim was challenged by their separate owners.<sup>8</sup> He had already been forced to restore another vessel in early May.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *APC*, I, 107.

<sup>7</sup> Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 34-36.

<sup>8</sup> *APC*, I, 176-177, 187-188.

<sup>9</sup> *APC*, I, 158.

Admittedly, merchants pirating Continental ships did not know the status of the goods on board when they attacked a vessel, but once on board a prize, pirates had little incentive to release goods of other European nations at peace with England. Many of these state-sanctioned pirates joined Wyndham and his Plymouth associates in seizing Spanish ships allegedly bearing French goods. Spanish merchants were understandably incensed at their sufferings given Spain's neutrality in the conflict, and they frequently brought their claims before the Privy Council.<sup>10</sup> The council tried to ameliorate the damage done to neutral merchants, but the climate of hardly controlled reprisals made it impossible to adequately handle the enormous volume of complaints being brought before the body. Repeat offenders like Wyndham make it clear that there was little will within the council to bring serious punishment to those well-placed to defend their innocence before them. These issues of goods, ships, and the validity of each as proper prizes in various situations continued throughout the remainder of the century.

Duplicitous dealing on the part of English merchant-pirates made the Privy Council's task considerably more difficult. Furthermore, many pirates spoiled vessels of various nations with little discretion and without commissions to make reprisals. Most of the participants in the reprisal campaign cared little whose goods they took, as long as they could sell them easily. Certain ports reappear repeatedly in the records and served as favorite haunts of these pirates. Some pirate nests like Norfolk, Suffolk, Dover and the Cinque Ports, and Southampton were historically significant to the realm and had served the monarchy for centuries.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, their regular participation in illegal reprisal activity so embarrassed Queen Elizabeth that she issued multiple, lengthy statements against unrestricted piracy. The queen preferred execution as punishment for pirates, complaining in 1564 about the many acts of piracy continuing since

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<sup>10</sup> *APC*, I, 176-177.

<sup>11</sup> *APC*, VII, 175, 180-181, 184, 244, 293, 362, 395; VIII, 45, 49, 67, 107, 114, 143, 176; IX, 29-30.

peace returned between the English and French, and that “not one [had been] executed or punished according to their deserts.”<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth hoped to see the guilty “executed upon some cliffs near to the sea side, to the example of others”; nevertheless, piracy remained rampant throughout the queen’s reign, speaking clearly as to the profitability of the practice.<sup>13</sup>

Unsurprisingly, ports farther from London, the center of royal power, were most notorious as havens for pirates. The West Country ports of Plymouth, Exeter, Falmouth, and Bideford consistently appear in the records as the source of piratical violence.<sup>14</sup> Cardiff, the Welsh port situated directly across from Bristol, became a source of particular concern to the English merchant community strongly represented in Bristol.<sup>15</sup> Ireland, a consistent source of trouble for the crown during the Tudor period, also harbored many pirates, including some Scottish pirates who operated there regularly in the early 1570s.<sup>16</sup> Given the distance of many of these ports from the center of English sea power closer to the Thames, the crown struggled to secure justice in many cases. Oftentimes, pirates’ names appear repeatedly in the *Acts of the Privy Council*, with no apparent consequences for their many depredations on legal shipping. This problem highlights one of the most important factors in piracy at all times in all places: piracy only succeeded through the complicity of their aiders and abettors on land.

If universally feared and hated, pirates would have lived in an untenably vulnerable state during the sixteenth century. Like all seamen before and after, these pirates relied on many different people in their ports of operation to victual and outfit their ships for action. These “pirate nests,” as historian Mark Hanna has called them, made piratical enterprise possible and

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<sup>12</sup> *APC*, VII, 182.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *APC*, I, 120, 191, 382; VII, 173, 182, 342-343; IX, 72-73, 102, 196.

<sup>15</sup> *APC*, VIII, 230; IX, 129, 209.

<sup>16</sup> *APC*, IV, 222, 245; VII, 229-230, 291; VIII, 102-103, 110, 116, 301; IX, 62, 70, 89.

became fixtures throughout the expansion of the first British Empire.<sup>17</sup> The support these landmen gave pirates during the period initially seems to present a mystery, but there are indications in the records of the Privy Council's meetings that the opportunity to purchase foreign goods at cheap prices drove these landed English people to lend the terrors of merchant shipping their aid. The council understood this issue, making a point to target the "aiders, maineteyners, or abettours" in order to stop pirates seemed most successful at disappearing in their home ports.<sup>18</sup> Even the Spanish ambassador understood the source of piracy's strength in England, asking the council to stop those "who gyveth them assystence and succour of victualles and suche other furniture as they want."<sup>19</sup> The decentralized English state relied on the cooperation of local officials to execute the crown's justice, but outlying regions often saw little benefit to following the mandates of a distant government with little authority in their jurisdictions.

English piracy against neutral shipping served as a source of consistent embarrassment to the crown throughout the middle decades of the sixteenth century. Prizes seized illegally quickly became international incidents. The Spanish Ambassador, Antonio de Guarás, complained regularly before the council during the 1570s of consistent spoilage of Spanish vessels at the hands of English pirates.<sup>20</sup> Spanish losses at the hands of merchant-pirates contributed substantially to the deterioration of Anglo-Spanish relations during the period. Men from the West Country were particularly anti-Spanish in the years leading to the official outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1585. This held important benefits for the realm since a Spanish invasion of England would be made difficult in the West Country, which presented a geographically

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<sup>17</sup> Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> *APC*, IX, 127.

<sup>19</sup> *APC*, VII, 240.

<sup>20</sup> *APC*, VII, 241, 252, 256; VIII, 45.

convenient place for a Spanish invasion. As a result of their strategic importance and the sheer distance from London, the West Countrymen had long been jealous of their regional distinctiveness, as evidenced in the Cornish Tax Revolt of 1497 and Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549.<sup>21</sup>

As Mark Hanna has argued, the Killigrew family of Cornwall represent many of the most salient issues relating to English piracy in the sixteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The Killigrews enjoyed many privileges from the crown in exchange for their loyalty in defending Pendennis Castle, the most important fortification in the West Country, guarding the harbor of Carrick Roads near Falmouth. John Killigrew III constructed the castle under Henry VIII's patronage in 1540 as the prospect of major conflict with Continental Catholic powers became increasingly likely in the aftermath of the English Reformation.<sup>23</sup> His son, Sir John Killigrew IV, was appointed to the Commission for the Suppression of Piracy in Cornwall in a laughable gesture considering his deep involvement in sea-raiding. Despite their prominent roles as the Governors of Pendennis Castle, one of the Killigrews was named alongside Henry Stanguishe, a notorious pirate operating on the Irish coast in the early 1550s.<sup>24</sup> In 1576, the Privy Council wrote to several prominent men of the West Country, Sir John Killigrew among them, with concerns about the apparent embezzling of goods taking place before prize goods were reported to the Admiralty.<sup>25</sup> Their concerns were validated in 1577 as evidence emerged that Killigrew bought French wine from a pirate named Robert Hicks.<sup>26</sup> Despite their reputation, the family continued to enjoy the

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<sup>21</sup> Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 25 n. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *APC*, IV, 245.

<sup>25</sup> *APC*, IX, 196.

<sup>26</sup> *APC*, IX, 365.

crown's support, and Sir John Killigrew's eldest son, also named John, became Vice Admiral of Cornwall in 1587.<sup>27</sup>

The case of the Killigrews and the general inability of the English government to suppress rampant piracy during the period casts some suspicion on the Lord High Admiral himself, the person most responsible for suppressing the alarming number of piracy incidents within the realm. Charged with overseeing English welfare on the high seas, admirals should have been particularly concerned about the prevalence of piracy on the English coast, but most who held the role were not. Indeed, admirals gained one tenth of the value of a prize declared valid under the law.<sup>28</sup> This rewarded a liberal interpretation of legitimate prizes and led multiple Lord Admirals to forgo their duties in important ways. Thomas Seymour, a Lord Admiral during the reign of Henry VIII, faced trial for treason in 1549 under thirty-three distinct articles of high treason. Among them were several relating to his failure to punish pirates and his active encouragement of piracy "as though [he] were authorized to be the chief pirate."<sup>29</sup>

The career of John Callis illustrates many of the issues germane to the complicated issue of pirate justice and toleration in sixteenth century England. Callis became well-known in the highest circles of English government for his considerable success in spoiling many ships during the 1570s.<sup>30</sup> The foremost historian of English piracy, John C. Appleby, argues that Callis and his large gang of pirates represented a "professionalization" of piracy in the English Channel with their more organized approach to piratical activity.<sup>31</sup> As mentioned previously, the Privy Council was unable to secure justice against the pirates operating primarily out of Cardiff in

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<sup>27</sup> *APC*, XV, 254.

<sup>28</sup> Robert W. Kenny, *Elizabeth's Admiral: The Political Career of Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, 1536-1624* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 67.

<sup>29</sup> *APC*, II, 254.

<sup>30</sup> *APC*, VIII, 230; IX, 73-74, 89, 127-128, 209, 351.

<sup>31</sup> Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag*, 145-146.

Wales, and in various other ports on the eastern coast of Ireland. Callis operated in these locales with a large entourage of associates, including Killigrew's former partner, Robert Hicks, who helped Callis take many ships during the 1570s.<sup>32</sup> His successful piracies apparently held international appeal, as evidenced by his recruitment of Simão Fernandes, an Azorean pilot who served previously under the Spanish.<sup>33</sup> Callis brought the disillusioned pilot into his orbit just before making a lucrative cruise to Fernandes's native Azores.<sup>34</sup> Charles L'Estrange Ewen, Callis's sole biographer, suggested that the pirate was probably illiterate.<sup>35</sup> If so, enlisting Fernandes, who received world-class training as a Spanish pilot and was literate in at least Portuguese, Spanish, and English, gave him advantages over any other pirate operating in the region.

Callis proved difficult to catch, primarily because his hosts in Cardiff were unwilling to cooperate with authorities since losing Callis meant losing access to cheap, foreign goods. The Privy Council wrote a frustrated letter to Sir John Perrot in January 1577, alleging that "their Lordships do not a letill mervell at the negligence of suche as are Justices in those partes, that, knowing the said Callice to be so notable and offendour and spoiler of suche her Majesties neighbors as are in good league and amytye with her... wold suffer him to departe in that order and not apprehend him."<sup>36</sup> Weary of seeing pirates "suffered to departe and wincked at," the council complained that "for a shewe and colour of justice, [they] have apprehendid some of the poorest and permitted the chieftest pirattes to escape."<sup>37</sup> Discovering "what persons have bought

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<sup>32</sup> Charles L'Estrange Ewen, "The Golden Chalice: A Documented Narrative of an Elizabethan Pirate," (Paignton, Devon, 1939), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Quinn, *England and America*, 248-250.

<sup>34</sup> Ewen, "Golden Chalice," 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 n. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *APC*, IX, 267.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

and received suche goodes and merchaundizes as have ben broughte in and solde by the pirattes aforesaide” was the key to bringing them to justice.<sup>38</sup>

Eventually Callis’s luck evaporated, and he was committed to the Tower of London in 1577.<sup>39</sup> His friend Robert Hicks was hanged during his custody, but Callis secured his own release through passionate pleas to Sir Francis Walsingham, the Principal Secretary of the Privy Council. Promising to fight piracy in the British Isles and to repay his multinational victims for their losses, he eventually received his freedom.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, Callis returned to piracy and raided shipping of many nations throughout the early 1580s and played a significant role in Humphrey Gilbert’s colonial schemes in 1578 and 1583. A curious suggestion Callis made to Walsingham during his imprisonment is also worth mentioning. Callis suggested that Walsingham employ one Solivan Beere, a pirate operating in Ireland, as a pilot.<sup>41</sup> While Walsingham apparently did not do so, he did indeed employ the Azorean Fernandes at this time. Fernandes had been condemned to the hangman’s noose as a result of his association with Callis’s gang of pirates, but his wide-ranging talents and experiences convinced Walsingham to intervene in his case.<sup>42</sup> This connection between Callis, Beere, and Fernandes has been overlooked by historians, unintentionally denying Callis a place of importance that he deserves in the beginnings of English activity abroad. Walsingham persuaded Fernandes to stop wasting his talents on petty piracy, and instead secured his invaluable talents and insatiable desire to harm the Spanish for the timely needs of expanding English interest in exploiting the Atlantic

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>39</sup> Ewen, “Golden Chalice,” 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>42</sup> Quinn, *England and America*, 249-250.

World. By the end of the sixteenth century, few men had contributed more knowledge, skill, and piratical impulses to the first English colonies than Fernandes.

Elizabeth's policy toward punishing piracy on the high seas was as inconsistent and ambiguous as her notoriously unpredictable foreign policy. The widely varying levels of enforcement highlights Elizabeth's willingness to look away from the illegal acts of those who could benefit her rule. She needed the unquestioning loyalty of the Killigrews to bolster the logical route of invasion for her state that had become a religious pariah among the powers of Europe. She also needed the support of the great merchant families of England, rising in prominence in the increasingly interconnected trade networks being created by the demand for commodities only recently available from throughout the Atlantic World. This emboldened merchants like the Hawkins family to seek higher profits during their trading expeditions through piratical acts. These attacks were not state-sanctioned acts later called "privateering," but they were acts of convenience born from an environment of apathy toward those parties with the power and willingness to support the queen against her rivals. Queen Elizabeth used a similar model of patronage to grant her nominal authority, if not her outright support, to colonial promoters looking to swell English prestige – and wealth – through overseas enterprises.

When England first ventured into the wider Atlantic World, they did so as interlopers in a zone already heavily exploited by their Continental rivals. Spain was the first European nation to claim and exploit large swaths of territory in the Americas. Their strong claim came by virtue of their sponsorship of Columbus' multiple voyages of discovery and their close relationship with Pope Alexander VI, who generously granted these lands to the Spanish sovereigns, Ferdinand

and Isabella, in the papal bull, *Inter Caetera*, in 1493.<sup>43</sup> The Portuguese, who led many pioneering expeditions to the African coast in the fifteenth century, also benefited from this act which granted them the territory east of the Line of Demarcation, further formalized in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas.<sup>44</sup> Other European powers simply rejected these claims. The French King Francis I's alleged remark that he "much desired to see Adam's testament to know how he divided the world" accurately reflected non-Iberian opinion on the pope's donation.<sup>45</sup>

The French were the first to seriously challenge Spanish supremacy in the Americas. England dispatched John Cabot to survey North America in 1497, but Henry VII and VIII did little to capitalize on his claims for the crown. In contrast, France saw an opportunity to siphon the American wealth flowing into the Spanish coffers through irregular maritime warfare. As early as the 1520s, French corsairs were already challenging Spain's sea lanes, as evidenced by their momentous capture of a ship bearing Aztec gold sent to Spain by Cortes in 1523.<sup>46</sup> These raids continued intermittently throughout the early decades of the sixteenth century from pirate hideouts on the north coast of Hispaniola.

The greater Caribbean held the focus of French involvement in the Atlantic basin throughout much of the sixteenth century. With religious upheaval threatening the stability of the state in the 1560s, Admiral Gaspar de Coligny authorized Jean Ribault, a French Protestant Huguenot, to settle a community of his coreligionists in the land claimed by the Spanish as

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<sup>43</sup> "1493. The bull *Inter Caetera*" in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, eds., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, vol. I (New York, NY: Times Books, 1984), 271-274.

<sup>44</sup> "1494. The Treaty of Tordesillas" in Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World*, 275-280.

<sup>45</sup> "Letter from Juan Tavera to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, January 27, 1541" in Henri P. Biggar, ed., *A Collection of Documents Related to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval* (Ottawa, ON: Public Archives of Canada, 1930), 190 (author's translation).

<sup>46</sup> Philip P. Boucher, "Revisioning the French Atlantic" in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 277.

“Florida.”<sup>47</sup> Ribault left his settlement on modern Parris Island to secure supplies in Europe, but before he could return, the remaining settlers abandoned the settlement and made a harrowing trip across the Atlantic in a small boat.<sup>48</sup> René de Laudonnière carried Ribault’s mission forward by founding another Huguenot settlement called La Caroline on the modern St. Johns River in 1565. The location of the settlement was immediately practical. Laudonnière claimed that mutiny led some of his men to seize Spanish prizes in the Caribbean, but the Spanish believed that a desire for plunder informed the entire enterprise.<sup>49</sup> The Spanish struck swiftly to prevent the French settlement from causing them serious damage. Shortly after Ribault relieved Laudonnière of command, nearly all of La Caroline’s settlers were killed by Spanish soldiers under Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.<sup>50</sup> The Spanish founded San Agustín nearby to secure the northern reaches of the empire. It would be over twenty years before another European power would attempt to settle the eastern coast of North America.

By the middle of the sixteenth century, English commerce and trade took place around the Atlantic Rim and within Eurasia’s interior, despite their relative lack of involvement in the Americas. Enterprising merchants sold English exports, particularly woolen cloth, in Antwerp, Seville, Muscovy, the Levant, Persia, the Guinea Coast, and the Caribbean. In return, foreign goods like pepper, silk, and olive oil returned to England to be sold. The Iberian powers dubiously viewed the legality of this trade, especially in Guinea and the Caribbean, because of their exclusive claims outlined in the Treaty of Tordesillas. During the 1550s and 1560s, Spain and Portugal increasingly challenged and blocked English trading efforts in their exclusive

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 285-286.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>49</sup> David Beers Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 251, 253.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 258.

zones. Many prominent English merchants engaged in these illicit trades untrammled, and many of the most prominent sea-dogs of the subsequent decades gained their first sea experience on these voyages. As Kenneth R. Andrews argued, “European overseas expansion in this epoch was fundamentally a commercial movement, an extension of the European trading system. . . . It was not a pacific movement, but an acquisitive and predatory drive for commodities and for the profits to be made on the rich products of the outer world.”<sup>51</sup>

Martin Frobisher, who eventually led three expeditions to the Arctic in search of the Northwest Passage and precious metals, began his long career at sea as a young man in illicit trade on the Guinea Coast.<sup>52</sup> He sailed with Thomas Wyndham – previously mentioned with regard to his piratical excesses during conflict with France in the 1540s – to Benin on a troublesome trading mission in 1554 in which about two thirds of all participants died from disease and lack of victuals.<sup>53</sup> Wyndham himself died before the expedition left Africa, and the men got into trouble with the Portuguese who regularly traded in the area by pillaging several of their ships in search of loot to supplement the supply of pepper that the king of Benin gave them.<sup>54</sup> Frobisher was fortunate to survive that mission and the others that followed. The Portuguese held him as a prisoner for much of 1555 as a result of his participation in the illegal trade.<sup>55</sup> Frobisher’s difficult entry into the English maritime world foreshadowed many of the failures that typified the remainder of his career.

Trading missions like Wyndham’s were profitable, but not extraordinarily so; however, the opportunity to take prizes of convenience did offer the lure of substantial reward. John

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<sup>51</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> McDermott, *Frobisher*, 35.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-38.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

Hawkins's career began similarly, as an interloper in the Spanish-dominated Caribbean slave trade.<sup>56</sup> The Hawkins family of Plymouth was one of several in the West Country that dominated English maritime activity in the sixteenth century and serve as centerpieces in common images of the Elizabethan Sea Dogs. Hawkins's father, William Hawkins, pioneered the way for future English overseas expeditions. According to Richard Hakluyt, William Hawkins sailed to "Brasil" in 1530 and 1532, and made an earlier voyage elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> It is likely but unproven that this earlier voyage is the one recorded by the Spanish authorities in the Caribbean in 1527, and the first mention of an English ship being allowed to dock in a Spanish-American port.<sup>58</sup> The Spanish officials who received the English ship were evidently so surprised to see the foreign vessel that they completely neglected to identify the captain.<sup>59</sup> The Spanish half-heartedly drove away this first of many ambiguously-intentioned vessels sent by England generally, and the Hawkins family particularly.

John Hawkins succeeded his father in becoming Plymouth's leading merchant-pirate. His three major expeditions to Africa and Spanish America during the 1560s followed a similar pattern. Hawkins and his men sailed to the African coast to acquire slaves either through trade or by pirating the human cargo of the Portuguese slave traders on that coast. The expeditions then took their slaves to the Caribbean, where restrictive Spanish trade policies left them starving for labor, especially as Native American populations vanished in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Frequently, Spanish colonial officials offered token resistance to Hawkins's efforts to engage in illicit trade, but trade usually commenced anyways with little violent persuasion from

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<sup>56</sup> Kelsey, *Hawkins*, 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> "Depositions taken at Santo Domingo, November 26 – December 9, 1527" in Irene A. Wright, ed., *Spanish Documents Concerning English Voyages to the Caribbean, 1527-1568* (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1929), 29-34.

the Englishmen. Spanish colonies desperately wanted the slaves and goods the English carried, and Hawkins was more than willing to create the appearance of forced trade if it meant wealth for him and his crew.

While fairly practical profit motives first spurred English involvement in Atlantic piracy and illicit trade, ideological divisions birthed from the Protestant Reformation promulgated nationalism and inspired fierce rivalries. With England's departure from the Catholic Church under Henry VIII, Catholic Spain became the primary target of English aggression in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Spain was not only unapologetically committed to the Catholic cause, they were also becoming increasingly wealthy from their American conquests. Most notably, Mexico and Peru filled the Spanish coffers with gold and silver extracted from the Americas. Phillip II's marriage to Mary I gave him temporary kingship over England from 1556 to 1558, when she died, and he extended an offer of marriage to Queen Elizabeth upon her ascension.<sup>60</sup> In many cases, national rivalries proved surmountable in the pursuit of religious aims. Hawkins called at Laudonnière's settlement in this spirit in 1564 and sold the French Protestants a ship of provisions in exchange for some cannons and ammunition.<sup>61</sup> According to a participant on the expedition, the French had "made the inhabitants weary of them by their daily craving of maiz."<sup>62</sup> Hawkins's interest in helping secure Protestant bases on the east coast of North America must have made an impression on his young cousin, Francis Drake, participating in his first voyage to the West Indies.<sup>63</sup> Drake paid a similar call to the next hopeful pirate base,

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<sup>60</sup> Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 72.

<sup>61</sup> Kelsey, *Hawkins*, 29-30.

<sup>62</sup> "Report on Florida" in Quinn, et. al., eds, *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, vol. II (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1979), 366.

<sup>63</sup> Kelsey, *Hawkins*, 19.

founded in 1585, farther up the coast as its relations with the Native Americans soured over their “craving of maiz.”

The increasingly brazen acts of many of England’s seamen soured the relationship between Spain and England, particularly after Hawkins and Drake were attacked in 1568 while illegally trading with the Spanish in Veracruz.<sup>64</sup> This experience drove the illicit traders into open hostility with Spain. Drake began his illustrious career alongside Hawkins, his second cousin, in his slaving missions to the African coast. Hawkins’s expeditions are central in the beginnings of early English expansion on their own merits, but the valuable experience they gave Drake stands as their most important consequence. When Hawkins and Drake arrived at San Juan de Ulúa to trade in Veracruz, they anticipated the same behavior the Spanish displayed on their previous voyages throughout the Caribbean when approached by the English traders. In Veracruz, however, the Englishmen received a stiff refusal and were ambushed by a Spanish fleet.<sup>65</sup> Drake and Hawkins barely escaped with their lives. For the English, the Battle of San Juan de Ulúa became symbolic of the treachery of the Spanish, driving men like Drake into a life-long commitment to pillaging the Spanish Empire.

Drake came to be the most feared man in the Spanish mind in the 1570s. In 1572, he raided the Spanish Main at Nombre de Dios and captured a mule train of silver and gold bullion on the isthmus in 1573. Ironically, the former slaver took his prize with the assistance of *cimarones*, independent communities of escaped black slaves.<sup>66</sup> Despite their importance, his accomplishments went publicly unrecognized by the English government to mitigate the damage done to their diplomatic relationship with Spain. Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth’s discreet

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<sup>64</sup> “Don Martin Enriquez’ statement and supporting depositions, San Juan de Ulúa, September 27-30, 1568” in Wright, ed., *Spanish Documents, 1527-1568*, 134.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Kelsey, *Drake*, 59-62.

support for Drake's acts of plunder illustrates a principle already stated with regard to piracy close to the British Isles: Elizabeth gladly embraced almost any brazen act that filled her coffers or furthered her own policy goals, while shunning more petty acts of violence that could only embarrass her on the international stage.

In 1577, Drake embarked on the journey that became the centerpiece of his career: the first English circumnavigation of the world. However, his voyage was more than merely a sailing accomplishment for England since he raided Spanish shipping at every opportunity, especially on the Pacific coast of the Americas. Drake struck fear in his men through his harsh treatment of any sign of insubordination among his crewmen.<sup>67</sup> Most pirating expeditions during the period struggled to keep their crews focused on the task at hand, but Drake's tough leadership style proved effective. When Drake arrived in Plymouth in 1580, the treasure he had taken shocked Queen Elizabeth. While trying to suppress his most remarkable story, she had the commoner knighted for his service and awarded arms. Drake became England's favorite hero of the sea and inspired the hopes of younger sons and commoners like him all over the island. Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza forebodingly reported to Phillip II that "this bait will certainly attract greedy people to help the enterprise, which they think will turn out as rich as Drake's last voyage."<sup>68</sup> Julian S. Corbett called him a "statesman" and "one of the great military figures of the Reformation," but Drake's behavior in his circumnavigation shows him as a pirate above all else.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Drake's treatment of Thomas Doughty is the most famous example of his propensity for strict punishment. See Kelsey, *Drake*, 97-109.

<sup>68</sup> "Berardino de Mendoza to the King" in *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, vol. III, ed. Martin A. S. Hume (London, UK: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896), 75.

<sup>69</sup> Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, I, vii.

Spain did not sit idly while its rivals plundered its New World wealth. After the sack of Havana by the French in 1555, Spanish officials there pushed for radical improvements to the city's lackluster defenses that were quite insufficient for a city of its growing importance in the region. Havana became one of Spain's most important New World settlements, serving as a convenient collection point for the rich commodities of the Americas before being sent to Seville. For the remainder of the sixteenth century, Spain dedicated considerable funds toward building impressive fortifications at La Fuerza, El Morro, and La Punta worthy of a city of such importance.<sup>70</sup> Santo Domingo, Cartagena, and Nombre de Dios also embarked on ambitious fortification projects because of consistent depredations by French and later English marauders.<sup>71</sup> The Spanish also instituted the fleet system to deal with the threat posed to their New World wealth. Single ships laden with valuable goods easily fell into pirate hands in the early decades of the sixteenth century, but by combining vessels into regularly-scheduled *flotas*, small-scale pirates stood little chance of making a major haul. The fleet system did make the shipments fairly predictable, however, giving the Caribbean economy and its vulnerability to plunder a seasonal component.<sup>72</sup>

Spain's empire proved too far-flung to be protected fully from those intent on skimming wealth from its surface, but during the sixteenth century Spain's defenses proved sufficient to prevent major damage to their overseas empire. A long-view of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries highlights the foolishness of some Englishmen's firm faith that the empire represented a rotten edifice merely waiting to collapse. Paul Hoffman's research demonstrates clearly the

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<sup>70</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 73-74.

<sup>71</sup> Paul E. Hoffman, *The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean, 1535-1585: Precedent, Patrimonialism, and Royal Parsimony* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 155-156, 174, 52-54, respectively.

<sup>72</sup> Fuente, *Havana*, 15-16.

ability of Spanish Caribbean defenses to adapt to the changing political circumstances and the varying levels of corsair activity in the Antilles and the Main.<sup>73</sup>

Ultimately, outright war did erupt from the culture of tolerated piracy under Elizabeth and the English aid given to the Dutch rebels plaguing Philip II in the Low Countries. Several members of the queen's inner circle had been agitating for war with Spain for several years. Sir Francis Walsingham, the Privy Council's Principal Secretary, was foremost among this group, alongside the Earl of Leicester and Walter Raleigh. John Hawkins, the famous merchant-pirate, also advocated for war against the Spaniard from his post as Treasurer of the Royal Navy.<sup>74</sup> The cold war between the countries turned hot after English ships were arrested in Spanish harbors on May 26, 1585.<sup>75</sup> In response, Elizabeth licensed many of the pirates responsible for the deterioration of her relationship with Spain to conduct legalized, private warfare against the Spanish.<sup>76</sup> With a few important exceptions, the English prosecuted the war through the use of these private individuals rather than through the Royal Navy.<sup>77</sup>

Three major piratical expeditions opened England's war effort against Spain in 1585 and deserve special consideration in understanding the nature of the Anglo-Spanish conflict. Bernard Drake and Amyas Preston outfitted the *Golden Royal* to resupply Raleigh's new colony on Roanoke Island, but they were redirected by the queen to the large, international fishing community exploiting the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.<sup>78</sup> The expedition hoped to warn the English fishing fleet not to go to Spain due to the recent embargo and looked to capitalize on the

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<sup>73</sup> Hoffman, *The Spanish Crown*, 213.

<sup>74</sup> Williamson, *Hawkins of Plymouth*, 225-226.

<sup>75</sup> Nathan Probasco, "Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Elizabeth I, and the Anglo-Spanish Conflict," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 37, no. 1 (2011): 128.

<sup>76</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Papers Relating to the Navy during the Spanish War, 1585-1587* (London, UK: Navy Records Society, 1898), 36-38.

<sup>77</sup> Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, 16-18.

<sup>78</sup> Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland 1577-1660* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 47-48.

opportunity to plunder the relatively undefended Iberian fishing vessels. As a consolation for losing his colony's resupply to the piratical scheme, Queen Elizabeth transferred the bulk of the expedition's expected proceeds to Raleigh.<sup>79</sup> Preston seized a Portuguese ship bearing Brazilian sugar and abandoned the main enterprise to get his lucrative prize home quickly.<sup>80</sup> Drake continued to Newfoundland, successfully warning the Englishmen there to not trade in Spanish ports and seizing the cargo from seventeen Portuguese vessels. Two other English ships joined Drake as he sailed to the Azores, taking three Brazilians and a French vessel sailing from Africa.<sup>81</sup> Drake and Preston succeeded impressively in achieving all their aims, further highlighting the attractions of piracy in the Americas and illustrating the vulnerability of the Newfoundland fisheries.

In coordination with the Newfoundland voyage, Francis Drake and Martin Frobisher led thirty-three vessels to the West Indies in 1585 with hopes of seizing the Spanish treasure fleet and causing significant damage to Philip II's overseas empire.<sup>82</sup> It was the largest fleet to sail in the Americas in the sixteenth century. Henry and Francis Knollys, two prominent Englishmen, participated in the voyage alongside Christopher Carleill, Sir Francis Walsingham's son-in-law. After several delays, the large fleet left Plymouth on September 14, 1585, hoping to recover the English vessels seized in Vigo, Spain, and wreak havoc among Spain's American possessions. The expedition sailed to Vigo and successfully freed English captives and gained considerable loot.<sup>83</sup> They next sailed through the Cape Verde and Canary Islands, as most transatlantic voyages did, before menacingly sailing to Santo Domingo on Hispaniola. The English sacked

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<sup>79</sup> "The *Golden Royal* and the 1585 Ventures" in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 237.

<sup>80</sup> Probasco, "Anglo-Spanish Conflict": 128.

<sup>81</sup> Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 172.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Frear Keeler, *Sir Francis Drake's West Indian Voyage 1585-86* (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1981), 10-11.

<sup>83</sup> Kelsey, *Drake*, 248-249.

the city at the heart of the Spanish colonial administration in the region with a resounding victory and vindication for those arguing for many years that Spanish America stood ripe for the taking by courageous Englishmen.<sup>84</sup>

After pillaging Santo Domingo for about one month, the force replicated its earlier success in Cartagena on the northern coast of South America.<sup>85</sup> With disease affecting many of his men and limited plunder compared to his expectations, Drake decided to move quickly north toward Cuba and ignore the Panama Isthmus that he had raided in the 1570s. Drake also passed Cuba without attacking Havana, evidently out of concern for the improved defenses erected since the French takeover of the city in the 1550s. Drake did, however, utterly destroy San Agustín in Florida, pillaging even the mundane items from the small settlement.<sup>86</sup> The expedition failed to discover Santa Elena, the Spanish colony further along the coast, but Drake did call at Raleigh's Roanoke colony before returning to England with his spoil.<sup>87</sup> Drake probably hoped Raleigh's planned pirate base was already operational, but Roanoke proved woefully insufficient for Drake to remain while he waited for the departure of the 1586 treasure fleet. Drake's expedition returned to England in July 1586 carrying Raleigh's first colony with it. The 1585 Roanoke expedition itself represents the third part of Elizabeth's opening barrage against the Spanish that year. It will be considered in detail in a later chapter.

Drake's West Indies raid did not bring the lucrative return that his circumnavigation brought to his supporters, but the expedition was extremely important nonetheless. The voyage showed the vulnerability of Spain's empire to encroachment by the English, a fact that fed the

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<sup>84</sup> For example, see Humphrey Gilbert's assessment of the Spanish empire in "A Discourse How His Majesty May Annoy the King of Spayne" in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 170-180.

<sup>85</sup> "A Summarie and True Discourse of Sir Frances Drakes West Indian Voyage" in Keeler, *Drake's West Indian Voyage*, 258.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-270.

<sup>87</sup> Kelsey, *Drake*, 276-277.

developing “Black Legend” of atrocities committed by the Spanish in America and the degeneracy of the Spanish Empire. Drake did severe damage to Spanish prestige and its ability to govern in the West Indies for many years; ultimately, Spain quickly recovered from the temporary setback. Nevertheless, piratical raids on Spanish shipping and vulnerable Spanish ports typified the remainder of the war that continued between the two powers until the end of Elizabeth’s reign.

While piracy of varying levels of state sanction thrived from the English Channel to the Caribbean, the first English colonies abroad were organized. Many of the same motivations that drove the English merchant-pirates into the wider Atlantic World and beyond also drove the colonial promoters in the 1570s and 1580s. If Spain could become wealthy through overseas colonies, so too could the English. The expeditions of Hawkins, Drake, Frobisher, and others helped establish England’s place in the West and influenced the handling of these colonial ventures as they attempted the seemingly impossible task of establishing lasting colonies of Englishmen abroad. At once, piracy became a useful ally and a dangerous enemy of the English colonial movement as it began in the latter decades of the sixteenth century.

### Chapter Three: Annoying the King of Spain “by Some Colorable Means”: England’s First Settlements to Oppose the Spanish<sup>1</sup>

Eventually English experiences in the Atlantic World led them to support overseas efforts to plant sustainable colonies. These efforts proved unable to separate themselves from the culture of tolerated piracy thriving in the waters around the British Isles and increasingly farther from the home ports of many merchant-pirates. Humphrey Gilbert became the prime mover in England’s earliest colonial expeditions, leading fresh efforts in Ireland, England’s oldest colony, and in the fertile environment for American colonization. Though ultimately unsuccessful, Humphrey Gilbert deserves a place in colonial history often denied to him because of his failures. Gilbert’s death at sea in 1583 was a tragic loss for the English colonial movement and could have seriously diminished interest in such projects if it had not been for his brother’s steadfast sponsorship of colonial projects in his stead. The most tragic consequence of Gilbert’s death was the loss of institutional knowledge that his death represented. Some lessons he learned during his career were relearned at Roanoke Island under Raleigh and again on the James River in Virginia.

Gilbert became the first Englishman to receive an American colonial patent from the English Crown in 1578, but a long journey of success and failure preceded this momentous recognition.<sup>2</sup> Gilbert was born to a prominent family of the West Country in the late 1530s and served the Crown as a soldier in the English defense of the French Huguenots in the early 1560s. Shortly after his return from France, Gilbert apparently first engaged in serious thought about overseas colonial enterprises. His experience in France and the coincidental timing of Jean

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<sup>1</sup> “6 November 1577. Sir Humphrey Gilbert, ‘A Discourse how hir Majestie May Annoy the King of Spayne,’” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 171.

<sup>2</sup> “11 June 1578. Letters Patent to Sir Humphrey Gilbert,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 188.

Ribault and Rene de Laudonniere's failed expeditions to Florida probably gave him an excellent opportunity to learn of the French endeavors in America. After all, Ribault proposed cooperation with the English pirate and mercenary, Thomas Stukeley, to support his French Huguenot colony in 1563.<sup>3</sup> These close associations between French and English Protestant colonizers probably first inclined Gilbert to seriously consider colonization, but in the absence of solid evidence, this remains conjecture.

Regardless of the circumstances that spurred his involvement, by 1565, Gilbert was presenting his arguments for pursuing the Northwest Passage to important players in the queen's court. At the time, he asked for the right to exploit the trading possibilities of the region himself, but the Muscovy Company denied his request. The company held considerable power as the arbiters of trade rights to the East, and they saw no reason to grant considerable power to an upstart soldier from the West Country.<sup>4</sup> Gilbert never forgot the slight and enacted his future plans without the assistance of the company. Gilbert's American ambitions were put on hold as he went to Ireland in 1566 to pacify the anti-English rebellion in Ulster. He planned his first colonial enterprise for Ulster in 1567, but the instability of the region halted his plans.<sup>5</sup> By 1569, he had allied with Richard Grenville and several other prominent Englishmen in requesting rights to hold ports on the southwest coast of Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Gilbert and his partners hoped for rights to "make a Corporat Towne, and to fortiffy the same at the haven of Balletemore" and to "have lysesence of her highnes to have the traffick of the same partes."<sup>7</sup> This fishing area, if fortified by

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<sup>3</sup> Williamson, *Hawkins of Plymouth*, 62; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 45-46.

<sup>4</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 184.

<sup>5</sup> "6 July 1567, Queen Elizabeth to Sir Henry Sidney," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 120.

<sup>6</sup> "1568-9, Request of Sir Warham St. Leger, Edward Saintloo, Richard Grenville, Thomas Leton, Humphrey Gilbert, Jacques Wingfield, and Gilbert Talbot for Corporate Privileges in Munster," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 122-124.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

Gilbert and his associates, would have been a strong bulwark against future Spanish aggression in Ireland, and would have made an ideal base for piracy, as it did in the seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup>

The Munster Rebellion of 1569 prevented this coastal colony from taking hold. Rather than leading an Irish colony, Gilbert became military governor of the Munster region in September 1569.<sup>9</sup> He pursued his first independent command with vigor, terrorizing the Irish locals into submission and solidifying his reputation as the most brutal of Englishmen in an Irish context particularly given to barbarism. Nearly all historians reference Gilbert's famous rows of severed heads leading to his tent in Munster and Thomas Churchyard's comments about his particular disdain for the Irish nobles, but perhaps no feature of Gilbert's Irish service is more important than his knighthood, granted in 1570 after only three months of service in Munster.<sup>10</sup> His scorched-earth tactics temporarily pacified the region, and Queen Elizabeth lauded him with that knighthood. This is a clear statement on the crown's tolerance of brutal subjugation and the ways in which future atrocities would be received in the American context.

Nathan Probasco argues that Gilbert's behavior in Munster does not necessarily suggest that similar violence would have typified his American expeditions. He cites Gilbert's preparations for his 1583 colony to indicate his interest in trading with Native Americans rather than abusing them and contradicts previous historians who have written disparagingly of Gilbert's prospects for peaceful cohabitation with Indians.<sup>11</sup> Probasco's assumption must be rejected in light of the numerous colonial expeditions from the sixteenth and seventeenth

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<sup>8</sup> John C. Appleby, "The Problem of Piracy in Ireland, 1570-1630" in Claire Jowitt, ed., *Pirates? The Politics of Plunder, 1550-1650* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 50, 52.

<sup>9</sup> *Calendar of the Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, vol. I, James Morrin, ed. (Dublin, Ireland: Alex. Thom and Sons, 1861), 537.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall of warres...* (London, UK: Edward White, 1579), 74; for Gilbert's knighting, see *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, 1575-1588*, J. S. Brewer and William Bullen, eds. (London, UK: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1868), 348.

<sup>11</sup> Probasco, "Researching North America," 12-13.

centuries that began with apparently sincere intentions to avoid violence with Indians but devolved into such behavior nonetheless. Had Gilbert established colonies in America, his treatment of American Indians could have hardly been better than that perpetrated against his Irish neighbors.

In the early 1570s, Gilbert represented Plymouth in Parliament alongside the pirate magnate, John Hawkins. Gilbert advocated for sweeping monarchical power and royal prerogative in the debates of the period. Such power would be necessary for him to receive the colonial power and authority he craved.<sup>12</sup> In December 1571, Gilbert and Sir Thomas Smith joined forces under a patent from Queen Elizabeth in an alchemical attempt to transmute iron into copper.<sup>13</sup> The whole affair became a debacle. Both men lost over £1000 to the dishonest connivance of a mineral assayer named William Medley.<sup>14</sup> Copper was a necessity in England's vital wool industry, and securing cheap copper held strong allure in the late sixteenth century. The first English expeditions to North America became as focused on mineral wealth as their Spanish counterparts. Gilbert and Smith's interaction at this juncture is important, as it likely gave them a chance to discuss their mutual interests in Irish colonization schemes.

Sir Thomas Smith was among the first to articulate an ideological vision for English colonies in his plans for his Irish colonies in the 1570s. Smith, an academic once called the "flower of the University of Cambridge," argued for Irish colonization using Roman precedents.<sup>15</sup> He argued that "England was as uncivil as Ireland until colonies of Romans

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<sup>12</sup> Rory Rapple, "Elizabethan Absolutism and Tamburlaine's Tents: Sir Humphrey Gilbert Reads *De Republica Anglorum*," *The English Historical Review* 132, no. 554 (February 2017), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Dewar, *Sir Thomas Smith: A Tudor Intellectual in Office* (London, UK: The Athlone Press, 1964), 151-155.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> "Preface," in Martín Cortéz, *The arte of navigation...*, ed. and trans. by Richard Eden (London, UK: R. Jagge, 1561), unpaginated.

brought their laws and orders, whose moulds no nation hath more truly kept.”<sup>16</sup> In Smith’s mind, England was ready to bestow the blessings of civilization that had been learned at the hands of the Roman conquerors. This ancient precedent remained a *modus operandi* for later colonial efforts in Virginia. John White included blue-painted Picts in his 1585 watercolors of the Algonquian Indians of Raleigh’s Virginia, reminding the home country of the savage beginnings of the English people. William Strachey expounded it further in explaining the necessity of violence against the natives of Virginia, stating: “Had not this violence, and this Injury, bene offred unto us by the Romanis... we might yet have lyved overgrowne Satyrs, rude and untutred, wandring in the woodes, dwelling in Caves, and hunting for our dynners... prostetuting our daughters to straungers... eating our owne Children...”<sup>17</sup> With such expectations, extreme violence could easily be justified.

These ancient precedents informed Smith’s efforts, but none of his Irish colonies proved permanent. He organized his first colonial venture throughout 1572 and 1573. Although he hoped to lead this colony to the north coast of Ireland himself, the queen appointed him as her ambassador in France, which left the colony in the care of his illegitimate son, also named Thomas.<sup>18</sup> The young Thomas struggled to assemble a substantive expedition after organizing several hundred men in Liverpool; most slipped away, leaving only one hundred men to settle the plantation in the Ards Peninsula.<sup>19</sup> The local Irish lords were incensed at the 360,000 acre tract carved from their land claims for Smith’s use and resisted the enterprise at every turn.<sup>20</sup> Sir Thomas sent reinforcements to his fledgling colony in the spring of 1573, but they never made it

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted in David Beers Quinn, “Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577) and the Beginnings of English Colonial Theory,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 89, no. 4 (Dec. 1945): 546.

<sup>17</sup> William Strachey, *The History of Travell into Virginia Brittania*, eds. Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1953), 24.

<sup>18</sup> Quinn, “Sir Thomas Smith,” 548-549.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Dewar, *Smith*, 159.

to Ireland. The lure of easy coastal piracy drew them away from Smith's unprofitable mission.<sup>21</sup> As the colony collapsed, young Thomas Smith's own Irish servants murdered him.<sup>22</sup>

Wracked by grief over his son's loss, and presumably reinforced in his opinion on the barbarity of the native Irish, Sir Thomas Smith persevered in his mission to settle a successful colony in Ireland. He began organizing his second expedition within a year of his son's death. In December 1573, he wrote elaborate plans for his colony that were, remarkably, only discovered by researchers in 1955 when they were deposited in the Essex Record Office.<sup>23</sup> Smith envisioned a neo-feudal society of manorial lords capable of bringing large numbers of soldiers and farmers to protect and provide for the colony.<sup>24</sup> His plan provided "Elizabetha," his strong fortified city, a grand strategy of military government and a guide to the minutiae of matter such as the fines to be levied for untilled acreage.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, Smith's obsessive, hands-on approach could not prevent a collapse similar to his lackluster previous effort. His brother, George, led the colony alongside its military commander, Jerome Brett. Brett did not follow Smith's instructions in Ireland and made an enemy of the Lord Deputy of Ireland, William Fitzwilliam.<sup>26</sup> With continuous Irish attacks on his settlement, and his inability to achieve his high aims for the colony, he relinquished his rights to the land to the Earl of Essex in 1575.<sup>27</sup> Smith died shortly thereafter in 1577, but his plans for a colonial feudalism did not die with him; they returned and informed several of the earliest attempts to settle English colonies beyond Ireland.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>22</sup> Quinn, "Sir Thomas Smith," 549.

<sup>23</sup> Dewar erroneously claims that the plans were drawn in December 1574, but the document as held in the ERO, is clearly dated "the first daye of December 1573" on its last line. Dewar, *Smith*, 164; "Orders set out by Sr Thomas Smyth knight . . .," in ERO, D/D Sh. 01/2.

<sup>24</sup> "Orders set out by Sr Thomas Smyth knight . . .," in ERO, D/D Sh. 01/2.

<sup>25</sup> Dewar, 166.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

While Smith struggled with his colonies in Ireland, Gilbert remained busy in the service of the queen. He spent a short stint in the defense of the Netherlands and returned to England in 1572.<sup>28</sup> He served faithfully in Parliament for several years and became an increasingly important member of Queen Elizabeth's circle. He advocated for the establishment of a school in London focused on the practical applications of the emerging scientific fields of the period, especially those with military and maritime utility.<sup>29</sup> His *Discourse of a Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia*, written mostly in 1566, was finally published in 1576 for the benefit of Martin Frobisher's expedition to Meta Incognita that year. Gilbert never became deeply involved in Frobisher's affair; he was listed as a subscriber to Frobisher's third voyage but apparently never paid his subscription fee.<sup>30</sup> His *Discourse* did bring him into the orbit of still more people who were to prove influential in the early days of English maritime expansion, particularly the mysterious polymath, John Dee.<sup>31</sup>

Frobisher's three expeditions to the Arctic from 1576-1578 did considerable damage to English enthusiasm for overseas projects that might have profited Gilbert and his contemporaries. Despite their transience, the voyages' importance for the trajectory of subsequent English colonial ventures cannot be overstated. The queen, and Frobisher's other investors, lost enormous sums of money in pursuit of mineral wealth in the Northwest. The first expedition returned in 1576 with a mysterious "blacke stoune, as great as a halfe penny loaf" to the ruin of the entire venture.<sup>32</sup> These expeditions initially departed England in hopes of finding the fabled Northwest Passage, but the possibility of attaining the mineral wealth perceived to be

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<sup>28</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Humphrey Gilbert, "Queene Elizabethes Achademy," in *Early English Text Society, Extra Series, VIII* (London, UK: N. Trübner and Company, 1869), 1-12.

<sup>30</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 31.

<sup>31</sup> "September 1577. John Dee on Gilbert's *Discourse*," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 166-167.

<sup>32</sup> McDermott, *Frobisher*, 141.

swelling Spanish coffers in preceding decades diverted the entire purpose of the mission to mining the strange ore. Mineral assayers in London gave competing assessments of Frobisher's rock, and the queen contributed a sizeable investment in Frobisher's scheme. The enormous weight of the venture increasingly came to rest on the hopes of extracting tons of gold from the Arctic. By 1578, it became painfully clear that Frobisher's errand was a total fiasco.

In this context, Gilbert abandoned his former interest in the Northwest, and by 1577 Gilbert's colonial ambitions farther south were full-grown. He sent two incendiary documents to the queen on November 6, 1577, with his plans to "annoy the king of Spayne."<sup>33</sup> These documents are remarkable for their outspoken, peacetime militancy against Spain and their place as the first extended argument for a piratical colonial scheme. One of the documents, presumably meant to be read first by the queen, argues that weakening the might of Spain should be England's top strategic priority, accomplishable by focusing on purging the power of English Catholic elements "not by banishment, or by fire, and sworde, but by diminishing their abilities by purse, credit and force."<sup>34</sup> Once the homeland is in order, Elizabeth should attend to the "deminishing of their forces by sea... eyther by open hostilytie, or by some colorable meanes."<sup>35</sup> Gilbert describes such means:

geving of lycence under lettres patentes to discover and inhabyte some strange place... your highnes lettres patentes being a manyfest shewe that it was not your Majestes pleasure so to have it. After the publick notyse of which fact, your Majestie is either to avowe the same (if by the event thereof it shall so seme good) or to disavowe both them and the fact, as league breakers, leaving them to pretend yt as done without your pryvitie....<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "6 November 1577. Sir Humphrey Gilbert, 'A Discourse how hir Majestie May Annoy the King of Spayne,'" in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 170.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

In this short passage, Gilbert gave Queen Elizabeth a powerful cover for her support of illicit piracy against the Spanish: plausible deniability. David Beers Quinn hinted at this idea, but ultimately concluded that the queen was not particularly interested in Gilbert's militaristic scheme since the patent he eventually received contained less overtly militaristic language.<sup>37</sup> The chain of events that followed, however, suggest that the queen supported Gilbert's ideas, especially since they afforded her plausible deniability. Through colonial patents to settle America, the queen could legally sanction English action in the West. When her crews of pirates predictably sacked Spanish holdings across the Atlantic, she could plead ignorance before the offended monarch of Spain. For Elizabeth, whose ambiguous foreign policy is most noteworthy of all early modern monarchs, Gilbert gave a perfectly practical means of opposing Spain by licensing her subordinates to prosecute open hostility in ways that the state could not. In this way, Elizabeth's colonial patents served the same purpose as a letter of marque.

Beyond this possible framework for future ventures, Gilbert gave specific details regarding his plans. He proposed sending a fleet to plunder the Newfoundland fisheries, an international hub of activity shared rather collegially by many of the nations of Europe.<sup>38</sup> The participants should then return to England and pretend to be merely common pirates offloading their plunder on the coast. Some would certainly face prison for their actions, but this was necessary in order to confirm the ruse. As these actions were being performed, Gilbert argued that a second expedition of many ships of war and five to six thousand men should establish a base for resupply somewhere in the West. This base could serve to outfit the ships necessary to make a final push to the West Indies.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 34-35.

<sup>38</sup> "6 November 1577. Sir Humphrey Gilbert, 'A Discourse how hir Majestie May Annoy the King of Spayne,'" in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 172.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

Gilbert's second letter to the queen from November 6, 1577, outlines the necessity and relative ease of taking the West Indies from the Spanish. He believed that Hispaniola and Cuba should be taken by the English, "which maye easely be done because there is but fewe people in them both."<sup>40</sup> Gilbert reminded the queen that these attacks would be aided by "a great number of Negros... that some tyme were slaves and have ronn away from their Masters," just as Drake had used maroons in his Panamanian raid in 1573.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, English ships should be dispatched to the "Iland of Bearmunda," so they could lie in wait for the Spanish treasure fleet, "which treasure hath been the principall aide wherewith to do all the great actes that... the Emperour Charles did in his tyme and the pryde of the Spanyardes to this day."<sup>42</sup> Gilbert closed his argument with a plea for his own flexibility in executing these matters: "There may be many thinges more saide in this behalfe which I leave because the tyme will best shewe them when this shalbe put in execution."<sup>43</sup> The Spanish Empire seemed a rotten edifice to Gilbert; all he needed was the queen's permission to kick the door in the West Indies.

Gilbert's bold anti-Spanish plans were brash and reckless, but his ideas seem to have informed the opening of hostilities at the beginning of the Anglo-Spanish War. The expeditions of Preston and Drake to Newfoundland, Drake's West Indies Raid, and Raleigh's plans for a pirate base on the east coast of North America fit Gilbert's framework of Spanish opposition with remarkable precision. Given the surviving evidence, it is impossible to know whether Gilbert's plans directly informed English strategy in the years following his unexpected death in 1583, or whether his writings merely indicate a man well-connected with the general spirit of the

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<sup>40</sup> "[6 November 1577]. [Sir Humphrey Gilbert], 'A Discourse how hir Majestie May Meete with and Annoy the King of Spayne,'" in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 178.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

times. While planting colonies or basing pirates in the Americas were not new concepts, Gilbert's formulation of a unified strategy to destroy Spanish domination in the West Indies seems to be a unique development, giving his ideas life after death.

Gilbert received his patent to "have hold occupie and enjoye" lands "not actually possessed of any Christian prince or people" on June 11, 1578.<sup>44</sup> His was the first such patent granted by the queen. The queen did make some important adjustments to Gilbert's proposal, however, granting his rights "nowe in this journey for discovery or in the seconde journey for conquest hereafter..."<sup>45</sup> While much of the patent should be seen only a pretense for Gilbert's anti-Spanish activities, this adjustment for a preliminary voyage of discovery seems to reflect the queen's will in the matter. Future colonial enterprises relied heavily on these reconnaissance expeditions for much information about the places they planned to inhabit. Gilbert's patent is a convenient marker for the beginning of English expansion into the Western Hemisphere, but this initial patent was largely a pretense for Gilbert's piratical schemes in the West Indies with the possibility of legitimate colonization only if necessary for the completion of the mission. Gilbert had already begun gathering ships, sailors, and supplies for his proposed expedition to "annoy the kyng of Spayne" before his patent was written.

Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador in London, wrote King Philip II regarding Gilbert's activities throughout the spring and summer of 1578. Mendoza's intelligence is a valuable source but must be used carefully; it contains remarkably accurate observations alongside obvious misinformation. By May 8, 1578, he already knew that Gilbert was collecting

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<sup>44</sup> "11 June 1578. Letters Patent to Sir Humphrey Gilbert," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 188.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

ships “to go rob your Majesty’s Indies route.”<sup>46</sup> Mendoza was particularly concerned to report that Gilbert was making “every effort to take with him a man well-versed in the navigation and language of that place, who is of the nation of Chaldeans, who is here [in England].”<sup>47</sup>

By early June, Mendoza’s vague description had solidified into solid intelligence on the identity of this man:

They are taking with them one Simon Fernandez, a Portuguese – a grand scoundrel – who has given and continues to give them much information about that coast, of which he is well-versed, and to the King of Portugal – as I am told – he has done no little damage owing to the losses suffered in this kingdom by his subjects through this man, and when Champagni was here it was arranged with the Earl of Leicester in his own room – where the queen was – that the way to insure themselves against your Majesty and to cut your bountiful good fortune was to go to the Indies route and rob the fleets, unless they could establish a footing on the coast, for in this they would prevent so much money coming to your Majesty....<sup>48</sup>

In this instance, Mendoza’s report is remarkably accurate. This is the Simão Fernandes previously discussed as an associate of John Callis in English Channel piracy and saved from the gallows by Sir Francis Walsingham. Fernandes would be referred to as “Secretary Walsinghams [sic] man” for the remainder of his English service.<sup>49</sup>

While Fernandes is remarkable for the breadth of his experience, he was only one of many pirates that manned Gilbert’s 1578 expedition. Commanding three ships compared to Gilbert’s seven, Henry Knollys employed a large group of “notorious evill men” on his ships.<sup>50</sup> With such a crew, Gilbert probably thought that his mission to plunder the Spanish Atlantic

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<sup>46</sup> “Copia de Carta Descifrada de Don Bernardino de Mendoza á su Majestad, Fecha En Lóndres á 8 de Mayo de 1578,” in Fernandez de Navarrete et. al, eds., *Coleccion de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, vol. XCI (Madrid, ESP: M. Ginesta Hermanos, 1888), 229. (translated)

<sup>47</sup> “Copia de Carta Descifrada de Don Bernardino de Mendoza á su Majestad, Fecha en Lóndres á 16 de Mayo de 1578,” in Navarrete, *Documentos Ineditos*, XCI, 230. (translated)

<sup>48</sup> “Copia de Carta Descifrada de Don Bernardino de Mendoza á su Majestad, Fecha en Lóndres á 3 de Junio de 1578,” in Navarrete, *Documentos Ineditos*, XCI, 244. (translated)

<sup>49</sup> “[August-September 1582]. Reports of the Country Sir Humphrey Gilbert Goes to Discover,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 309.

<sup>50</sup> “12 November 1578. Sir Humphrey Gilbert to Sir Francis Walsingham,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 205.

would provide an excellent incentive for following his orders. In this hope, he was sorely disappointed. Knollys, perhaps unsurprisingly, proved insubordinate to Gilbert's original plan. His men began seizing ships along the Irish coast.<sup>51</sup> Ambassador Mendoza seems to have expected such behavior in his letter of June 16, 1578 to King Philip: "It is understood that once they get to sea they will join together and go to the Indies route, if in Ireland or Scotland nothing occurs to divert them..."<sup>52</sup> Mendoza made a prescient assessment of Gilbert's crew before the expedition departed. While Knollys sought immediate fulfillment near home, Gilbert did little better. Apparently, Gilbert was content to join his associates in petty piracy, and he never made it near the Americas.

The one bright spot in an otherwise complete debacle was the behavior of Gilbert's half-brother, Walter Raleigh, and his pilot, Simão Fernandes. They left England ahead of the other ships in the *Falcon* and loitered in the Cape Verde Islands, waiting for the other ships to arrive before sailing further. When the rest of the expedition did not appear, they apparently sought plunder in the region before returning home by May.<sup>53</sup> Still, all was not well, and William Hawkins, the *Falcon*'s owner, brought Gilbert before the High Court of Chancery, apparently because of wasted supplies for which Gilbert claimed no responsibility. Fernandes and Raleigh were examined by the court, and their deposition illustrates their close working relationship in outfitting the *Falcon* for the expedition. The roughly forty-year-old Azorean and the twenty-six year old Englishman answered the questions presented them with detail as to their preparations,

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<sup>51</sup> "25 March 1579. Henry Knollys in Ireland," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 219-220.

<sup>52</sup> "Copia de Carta Descifrada de Don Bernardino de Mendoza á su Majestad, Fecha en Lóndres á 3 de Junio de 1578," in Navarrete, *Documentos Ineditos*, XCI, 244. (translated)

<sup>53</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 45.

and Raleigh seemed to understand that his half-brother departed from his course on account of “theires that were in his company.”<sup>54</sup>

The Privy Council responded swiftly to Gilbert’s apparent dereliction of duty, revoking his rights to establish overseas colonies on April 26, 1579, unless he paid sureties for his future expedition’s good behavior.<sup>55</sup> His proposals to the queen in 1577 asked for her cooperation in hiding his acts of piracy against the Spanish crown, but the fulfillment of this scheme in 1578 suffered terribly from disorganization. Rather than crippling Spain’s overseas empire through state-sanctioned piracy, Gilbert’s botched venture only managed to irritate local shipping around the British Isles. Such petty theft was no fulfillment of Elizabeth’s larger strategic aims against Spain, and it challenged her faith in Gilbert’s ability to complete the task at hand.

In the years following his failed expedition in 1578, Gilbert’s plans for a North American colony proceeded in fits and starts. He did, however, support an important reconnaissance expedition in the spring of 1580 in keeping with the queen’s earlier directive in his colonial patent.<sup>56</sup> Gilbert sent the *Squirrel*, under the command of Simão Fernandes, to the modern New England coast. The bond of £500 Gilbert entered for the ship’s good behavior attests to his fallen reputation after his indiscriminate piracy.<sup>57</sup> Fernandes sailed to America and back to England in just three months, an excellent feat of seamanship and probably the result of highly favorable winds. Fernandes’s short visit still yielded intelligence regarding the housing of the native peoples of the region, and the expedition also returned bearing large animal skins from the area. Immediately after his return, Fernandes visited John Dee, providing him with a map of the

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<sup>54</sup> “Deposition of Simão Fernandes and Walter Raleigh,” transcription in *David B. Quinn Papers* (Library of Congress: Washington, D.C.), Box 77, Folder 3.

<sup>55</sup> *APC XI*, 109-110.

<sup>56</sup> “11 June 1578. Letters Patent to Sir Humphrey Gilbert,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 191.

<sup>57</sup> “7 April 1580. Sir Humphrey Gilbert Enters into a Bond for the Good Behaviour of the Crew of the *Squirrel*,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 239.

east coast of North America.<sup>58</sup> This was the last service Fernandes rendered to Gilbert, probably because his patron, Sir Francis Walsingham, had begun to doubt Gilbert's ability to carry the English overseas enterprise forward. Fernandes is a barometer of the interests of the anti-Spanish party of the queen's inner circle. He served in many capacities throughout his career, but the common thread among them all was a consistent urge toward plundering the Spanish Empire.

While Gilbert struggled to prepare for his next expedition, Fernandes served as a pilot on Edward Fenton's voyage to the South Sea. This important mission was bankrolled by Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, and sought to capitalize on the relationship built between Sir Francis Drake and the people of the Moluccas in the East Indies.<sup>59</sup> This expensive expedition, composed of four ships and about 250 men, accomplished nothing of importance and only surpassed Gilbert's 1578 expedition in the number of miles it traveled.<sup>60</sup> Fenton served previously in Ireland and as Martin Frobisher's lieutenant to *Meta Incognita*, but he proved inadequate for the task of leading a large crew of seamen on a long, serious expedition.<sup>61</sup> As soon as Fenton's ships left the English Channel, it became apparent to Richard Madox, the *Galleon Leicester*'s chaplain, that "they wer al withowt pytty set upon the spoyl."<sup>62</sup> Apparently, the sailors on the expedition spoke highly of trade while ashore to procure investment from the merchant community, but made clear their piratical intentions once at sea. The expedition sailed

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<sup>58</sup> A copy of this map remains in the British Library's Cotton Collection. See Quinn, et. al., eds, *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, vol. III (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1979), Map 89; Probasco, "Researching North America," 178-180.

<sup>59</sup> E.G.R. Taylor, ed., *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton, 1582-1583* (Cambridge, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1959), xxviii.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Story Donno, ed., *An Elizabethan in 1582: The Diary of Richard Madox, Fellow of All Souls* (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1976), 121-127.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, *Troublesome Voyage*, xxxii; McDermott, *Frobisher*, 206.

<sup>62</sup> Donno, *Diary of Madox*, 143-144.

as far as St. Vincent on the South American coast before disintegrating and returning to England in disgrace.

Madox's impressive diary of the voyage paints a lively picture of Fernandes and the priorities of early English trading voyages. To Madox, Fernandes was "the source of all evil" and "a ravenows thief."<sup>63</sup> John Walker, another chaplain, echoed Madox and complained to Fenton about Fernandes's speech that was "offensyve to God, and nothinge chrystyanlyke, for that he rejoyced in thinges starke naughtey, bragginge in his sondrye pyracyes."<sup>64</sup> During the voyage, the expedition was forced to rely on the Azorean and his fellow pilot, Thomas Hood, who sailed only to acquire Spanish plunder. According to Madox, "Fernando sayld a month on dry land."<sup>65</sup> This feeling of being hostage to the whims of pirate pilots haunted John White in his expedition to Roanoke Island in 1587. When Madox confronted Fernandes about his hostility to the Spanish, nominally at peace with England, Fernandes said, "a license has been granted to me by five privy councilors to wage war against the Spaniards."<sup>66</sup> The pilot likely told the truth; he retained the Privy Council's confidence long after Fenton's voyage disintegrated through piracy. Fernandes was doing Walsingham's bidding: plundering the wealth of Spain.

This view of Fernandes as a sign of the anti-Spanish faction's blessing is confirmed in the aims of Gilbert's colonial enterprise that would eventually sail in 1583. As Gilbert prepared to send another expedition in 1581 and 1582, it is apparent that a landed settlement had become his chief aim. Far from his proposal to simply "annoy the kyng of Spayne," Gilbert appears to have embraced his colonial patent for its own sake, not as a simple pretense for piracy. He

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 262 and 261, respectively.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 274.

coordinated his efforts with Sir George Peckham and Sir Thomas Gerard, English Catholics eager to secure a colony for their co-religionists who feared increasing levels of persecution as Anglicanism continued to solidify its identity in England. In all, Gilbert subleased the rights to over eight million acres of land in North America to fund his colonial enterprise.<sup>67</sup>

Gilbert's plans for his colony exemplify the most conservative, traditionalist elements of contemporary English society. England was quickly modernizing and leaving behind its feudal heritage, but Gilbert's scheme proposed to create a neo-feudal society in America. Gilbert served, under the queen's nominal authority, as a grand landlord of the entirety of his massive North American claim. His vision, detailed in his grant of authority to Sir John Gilbert, Sir George Peckham, and William Aucher, was detailed, if rather idealistic. The project would become self-sufficient in due time as his large landholding grantees induced further settlers to rent the land from them.<sup>68</sup> Gilbert foresaw Anglican clergymen creating new bishoprics in the land alongside their Catholic neighbors in an apparent plan for religious toleration, the first such vision for English America.<sup>69</sup> Each successive rung on the steeply hierarchical ladder of settlement for the colony would pay ever decreasing rents for their tenancy on the land after seven years of settlement, by which time the land should be settled enough to produce its rents. Even England's roaming poor had a chance to partake in the new society if they could provide some seed and tools with which to farm. Grantees were also encouraged to transport servants with them in order to gain access to larger landholdings, an important precedent that later induced Englishmen to bring millions of indentured servants and slaves to the Americas in

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<sup>67</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 190-191.

<sup>68</sup> "8 July 1582. Grant of Authority by Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Regarding his Rights in America, to Sir John Gilbert, Sir George Peckham, and William Aucher," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 274-275.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-278.

succeeding centuries.<sup>70</sup> Gilbert's share was to be two-fifths of the colony's net income so that he could pay the queen her fifth as required in his colonial patent and retain the other fifth for his personal use.<sup>71</sup>

In 1582, Gilbert continued the arduous task of organizing his colonial expedition. Given the failure of his previous overseas enterprise, he was eager to prove himself worthy of Elizabeth's confidence. He actively interviewed many people with experience in the Americas and those who possessed extensive knowledge by association. Among these were David Ingram, a man who claimed to have walked the three thousand miles from the Gulf of Mexico to Cape Breton, and John Dee, the English polymath with considerable cartographical knowledge of the Americas.<sup>72</sup> A set of instructions for a 1582 reconnaissance expedition to Norumbega – a nebulous region roughly corresponding to modern New England – also attest to Gilbert's extensive preparations and his intentions for a landed colony. The unknown author advised the expedition's master to seek the most defensible position on navigable rivers. The instructions held hope for the possibility of trade in the South Sea "by fresh ryvers and lakes whereby no prince can possibly impeache your traffique."<sup>73</sup> It does not appear that such a reconnaissance expedition ever occurred, but its directives contribute to a substantial body of evidence that suggests Gilbert's fastidiousness in preparing for his final colonial enterprise.

Despite Gilbert's best efforts, he struggled to cobble together a viable expedition. When Spanish Ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza discovered Gilbert's plan to plant English Catholics in America, he quickly moved to squash the plan. This represented a real threat to the

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-275.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-272.

<sup>72</sup> Probasco, "Researching North America," 26, 126-137.

<sup>73</sup> "Instructions for a Voyage of Reconnaissance to North America in 1582," transcription in *David B. Quinn Papers* (Library of Congress: Washington, D.C.), Box 71, Folder 6.

Spanish Crown's hopes to use propaganda among England's numerous Catholics to destabilize the queen and her Anglican Church. Mendoza warned the Catholics that their actions would be in direct contradiction of papal decree and that they would be killed alongside any other Englishmen settling within Spanish Florida.<sup>74</sup> Mendoza's scare tactics combined with large financial barriers placed by the Privy Council to crush Catholic involvement in Gilbert's project. By 1583, most of the Catholic gentry abandoned him. Gilbert's efforts were also stymied by issues with capitalizing his project. The port of Southampton was awarded exclusive commercial rights under his patent, and his subscribers principally came from this area.<sup>75</sup> Gilbert only raised about £1000 from the merchant community of Southampton, relying on a small group of large-scale investors, like Raleigh, for the majority of the expedition's capital.<sup>76</sup> Such a structure proved unable to support sustained investment, both in Gilbert's attempts to establish settlements and Raleigh's own attempts later in the decade.

Secretary Walsingham's behavior during Gilbert's preparations in 1582 was particularly curious. Walsingham and his step-son, Christopher Carleill, tried to organize their own American expedition in 1582 by tapping into the resources of England's wealthiest western port, Bristol.<sup>77</sup> This move violated Southampton's monopoly on American trade. Furthermore, Carleill and Walsingham contacted the Muscovy Company for financial assistance in their scheme. Gilbert intentionally avoided engaging the company in his plans, probably due to their unfavorable reaction to his 1567 request for trading rights in Asia.<sup>78</sup> Historian David Beers Quinn floated several explanations for this strange arrangement and believed the simplest

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<sup>74</sup> Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 192; Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 364-397.

<sup>75</sup> "[12 December 1582]. Additional Articles of Agreement between Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the Adventurers, with his Instructions for the Voyage," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 330-333.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 76-77.

<sup>78</sup> McDermott, *Martin Frobisher*, 103-104.

inference from the evidence was that Walsingham was attempting to undercut Gilbert's actions in America.<sup>79</sup> This is possible, given his decision to remove Fernandes from the enterprise, but unlikely in light of more recent documentary discoveries. Quinn changed his opinion due to new evidence in the form of some letters discovered in a private collection in the 1960s. It seems more likely that Walsingham wanted to use his connections in Bristol and the Muscovy Company to help secure a secondary expedition to follow shortly after Gilbert's departure in 1583. This interpretation is bolstered by a letter from Maurice Browne, an important participant in the 1583 expedition, who claims that Carleill's expedition, composed of "divers of the cheife marchautes of London, and the marchautes of Bristowe dooe joyne in consort, and doth send fyve sayle more of good shipes with provision and men to Sir Humfrey..."<sup>80</sup> Although such an action would be illegal under the terms of Gilbert's patent, Walsingham always wielded his immense power on the fringes of the law by supporting numerous spies throughout the Continent, shamelessly unleashing English pirates upon the Spanish, and seeking outside funds for colonial ventures he believed necessary but illegal. Future colonies proved the wisdom of organizing swift relief in the hostile Americas. In the end, Walsingham's plan came to naught, and Gilbert had to rely solely on the unimpressive investment of the Southampton merchant community, a group of financially challenged Catholics, and the monumental investments of a small group of English gentlemen.

Gilbert continued his preparations through the early months of 1583, facing many delays and false starts. He finally sailed in June with five vessels and plans to go directly across the North Atlantic to Newfoundland rather than following the normal procedure of sailing south to

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<sup>79</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 79.

<sup>80</sup> David B. Quinn and Neil M. Cheshire, *The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 204.

the West Indies before coasting north on the Gulf Stream. The voyage followed this unusual course because of a lack of victuals. This issue plagued the entirety of the expedition; the *Bark Raleigh*, which was the expedition's largest vessel, turned back for England very soon after sailing for this reason.<sup>81</sup> It is likely that many of Gilbert's prospective colonists were aboard the large *Bark Raleigh*, and that the lack of victuals quickly convinced them of the dangers of the remainder of the enterprise. Quinn suggested that the project's long delays probably wasted supplies as quickly as Gilbert could acquire them.<sup>82</sup>

Although Gilbert's 1583 venture had undergone a great deal of planning for a landed settlement to separate it in many ways from his piratical expedition in 1578, his final voyage still suffered from a culture of tolerated piracy. One of his five vessels, the *Swallow*, was a pirate ship captained by John Callis prior to Gilbert's departure. When Gilbert encountered the ship, he set free Callis's two French prizes and confiscated the *Swallow* for his own purposes.<sup>83</sup> He evidently retained Callis's crew, which was a mistake he should have avoided. On the way to Newfoundland, the *Swallow* confiscated the victuals Gilbert failed to provide by robbing vessels on the way.<sup>84</sup> Edward Hayes, the author of the most authoritative account of the voyage, spends the early pages of his tract highlighting the necessity of Gospel-centered behavior abroad and comments that, although Captain Maurice Browne was "very honest and religious, yet was he not appointed of men to his humor and desert: who for the most were... pirates."<sup>85</sup> As such, they found opportunity to "robbe and spoile" on their journey, treating their victims with particular

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<sup>81</sup> "6 August 1583. Examinations of John Carter and Lancelot Clayton," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 378.

<sup>82</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 82.

<sup>83</sup> "11 April 1584. Recognizance for Richard Boyse," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 429-431.

<sup>84</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 85.

<sup>85</sup> "[October 1583?]. Edward Hayes' Narrative of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Last Expedition," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 399.

cruelty.<sup>86</sup> They put ropes around the necks of their prize's crew "with expedition (like men skillful in such mischief)."<sup>87</sup>

Gilbert's remaining ships rendezvoused at St. John's Bay, an international fishing community of Portuguese, Spanish, Basque, English, and other fishermen. Gilbert suggested raiding these peaceful fishermen in his plans from 1577, and his actions in August 1583 were little better. The vessels secured the narrow entrance to the bay and sought food, water, and supplies from the fishing community.<sup>88</sup> After apparently securing some victuals, the expedition landed on the shoreline and claimed the country within two hundred leagues in each direction for the queen. The surrounding areas of Newfoundland were surveyed for future settlement, and Gilbert established the first three English laws for a settlement in America. He instituted Anglicanism as the only acceptable form of public worship. Clearly, he had departed from his plans for religious toleration when the English Catholics were more deeply involved in his scheme.<sup>89</sup> He also made any interference in the queen's sustained possession of the land high treason and instituted the loss of both ears for "words sounding to the dishonour of her Majestie."<sup>90</sup>

According to Hayes, the fishing community heartily assented to these laws and agreed to pay Gilbert taxes faithfully in the future. These fishermen probably had considerably less enthusiasm for Gilbert's intrusion into their previously collegial community than Hayes assumed. The expedition proceeded south from St. John's harbor, hoping to reach its intended destination of Norumbega along the modern New England coast. The *Swallow* was dispatched

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 402-403.

for England with many sick and famished adventurers. Her pirate crew was transferred to the expedition's flagship, the *Delight*, and Gilbert fortuitously relocated to the *Squirrel*.<sup>91</sup> On the way, disaster struck when the *Delight* broke apart on the shallows near modern Sable Island.<sup>92</sup> Nearly one hundred men were lost in the wreck, including the Hungarian poet, Stephen Parmenius; an unnamed Saxon mineralogist; Maurice Browne, the former captain of the *Swallow* who transferred to the *Delight* at St. John's Harbor; and Browne's unruly pirates formerly on the *Swallow*.<sup>93</sup> Gilbert's books, notes, and charts that he made during the journey also perished in the wreck.<sup>94</sup> Hayes mourned his friends' downfalls but believed the pirates' deaths proved that "Gods justice did follow the same company."<sup>95</sup>

With extremely limited supplies, and the loss of the expedition's largest vessel, the remaining crewmen refused to proceed. Gilbert assented, remaining positive that his colony of fishermen in St. John's Bay and his reconnaissance expedition ashore would incline the queen to lend him £10,000 for an expedition in the spring of 1584.<sup>96</sup> This rosy view of the queen's favor is preposterous considering her hesitancy to fund other voyages without the preceding disasters that had racked each of Gilbert's previous attempts. As the expedition returned to England, Gilbert chose to remain in the *Squirrel*, overburdened as it was, refusing to relocate to the sturdier *Golden Hind* with Captain Hayes. Apparently with More's *Utopia* in hand, Gilbert drowned September 10, 1583, when the *Squirrel* disappeared beneath the waves.<sup>97</sup>

Despite his praise of Gilbert's noble virtues throughout his account, Hayes was frank in his explanation of Gilbert's two most important shortcomings. First and foremost, Gilbert was

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 412-413.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 413-414.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 417.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>97</sup> Quinn, *Gilbert*, I, 89.

“too prodigall of his owne patrimony” in seeking participants in an expedition to a land with no proven commodities.<sup>98</sup> With no promise of financial stability, Gilbert’s recruits “made it their best reckoning to bee salved some other way, which pleased not God to prosper....”<sup>99</sup> Thus the attractions of piracy proved irresistible on a voyage not initially intending to indulge in such behavior. Secondly, Gilbert had “thrust himselfe againe into the action, for which he was not fit... though hee sawe no encouragement to proceed....”<sup>100</sup> These criticisms at the end of Hayes’s narrative made explicit some of his subtler doubts expressed throughout his rendition of the 1583 expedition’s fateful experience. For example, Hayes insinuates that Gilbert grieved “most of all of his bookes and notes” rather than the many men who perished in the *Delight*’s wreck.<sup>101</sup> Hayes also stated that Gilbert “beat his boy in great rage” when he discovered that the boy had not rescued some ore from the *Delight* before he abandoned it.<sup>102</sup> Gilbert’s fearsome temper from his days in Ireland seems to have persisted to the end.<sup>103</sup>

After the failures of Gilbert’s 1578 venture, he was clearly eager to capitalize on his colonial patent with his 1583 expedition, but his hope for vindication led him into recklessness. Hayes’s penetrating observations impugn Gilbert as a poor planner and leader. His colonial ambitions came to nothing, and it is tempting to omit him from the history of English colonization in the Americas. Many historians have been content to pass over Gilbert in their quest to highlight the successes of later efforts, but this is a mistake. Gilbert is significant as the first man to secure the English Crown’s confidence in planting American settlements, despite

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<sup>98</sup> “[October 1583?]. Edward Hayes’ Narrative of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s Last Expedition,” in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 422.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> For a similar argument, see Philip Edwards, “Edward Hayes Explains Away Sir Humphrey Gilbert,” *Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 3 (1992): 270-286.

other prominent Englishmen with their own dreams of overseas empire. His plans bridged the sizeable gap between those Englishmen engaging in trade and plunder throughout the Atlantic world, and the hosts of colonial promoters that dominated the English overseas experience in the ensuing decades and centuries. While his half-brother took his colonial ambitions to their logical ends, Englishmen in the seventeenth century revived his plans for seizing the West Indies in “Western Designs” to annoy the king of Spain.

## Chapter Four: The Roanoke Colonies: Culminations of Piratical Colonization

Walter Raleigh's colonies exemplify the competing motivations and visions for English colonies in the late sixteenth century. Many promoters envisioned agricultural communities producing commodities for European markets, an approach that eventually succeeded in establishing the first permanent English colony at Jamestown. Still more promoters advocated a more militaristic strategy of conquest, not so different from the Spanish subjugation of Central America that the English rhetorically deplored. Frobisher, Gilbert, and Fenton never established English settlements abroad, typically because of their intense urge for plunder. Under Raleigh, however, these competing motivations and ideological assumptions would be put to the test in concrete settlements, comparable only with the Irish plantation schemes of the previous decades. Piracy became more central to Raleigh's expeditions than to any of the previous English attempts at colonial settlement. While piracy motivated the English planting at Roanoke above all else, the motivation of Spanish plunder also undermined the colonies at every turn. Roanoke would be the stage of an Elizabethan tragedy; after all, in a span of six years, about two hundred Europeans -- and innumerable Native Americans -- would be lost to history.

With so much of the North American coast unsettled by Europeans in the 1580s, Raleigh's choosing the Outer Banks as the destination for his first colony demands some explanation. The primary attraction of the area was its promise of seclusion and protection due to its long, protective shoals. In the climate of piracy that was becoming more mainstream at an alarming rate to England's enemies, the inland sounds of the Outer Banks seemed an optimal haven for pirates and privateers as they prowled the Gulf Stream waters for the Spanish *flotas* bound for Spain. Some promoters, like the younger Richard Hakluyt, assumed that the region

would have a Mediterranean climate since its latitude was near that of Spain and Italy.<sup>1</sup> With hostilities between England and Spain on the rise, Mediterranean products were more difficult to procure through trade, but the promoters hoped that an American colony could fill the gap. The real climate of the region came as a shock to the Englishmen with its hot summers and cool winters.

Simão Fernandes also played a large role in Raleigh's decision to locate his colony on the Outer Banks. If the testimony of a Spanish pilot formerly held in English captivity may be trusted, the Azorean Fernandes "induced them to settle there."<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, a foreigner played a key role in the beginnings of English colonization, but Fernandes had the most developed knowledge and experience of eastern North America among those in English service. His knowledge of the Spanish settlement at Santa Elena and the butchered Jesuit mission on the Chesapeake Bay, coupled with his probable familiarity with the Chicora Legend that initially drew the Spanish into the Southeast, made the Outer Banks an attractively unexploited place for settlement.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary maps also frequently showed Verrazano's Sea dipping tantalizingly close to the coast, since the Italian navigator mistook Pamlico Sound for the Pacific in his 1524 voyage.<sup>4</sup> With claims to the supposed Northwest Passage far from surrendered after Frobisher's failures, the region apparently had much to offer. Unfortunately for those Englishmen who settled there, the Outer Banks offered none of the benefits for which they hazarded their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 16-27.

<sup>2</sup> "Pedro de Arana, his summary of his examination of Pedro Diaz; Havana, March 21, 1589" in Irene A. Wright, trans. and ed., *Further English Voyages to Spanish America, 1583-1594* (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1951), 240.

<sup>3</sup> For a full exploration of the Chicora Legend, see Hoffman, Paul E., *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, A.D. 500-1600* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 291.

On April 27, 1584, two barks departed England for the New World, looking to capitalize on Walter Raleigh's patent to "fynde out and viewe such remote heathen and barbarous landes."<sup>5</sup> Raleigh's star rose considerably in the queen's favor in the early 1580s, and his half-brother's sudden death in 1583 rendered him the leader of the colonial promoters at court. Raleigh's patent provided him authority to "buylde and fortifye" settlements of people bearing the "pryvyledges of free Denizens and persons natyve of England."<sup>6</sup> Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe led the expedition south to the Canary Islands and then to the West Indies. After victualling in the Bahamas for one week, the expedition continued north along the east coast of North America, which Barlowe said "smelt so sweetely... as if... in the midst of some delicate garden."<sup>7</sup> The party entered Roanoke Sound "not without some difficultie" near modern Oregon Inlet, at Port Ferdinando, so named for the expedition's Azorean pilot, Simão Fernandes.<sup>8</sup> The difficulty of navigating the treacherous shoals and shallow waters of the Outer Banks should have portended the difficulties the future colonies would face, but the English remained enraptured by their Edenic surroundings. The men disembarked on Hatteras Island, and claimed the land for their queen under the provisions of Raleigh's patent.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after arriving, the Englishmen had their first encounter with the region's indigenous people. The two parties quickly began trading with one another, the Englishmen trading clothes and trinkets for the natives' animal skins. The leader of the local party was Granganimeo, whose brother, Wingina, was the leader of the Secotan Indians. Wingina was wounded, having taken

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<sup>5</sup> "25 March 1584, Letters Patent to Walter Raleigh" in David Beers Quinn, ed., *The Roanoke Voyages: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584*, Vol. I (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.), 82.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, 86.

<sup>7</sup> "Arthur Barlowe's Discourse of the First Voyage" in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 93-94.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

two arrows in a recent skirmish with neighboring tribes.<sup>10</sup> The English were invading an area already embroiled in conflict. Granganimeo led the exploring party to his home on Roanoke Island. The Roanokes received the Englishmen “with all love and kindness.”<sup>11</sup> Granganimeo’s wife cooked vegetables for the party and offered her home for their lodging. The Englishmen refused, preferring the safety of their pinnace to spending the night in the foreign home.<sup>12</sup> After assessing the region for several days, the explorers returned to England with Wanchese and Manteo, two Indians from the area. By October 1584, the pair were causing a stir in London because of their foreign dress, and Thomas Hariot was “specially employed” learning their Algonquian language.<sup>13</sup>

Richard Hakluyt also presented his *Discourse of Western Planting* to the queen late in 1584, highlighting the “greate necessitie” of establishing English plantations overseas.<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt’s sophisticated twenty-one-point argument for English overseas expansion combined evangelical, commercial, military, and societal concerns in its plea to the queen for state sponsorship of colonial ventures. Informed by years of studying other European travel accounts and colonial experiences, Hakluyt argued that English colonies would bring the heathen to Christianity, reduce the masses of jobless sluggards in London, create new markets for commodities, and base squadrons of state-sponsored sea dogs to nobly plunder the Spanish treasure fleets. Hakluyt hoped his *Discourse* would inspire Elizabeth to support the venture with state funds; in this aim, he was unsuccessful. The queen’s reticence is understandable in light of the embarrassment of Martin Frobisher’s enterprises and the total failures of Gilbert’s various

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 2007), 33.

<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 2.

voyages. Indeed, there was little reason to expect success in 1584 when Hakluyt's argument was presented to the queen. Given Hakluyt's failure to inspire state sponsorship of Raleigh's voyages, historians have traditionally discounted the *Discourse's* importance in the development of English colonial theory, despite its impressive collection of available contemporary knowledge.<sup>15</sup> The striking ways in which Raleigh's colonies at Roanoke reflected Hakluyt's arguments in the *Discourse of Western Planting* strongly suggest otherwise.

As preparations for the upcoming colonial voyage carried into 1585, the deteriorating diplomatic relationship between England and Spain hardened into open warfare in the Atlantic. The Spanish ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza, was expelled from England in 1584 for his involvement in the Throckmorton Plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth.<sup>16</sup> English piracy against Spanish merchant vessels received little condemnation from the queen, with no signs of change. All of this compounded the religious hostility between the two nations that had been simmering for several decades by the 1580s. Thus, with a war beginning that eventually threatened England's security and autonomy, Sir Walter Raleigh began the arduous task of organizing the first English colony in America.

Raleigh's first colonial effort reflected the tumultuous times of its inception. While Barlowe's 1584 account focuses heavily on the agricultural promise of the land with its "divers kindes of fruites, Melons, Walnuts, Cucumbers, Gourdes... and Countrey corne," the 1585 colony became a military base for warfare against the Spanish, with commercial concerns occupying an important secondary place in the adventurers' minds.<sup>17</sup> A fundamental change occurred in the orientation of the colony in a very short period of time. This shift owed itself to

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<sup>15</sup> Quinn and Quinn, "Introduction" in *Discourse of Western Planting*, xxx-xxxii.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 204.

<sup>17</sup> "Arthur Barlowe's Discourse of the First Voyage," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 105.

the deepening hostilities with Spain at the most important moment and to Richard Hakluyt's recommendations in his *Discourse*. Queen Elizabeth's intervention in the colony's preparations bears witness to the importance of the 1585 colony in England's strategic position vis-à-vis Spain. In February 1585, she recalled Ralph Lane from military service in Ireland and proceeded to pay his salary as a member of Raleigh's expedition.<sup>18</sup> Lane was no merchant, gentleman, mineralogist, or any other type of man commonly associated with other English colonial enterprises; rather, he was an expert in fortifications who had been employed in the security of English plantations in Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Paid by the queen herself, and a chief interest of Secretary Walsingham, Lane provided the military expertise necessary to make the Roanoke Colony an effective part of the Anglo-Spanish War. In Hakluyt's *Discourse*, "men experte in the arte of fortification" were the first named in his list of necessary professionals for western plantations.<sup>20</sup> The queen had listened.

Lane was not the only member of Walsingham's inner circle to participate in the 1585 venture. Simão Fernandes, "Secretary Walsingham's man," was to serve as the pilot of the *Tiger*, the expedition's flagship.<sup>21</sup> As Lane brought landed military experience to the venture, Fernandes represented the real impetus of the war itself: state-sanctioned piracy of Spanish vessels at sea. Fernandes shifted from Gilbert's service in 1582, probably at the request of Walsingham himself, since he was more interested in the Fenton expedition to the South Sea. Having served well with Raleigh on Gilbert's otherwise troublesome 1578 expedition, Fernandes

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<sup>18</sup> "8 February 1585, Signet Letter to Sir John Perrot for Ralph Lane," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 149-150.

<sup>19</sup> Lane's tenure in Ireland can be traced in the *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland: 1574-1585*, ed. Hans Claude Anderson (London, UK: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 423, 493, 494, 497, 499, 505, 551, and 563.

<sup>20</sup> Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*, 123.

<sup>21</sup> "August-September 1582. Reports of the Country Sir Humphrey Gilbert Goes to Discover," in Quinn, *Gilbert*, II, 309.

was a good fit for the Roanoke ventures. He served on each of the major expeditions to Roanoke in 1584, 1585, and 1587.

John White and Thomas Hariot were also important members of the 1585 colony. White's watercolors, painted during the expedition, are artistic treasures as early European perspectives on North America. He likely accompanied Martin Frobisher to the Northwest in 1577, and he also traveled to Virginia with the reconnaissance expedition in 1584.<sup>22</sup> He traveled to Roanoke as the expedition's official artist in 1585, painting forts, animals, natives, and villages along the way. As White reported artistically on the New World, Hariot recorded the scientific wonders of America and its inhabitants. He highlighted the flora and fauna of the region alongside his ethnology of the area's indigenous peoples in his report to Raleigh, now known as *A Briefe and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia*.<sup>23</sup> Employing these two men to record the natural wealth and existing human cultures of eastern North America stands as one of Raleigh's wisest decisions relating to his expeditions.

Raleigh's ships left Plymouth in April 1585 under the command of Sir Richard Grenville, an experienced seaman and a veteran of the Irish conquest who saw his own colonial proposal to visit "Terra Australis" in the South Sea denied by the queen in 1574.<sup>24</sup> Over a decade after this disappointment to his colonial ambitions, he received an opportunity to serve as the general and admiral of Raleigh's immense expedition of roughly six hundred men and eight seagoing vessels.<sup>25</sup> Grenville and Lane sailed on the *Tiger*, a three-masted ship of roughly 150 tons that the queen lent as the expedition's flagship.<sup>26</sup> Well-armed with about twelve cannons, the *Tiger*

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Hulton, ed. *America 1585: The Complete Drawings of John White* (London, UK: British Museum Publications; Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hariot and Theodor de Bry, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> A. L. Rowse, *Sir Richard Grenville of the 'Revenge'* (London, UK: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 90.

<sup>25</sup> "9 April 1585, Sir Richard Grenville Leaves Plymouth," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 173.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Glasgow, "H.M.S. 'Tiger,'" *The North Carolina Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (1966): 119-121.

looked to compel surrenders from possible prize-ships on the journey, allowing the two smaller pinnaces to close and seize the vessels.<sup>27</sup> John Clarke, a companion of the notorious pirate, John Callice, captained the *Roebuck* and apparently took a French prize bearing Spanish goods while waiting for the remaining ships to assemble in Plymouth.<sup>28</sup>

The fleet left England and sailed south, taking a Spanish fishing vessel bound for Newfoundland soon after departure.<sup>29</sup> A storm dispersed the fleet off the coast of Portugal, forcing the ships to proceed to the West Indies in isolated groups.<sup>30</sup> The ships arrived piecemeal at Puerto Rico, where they planned to replenish stores spent in the crossing. Grenville and Lane arrived first in the *Tiger* and began building a temporary fort at Guayanilla Bay to defend their men who were busy building a new pinnace to replace one that sank off Portugal.<sup>31</sup> When the pinnace was built, Lane and Grenville abandoned the fort under the perceived threat of an imminent Spanish attack and searched for plunder in the area. They took two Spanish ships, one containing numerous goods bound for San Juan that were beneficial to the English expedition. Lane took command of the prize and sailed to Salinas Bay, Puerto Rico to take two mounds of salt near Cape Rojo.<sup>32</sup> Lane skillfully constructed earthworks around the site to protect the captive Spanish crewmen laboring to remove the salt, immortalized in one of John White's watercolors from the voyage.<sup>33</sup>

After a few of the other ships rendezvoused with the *Tiger*, the expedition proceeded to Hispaniola. The English spent a week with the Spanish governor of Isabella on the north coast

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> "Seizure of a French Ship by one of Raleigh's," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 153-155.

<sup>29</sup> "April 1585, Intercepted Letter from a Spanish Agent in England," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, II, 731.

<sup>30</sup> "The Holinshed Account of the 1585 Expedition," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 175.

<sup>31</sup> Morison, *The European Discovery*, 633-635.

<sup>32</sup> David Beers Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 60.

<sup>33</sup> Hulton, *America 1585*, 42.

of Hispaniola, ignoring the state of warfare between the two countries.<sup>34</sup> Simão Fernandes likely led the expedition to this location because of a French acquaintance called “Alanson,” mentioned in 1587, who traded in the region.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, these Spaniards were no strangers to foreign trade. The “English Generall and the Spanish Governor discoursed betwixt them of divers matters” and the Englishmen “provided two banquetting houses... one for the gentlemen, the other for the servants.”<sup>36</sup> A scene of mirth continued as “a sumptuous banquet was brought... with the sound of trumpets, and consort of musick, wherewith the Spanyards were more than delighted.”<sup>37</sup> The English traded their prize goods for horses and cattle for the colony and for goods to be sold in England.<sup>38</sup> Truly, many members of the Atlantic community had little interest in the conflict between Spain and England.

Leaving Hispaniola and navigating the Bahamas, the expedition sighted the North American coast on June 20, nearly wrecking on the Cape Fear on June 23. The expedition sought to penetrate the Outer Banks at an inlet called Wococon, near modern Ocracoke and Portsmouth Islands.<sup>39</sup> The *Tiger*'s draft was too deep, causing it to ground and face the fury of the rough waves. The 1584 expedition breached the Outer Banks “not without some difficultie,” but their warning that should have raised serious doubts about Roanoke's prospects as a pirate haven was ignored because it was inconvenient to the preferred strategy against Spain.<sup>40</sup>

At this point, serious fault lines become apparent in the accounts of the 1585 venture. One anonymous journalist blamed “the unskilfulnesse of the Master whose name was Fernando”

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<sup>34</sup> “The *Tiger* Journal of the 1585 Voyage,” in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 185-187.

<sup>35</sup> “1587, John White's Narrative of His Voyage,” in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, II, 521.

<sup>36</sup> “The *Tiger* Journal of the 1585 Voyage,” in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, I, 186.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-189.

<sup>40</sup> “Arthur Barlowe's Discourse of the First Voyage,” in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 94.

for the *Tiger*'s mishap.<sup>41</sup> Ralph Lane, on the other hand, wrote Sir Francis Walsingham shortly after disembarking on the Outer Banks, praising "the master and Pylotte maggiore of our Fleete your honors servante Symon Ferdynando who trewly hathe carryed him selfe bothe with greateskylle and grete government all thys voyage" as the "masteres and marryners wyll with one voyce affyrme."<sup>42</sup> In another letter, written in September 1585, Lane tells Walsingham that Grenville "hathe demeaned him selfe, from the first daye of hys entry into government at Plymmouth...."<sup>43</sup> Evidently, Grenville had threatened Lane's life over advice the latter had volunteered to him.<sup>44</sup> Lane completed his assessment by stating that he "had soo muche experyence of hys government...humbelly to desyre... to bee freedde from (the) place where sir Richard Greenefeelde ys to carry eny authorytye in chyeffe."<sup>45</sup>

In such an environment of division, difficult decisions had to be made. The loss of the *Tiger*'s supplies was a major blow to the security of the colony since it would take considerable time to grow sufficient food for the large group, especially since the English were largely ignorant of the area's growing seasons. Sir Richard Grenville decided to return to England in order to secure relief for the colony, departing on August 25. Many of the men returned with him, leaving only 108 men under Lane's command to establish England's first American colony. On the voyage to England, Grenville took the most lucrative prize of the Roanoke ventures, the *Santa Maria* of San Vicente. Spanish reports valued the ship at about £48,000, laden as it was with pearls, ivory, gold, and silver.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, Grenville reported the prize's value to Sir Francis Walsingham as being about £15,000 with no mention of several of the commodities the

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<sup>41</sup> "The *Tiger* Journal of the 1585 Expedition," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 189.

<sup>42</sup> "12 August 1585, Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 201-202.

<sup>43</sup> "8 September 1585, Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 211.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>46</sup> "Enrique Lopez, Fayal, about November 18, 1585," in Wright, *Further English Voyages*, 12-15.

Spanish claimed were onboard.<sup>47</sup> The evidence suggests that Grenville was trying to maximize his profits at the expense of the state's one-fifth claim to any reported profits. Nevertheless, Kenneth R. Andrews argued that the value of the prize fully-covered the 1585 expedition's expenses.<sup>48</sup> This was a powerful statement to those promoters of funding overseas expansion through plunder and ensured piracy's continued presence on all major voyages to Roanoke.

Before settling on a permanent site for the settlement, the expedition explored the mainland coast of Pamlico Sound and visited several Indian villages. They toured Pomeioc, a palisaded village of about eighteen longhouses near Wysocking Bay; Aquascogoc, further to the west near modern Belhaven; and Secotan, still further west on the Pamlico River.<sup>49</sup> At least some of the party also traveled the short distance inland to Lake Paquipe, now known as Lake Mattamuskeet. These encounters provided John White with the opportunity to paint his best-known watercolors of Algonquian Indian villages and people before the ravages of European diseases and weapons destroyed them. During this important time in which peaceful cohabitation seemed possible, an important act of barbarism was committed by the explorers that shook any perceptions of fair-dealing the Indians may have had from the English: "We returned thence, and one of our boates with the Admirall [Arthur Barlowe] was sent to Aquacococke to demaund a silver cup which one of the Savages had stolen from us, and not receiving it according to his promise, we burnt, and spoyled their corne, and Towne, all the people beeing fledde."<sup>50</sup> When in doubt, the English resorted to intimidation in their dealings with the Indians, to the ruin of all parties involved.

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<sup>47</sup> "29 October 1585, Sir Richard Grenville to Sir Francis Walsingham," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 220.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 207.

<sup>49</sup> Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 69-70.

<sup>50</sup> "The *Tiger Journal* of the 1585 Expedition," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 191.

While Grenville enriched himself at sea, Ralph Lane, relieved to be rid of the general whose leadership he had come to detest, began the difficult task of leading the first English colony in America. The details known about the beginnings of the colony are minimal; Lane's narrative of the colony's history only covers the last few months of Roanoke's occupation, but there are important clues that emerge from his early letters to Walsingham and the surviving works of John White and Thomas Hariot. Importantly, some men journeyed to the Chesapeake Bay and wintered with the Indians there on the south shore. This is evident from White's detailed map of the region and Lane's cryptic references to such an expedition in his report given upon the colony's return home.<sup>51</sup> The sparsity of Lane's description of the region is probably due to Raleigh's editing of the account before Richard Hakluyt published it in 1589. He rightly feared the prying eyes of the Spanish. Hariot's *Briefe and True Report* indicates strongly that he made the journey north to the bay.<sup>52</sup>

The fortifications built in Virginia were among the most pressing items on Lane's agenda for establishing the colony, but they remain poorly understood by historians. These structures are the most likely to still remain visible in the twenty-first century, but historians remain divided in their assessments of the documentary and archaeological record that could give clues as to their location. Lane's first fort in Virginia occupied a point of land separating Port Lane and Port Ferdinando, due east of Roanoke Island. Although historian David Beers Quinn did not believe any fortification was erected there, Lane himself claimed that "the lande being fortifyed with a skonse, yt ys not to be enterdde by all the force (that) Spayne canne make."<sup>53</sup> Keeping in mind the rapid pace with which Lane had built his forts in the Caribbean, such a bold pronouncement

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<sup>51</sup> "17 August 1585-18 June 1585, Ralph Lane's Discourse on the First Colony," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 257-258.

<sup>52</sup> Hariot, *Briefe and True Report*, 34.

<sup>53</sup> "12 August 1585, Ralph Lane to Sir Francis Walsingham," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 203.

suggests that a formidable structure had already been raised near Port Ferdinando even before Grenville departed for England. Furthermore, Spanish ships searching for the English settlement found a great deal of debris in 1588 from English occupation of the area, including two barrels for catching rain water, presumably to supply the garrison stationed there during Lane's tenure at Roanoke.<sup>54</sup>

While the inlet fort guarded the area from a much-feared Spanish attack, Lane also led the construction of the main settlement for the 108 military men under his care. The prominent men lived in two-story dwellings, while barracks were probably built for the rest of the military men.<sup>55</sup> The expedition promptly constructed a forge, just as it had in Puerto Rico, for making nails, hinges, and other necessary items.<sup>56</sup> There was also a storehouse for the expedition's limited provisions under the care of Richard Butler, a cape merchant.<sup>57</sup> Even such a bare outline of the buildings necessary to house a settlement of over one hundred people easily disqualifies the existing Fort Raleigh site on Roanoke Island as the colony's primary fort. After all, Lane's fort at Guayanilla Bay measured approximately 1150 feet by 950 feet and was erected in less than 10 days.<sup>58</sup> Surely a site of comparable size was erected on Roanoke Island during Lane's nearly one year of occupation.

In his apologia written to defend his failed colony, Lane described his explorations "within the mayne" and outlined his plan to relocate the colony if he had received resupply in a

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<sup>54</sup> This interpretation is consistent in some ways with the arguments made by Willard and Midgette in "The Roanoke Sagas: Lane's Fort and Port Ferdinando," *Searching for the Roanoke Colonies: An Interdisciplinary Collection*, E. Thomson Shields and Charles R. Ewen, eds. (Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2003), 159-165; however, the present author does not propose that the main fort site was located there as Willard and Midgette do.

<sup>55</sup> This information comes from White's assessment of the site when he returned to Roanoke in 1587. "1587, John White's Narrative of his Voyage," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 524.

<sup>56</sup> "June 1585, The Relation of Hernando de Altamirano," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 740.

<sup>57</sup> Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 78-79.

<sup>58</sup> Hulton, *America 1585*, 173.

timely manner.<sup>59</sup> Having sent a party to explore the Chesapeake Bay during the winter of 1585 and hearing of that region's wealth from the nearby Choanoke Indians, he proposed sending an expedition to build "a sconsse with a small trench, and a pallisado upon the top of it" at the headwaters of the Chowan River.<sup>60</sup> From there, the expedition would proceed north two days and build "another sconsse according to the former... upon some corne fieldes."<sup>61</sup> Another two days' journey would land his expedition on the Chesapeake Bay, where he "would have raised a mayne forte, both for the defence of the harboroughs, and our shipping also, and would have reduced our whole habitation from Roanoke and from the harborough and port there (which by prooffe is very naught)..."<sup>62</sup> This journey "within the mayne" would have only been about fifty miles overland by the route described, and Lane's implications to Raleigh were clear: the Chesapeake Bay possessed those features necessary for a successful colony.<sup>63</sup>

While Lane planned his escape from Roanoke, relations with the local Indian population continued to deteriorate. The colonists relied heavily on Indian corn, and the locals hardly had enough to feed themselves during the drought prevailing at the time. Word of the colonists' habit of stealing corn spread throughout the area, so that when Lane took a party up the Roanoke River in his search for copper mines, the Indians abandoned their riverside villages and took their food stores with them.<sup>64</sup> Lane also became a pawn in the hands of his Indian neighbors as the rival Chowan and Roanoke Indians sought to use the Englishmen to their own advantage. In this way, Menatonon, the Chowan chief, convinced Lane of an impending Roanoke attack against the

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<sup>59</sup> "17 August 1585- 18 June 1586, Ralph Lane's Discourse on the First Colony," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 255.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 255.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

colonists on the island.<sup>65</sup> The Roanoke chief, formerly called Wingina, had changed his name to Pemisapan, and Menatonon warned Lane of impending doom through his son Skiko, who was living among the English. Convinced by Skiko's words, Lane made a preemptive strike against the Roanokes. The English beheaded Pemisapan in the skirmish, and killed several other Roanoke Indians. This climactic act of violence intimidated the local Indians for some time, signaling the end of any hopes for peaceful English colonization at Roanoke Island.

Under such dire conditions, Edward Stafford was filled with genuine terror upon sighting a massive fleet of twenty-three ships approaching modern Cape Hatteras on June 8, 1586.<sup>66</sup> However, his fears of Spanish annihilation were dispelled when he discovered that it was Sir Francis Drake's fleet returning from its sweeping attack on the Spanish Caribbean. Drake's activities during the expedition bear witness to his vested interest in Roanoke's success: he sacked San Agustín to protect Roanoke and stripped the Spanish outpost of every item that might prove useful for the colonists.<sup>67</sup> He was disappointed by the situation at Roanoke. The colonists did not have food or sufficient clothing, and their relations with the local Indians were shattered. Most importantly, Drake was forced to anchor "in the road of our bad harborough," Port Ferdinando.<sup>68</sup> Despite Roanoke's failings for his own purposes, Drake proved himself a friend of the colonial scheme, offering his seventy ton *Francis* and one month's provisions for one hundred men. This decision echoed John Hawkins's similar offer to the French colony of La Caroline twenty years earlier when Drake made his first voyage to the West Indies. Drake

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Leroy Oberg, *The Head in Edward Nugent's Hand: Roanoke's Forgotten Indians* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 94-95.

<sup>66</sup> "17 August 1585- 18 June 1586, Ralph Lane's Discourse on the First Colony," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 288.

<sup>67</sup> "Juan de Lepe, Bartólome Cordoriel, Francisco Hernández, Juan Alvarez, depositions made at Havana, June 30, 1586," in Wright, *Further English Voyages*, 180-184.

<sup>68</sup> "17 August 1585- 18 June 1586, Ralph Lane's Discourse on the First Colony," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 289.

probably hoped the *Francis* would help the colony quickly relocate to the Chesapeake, and fulfill his hopes for a pirate base. Nature itself seemed to conspire against his benevolence: a hurricane ravaged the fleet for four days and sank the *Francis*. With this final blow to the colony's dim hopes, Lane hurriedly ferried his men onto Drake's ships to return to England. Raleigh's first colony had failed.

Only a few days after the abandonment of Roanoke, Raleigh's long overdue relief ship arrived on the Outer Banks. Finding the area abandoned, it left for England.<sup>69</sup> Two weeks later, Sir Richard Grenville arrived with a sizable relief force. After learning of Lane's departure from a Roanoke Indian, he foolishly left only fifteen men to hold the settlement site.<sup>70</sup> With his large crew still intact, Grenville sought plunder across the Atlantic and took a few small prizes before returning to England in December.<sup>71</sup>

Raleigh's thoughts regarding Roanoke's abandonment are not recorded, but his plans for future settlement in 1587 bear witness to some things he learned from Lane's report. Raleigh was undoubtedly disappointed by his lost investment in the colony, but probably held hope that Grenville's small party could maintain the English claim to the Outer Banks. Although Lane's failures at Roanoke made him blameworthy for some of the colony's shortcomings, Raleigh himself probably felt guilty for the colony's failure. After all, he had failed to supply his colony by Easter 1586 as expected, not because he could not afford to do so, but because such an expedition under Bernard Drake was diverted by the queen away from Roanoke to Newfoundland on a privateering voyage.<sup>72</sup> His focus turned to highly profitable plunder cruises

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<sup>69</sup> "The 1586 Voyages," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 477-480.

<sup>70</sup> "Pedro de Arana, his summary of his examination of Pedro Diaz; Havana, March 21, 1589," in Wright, *Further English Voyages*, 239.

<sup>71</sup> "December 1586, Grenville Returns from Virginia," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 1, 494.

<sup>72</sup> David Beers Quinn, *Raleigh and the British Empire* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1962), 80.

during this early stage of the sea war with Spain, and he was slow to organize another relief expedition.

Despite his disappointments, Raleigh's faith in Virginia's viability for an English settlement remained unsullied. Shortly after Lane's return, he organized another colony to settle on the Chesapeake Bay, according to Lane's earlier plan. His second colony would be substantively different from the militaristic colony founded in 1585 and more similar to Gilbert's manorial schemes for Norumbega. Male and female settlers – not soldiers – would pay their way to America and receive five hundred acres of land in Virginia.<sup>73</sup> In sixteenth century England, property ownership on such a scale was unattainable for all but the wealthiest Englishmen. The sparse evidence relating to the 118 colonists who departed for Virginia in 1587 suggests that most of them were of middle-class stock in London and the West Country.<sup>74</sup> For such a group, five hundred acres of land must have been an incredibly attractive lure. John White would be their governor, alongside twelve assistants, heavily invested in the venture, who would serve as an executive council.<sup>75</sup>

The history of the 1587 colony must be primarily reconstructed using John White's narrative account of the expedition. As with Lane's account of his colony, this perspective is problematic, especially since White's account contains a singular antagonist upon whom all difficulties are blamed. After the expedition left Plymouth, White claims that Simão Fernandes, the master of the fleet, "lewdly forsooke" the expedition's flyboat off the coast of Portugal.<sup>76</sup> The fleet swung through the West Indies in typical fashion, but White's attempts to supply his

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<sup>73</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 104-105.

<sup>74</sup> William S. Powell, "Roanoke Colonists and Explorers: An Attempt at Identification," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (April, 1957): 209.

<sup>75</sup> "7 January 1587, Grant of Arms for the City of Raleigh in Virginia, and for its Governors and Assistants," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 506-511.

<sup>76</sup> "1587, John White's Narrative of his Voyage," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 517.

colony were frustrated at every turn. White blamed Fernandes for each mishap. While on the modern island of St. Croix searching for fresh water, White found Indian pottery, despite Fernandes's claim that the island was uninhabited. Later, White claimed that Fernandes "began to sweare, and teare God in peeces" when he intentionally brought the *Lion* into shallow waters to frustrate the expedition's plans to search for salt.<sup>77</sup> Fernandes told White that he planned to visit Hispaniola, as the 1585 colonists had done, but sailed past it without delay.<sup>78</sup> When Fernandes finally allowed the fleet to disembark for salt in the Caicos, White curiously writes that he "solaced himself a shoare, with one of the company" while the others worked.<sup>79</sup> As the expedition coasted along the Outer Banks, Fernandes nearly grounded the ships on modern Cape Lookout. White's assessment: "such was the carelessness, and ignorance of our Master."<sup>80</sup>

The expedition anchored at the inlet previously called Port Ferdinando, with White careful to remove the pilot's name and refer to it only as "Hatoraske."<sup>81</sup> Intending to visit Grenville's holding party on Roanoke and "have conference, concerning the state of the Countrey, and Savages," White took forty of his best men into the pinnace to enter the inlet. At this point, White's condemnation of Fernandes reaches its climax:

Assoone as we were put with our pinnesse from the shippe, a Gentleman by the meanes of Fernando, who was appointed to returne for England, called to the sailers in the pinnesse, charging them not to bring any of the planters backe againe, but leave them in the Island, except the Governour, and two or three such as he approoved, saying that the Summer was farre spent, wherefore hee would land all the planters in no other place. Unto this were all the sailers both in the pinnesse, and shippe, perswaded by the Master, wherefore it booted not the Governor to contend with them...<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 522.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 523.

According to White, Fernandes's piratical urge to reach the Azores and intercept the treasure fleet before the summer passed marooned the colony on Roanoke. As the governor of the colony, White offered no resistance to the sailors' coup and began moving his colonists to the island he knew well.

If White's accusations are true, they show Fernandes to be guilty of a damnable amount of treachery.<sup>83</sup> By all appearances, Fernandes intentionally tried to prevent the colony's success by keeping them from necessary provisions. However, this does not make sense, especially since Fernandes made a sizable investment in the expedition and was among the twelve assistants.<sup>84</sup> More likely, White opposed Fernandes's attempts to take prizes in the West Indies, since no prizes are mentioned, as they are in the narratives of the 1585 colony's journey through the same area. Perhaps Fernandes's actions were a childlike act of revenge for frustrating his own purposes on the voyage, or perhaps he forced White to decide which places to seek supplies in the West Indies. This could explain their failure to victual and White's need for a scapegoat. White's account may be largely fabricated to hide his own preference to return to Roanoke Island, which he already knew well; in the nascent national rivalries birthed by the Protestant Reformation, the foreign Fernandes would have been a believable saboteur in England. White's account also shows signs of heavy editing after he arrived home late in 1587. Fernandes is clearly the villain of the entire enterprise from the beginning of the journey, and his actions at Roanoke are unsurprising when they appear in White's narrative.

Regardless of the circumstances, Raleigh's colony was not in its intended destination as it began the arduous task of reoccupying the previous colony's overgrown buildings. Roanoke's

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<sup>83</sup> Miller, 132-134.

<sup>84</sup> "7 January 1587, Grant of Arms for the City of Raleigh in Virginia, and for its Governors and Assistants," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 511.

hostility to English settlement was abundantly clear: the holding party was gone, only a skeleton left behind to suggest their fate; and soon after landing, Indians murdered George Howe as he searched the beach for clams.<sup>85</sup> Under these hostile conditions, John White left his colony to go to England to secure supplies. In his account, he is careful to emphasize the colonists' insistence that he go instead of anyone else, but the governor's departure from the colony is bizarre and unreasonable without further explanation.<sup>86</sup> It serves as a fittingly problematic bookend to his conflicted description of the colony's beginnings. White boarded a pinnace and sailed alongside Fernandes's *Lion*, which had remained at Roanoke for several weeks, apparently unconcerned with the lateness of the season. The men did eventually reach the Azores, seeking prizes unsuccessfully before returning to England.<sup>87</sup> In the meantime, 114 men and women began new lives in the New World.

Raleigh's reaction to White's report must have been less than enthusiastic. Despite their long-term working relationship, Simão Fernandes never sailed for Raleigh again. Raleigh was disappointed to find that his colony was in the same hostile territory that defeated his previous efforts. This must have been especially so since Raleigh had more fully embraced anti-Spanish piracy in 1587, and Roanoke had already been proven unsuitable for such purposes. He did arrange for Sir Richard Grenville to lead a large relief expedition to sail with supplies shortly after White's return, but the Privy Council halted his plan in the interest of preserving all resources for the war effort against Spain.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, White sailed with the small *Brave* and *Roe* in April 1588. The crew were chiefly interested in plunder from the outset, only to be

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<sup>85</sup> "1587, John White's Narrative of his Voyage" in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 525.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 532-534.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 538.

<sup>88</sup> "31 March 1587, The Privy Council to Sir Richard Grenville," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 560-561.

subdued by a French pirate and sent limping back to England.<sup>89</sup> Some privateers ventured to the West Indies and the Grand Banks of Newfoundland in 1588 and 1589, but there is no evidence that they visited Raleigh's colony. In 1590, White finally sailed with three of John Watts's privateering ships to ascertain the status of his colony. After a hazardous journey, White found the enigmatic word "CROATOAN" carved in the palisade around the settlement site on Roanoke Island.<sup>90</sup> Before further searches could be made on Croatoan Island, strong storms raked the Outer Banks, and White's shipmates determined to abandon the search and make for the West Indies to find plunder.

Many forces seemed to conspire against the Roanoke Colony, and Raleigh himself cannot escape the blame for their disappearance. Instead of energetically securing the colony's relief, Raleigh diverted his attention to his increasing investments in piracy and his commitments in Ireland. In the hysteria abroad in England during the Armada's preparation, Raleigh understandably focused his efforts on securing his massive land holdings in southwestern Ireland. The remote coast was a likely place for an amphibious landing of Spanish troops, who could use the solidly Catholic and reliably anti-English native Irish as hosts for their preparations to invade England itself. But even after the Spanish threat of invasion diminished in 1589, he went to Munster to personally fight his battles against the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir William Fitzwilliam.<sup>91</sup> Roanoke was a distant concern in comparison to his immediate needs closer to home; nevertheless, Raleigh did induce a group of nineteen gentlemen to join him in responsibility for "the inhabiting, and planting of our people in Virginia" early in 1589.<sup>92</sup> While

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<sup>89</sup> Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, 194.

<sup>90</sup> "John White's Narrative of the 1590 Voyage to Virginia," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 614.

<sup>91</sup> Raleigh Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 142-143.

<sup>92</sup> "7 March 1589, Agreement between Sir Walter Raleigh, Thomas Smythe etc., and John White etc. for the Continuance of the City of Raleigh Venture," in Quinn, *Roanoke Voyages*, 2, 569.

Raleigh ultimately remained in charge of the venture, the message of this new arrangement was clear: his resources were being stretched by his involvement in America, and he wanted others to share in the responsibility for finding his colony, unseen for nearly three years. White's voyage with the Watts syndicate yielded nothing of sufficient interest for Raleigh to dedicate more effort to finding his colony. Furthermore, Raleigh's patent expired on March 24, 1591, if no permanent settlement had been made under its provisions; the mystery surrounding Roanoke's fate was more valuable to Raleigh in the 1590s than secure proof that they had been defeated by the hostile American environment.<sup>93</sup>

New theories on the eventual fate of the Lost Colonists have been regularly floated since their disappearance in the sixteenth century. In the twentieth century, scholars largely came to accept David Beers Quinn's belief that the colony relocated to their intended destination on the Chesapeake Bay. Jamestown's settlers searched for the colonists after their arrival in 1607, and their accounts provide tantalizing clues about the colonists' persistence over twenty years after their abandonment. Quinn believed that Powhatan, the mighty chief who encountered the English at Jamestown, massacred the colonists, as the chief bragged to John Smith in 1608.<sup>94</sup> Quinn's theory has received criticism in recent years, especially with the publication of Lee Miller's *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* in 2000. Miller argued that the colonists simply relocated "fifty miles into the main" as they had originally planned with John White before his departure.<sup>95</sup> Miller uses further evidence from Jamestown's settlers suggesting that the English were enslaved by the Indians of the interior and used to "beat copper" for their Indian masters.<sup>96</sup> Despite no shortage of attempts to explain the fate of the colonists, until

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<sup>93</sup> Quinn, *Raleigh*, 103.

<sup>94</sup> Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke*, 365.

<sup>95</sup> Miller, 228-229.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

archaeological work proves otherwise, they remain in the twenty-first century as they were to John White in 1590: lost.

The Roanoke expeditions highlight the theoretical divisions between the prominent colonial promoters of the Elizabethan Era. Competing conceptions of the necessary orientation of successful colonies pushed and pulled against one another in those uncertain times. Powerful men differed strongly on whether these settlements should be primarily agricultural, piratical, militaristic, religious, or some amalgamation of these orientations. Ultimately, the climate of state-sponsored piracy in the 1580s and 1590s affected Roanoke most profoundly. It guaranteed that the ships' crews responsible for the colonists' safe passages would be motivated by the possibility of plunder rather than the future hopes of tenuous settlements on the American coast. Simão Fernandes played his final, anti-climactic role in English colonization in 1587 when he disobeyed Raleigh's instructions and dumped the colony at Roanoke Island, but he can hardly be blamed solely for the failures of the experiment. Piracy created a positive feedback loop as long-term piracy at sea precipitated war with Spain, dooming the colonists who risked their lives in America to help maintain the piratical enterprise. In the end, Roanoke's sustaining lure for the English proved to be its undoing.

## Epilogue: A Reprise for Reprisal

The second half of the sixteenth century saw piracy at sea become increasingly interwoven with English overseas expeditions. Lending the period its general character and uniting a disparate series of failed attempts to create a permanent English presence in the Americas, piracy proved an attractive lure to prospective participants and tragically undercut the slim possibility of success in many ventures. Piracy came to be closely associated with colonial settlement through a process largely begun by Gilbert, a man not immediately associable with piracy, and culminating in Raleigh's Roanoke enterprises at the outset of the Anglo-Spanish War. Pirates operating primarily in their own self-interest promised to fulfill the Crown's more ideological hopes to oppose the Spanish.

John White's failure to locate the Roanoke Colony in 1590 signaled a major pause in the flurry of English colonial activity focused on North America that began in the early 1570s. The sea war between England and Spain dominated the attention of the state and its most eminent individuals in the 1590s. The lucrative haul of the many English privateers operating throughout the Atlantic World from the outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish War in 1585 until the formal end of the conflict in 1604 proved that the insistent demands of many promoters on the necessity of an American piracy base were largely unnecessary. From their bases of operation in the West Country of England and the southern coast of Ireland, Elizabeth's sea dogs did considerable damage to Spanish shipping, but never came close to unraveling the Spanish imperial machine as Gilbert and some of his associates thought possible.

The ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne upon the childless Elizabeth's death in 1603 brought major change to England's foreign policy positions, especially with Spain. The newly minted King James I of England and Ireland sought a new era of peace

with the Spanish and chose to make an example of Sir Walter Raleigh who still hoped to settle scores with the Catholic rival. Raleigh's blunders in Guyana, especially those piracies committed against the Spanish in 1617, coupled with his thinly veiled disdain for the new king, led to a charge of treason and his execution in 1618.<sup>1</sup> He played no role in the renewed effort to settle Virginia under the Virginia Company in 1606. Indeed, the Elizabethan generation largely departed from the stage by the time England first established a permanent presence in the Americas: Gilbert, Grenville, Lane, Raleigh, Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, Fernandes, and nearly all other major participants in the enterprises under Elizabeth were dead and played no active role in the formation of Jamestown. Only Richard Hakluyt, the publicist of all the aforementioned, had his name listed among the investors in the Virginia Company.<sup>2</sup> An age had come and gone.

Nevertheless, some elements of the sixteenth century's culture of piratical colonization did not die with the participants. Puritans in England during the Stuart monarchy would have fit well in the passionately anti-Spanish environment of the sea dogs. Chafing under James I's pacifistic orientation toward the Catholic Spanish, English puritans looked for opportunities to build a more authentic Christian society outside England. These militant Protestants are best known for their successful colonial refuges in New England – the Norumbega of Gilbert's generation – but Puritans also settled Providence Island near the coast of modern Nicaragua in 1629. Nestled deep in the Caribbean Sea along the Spanish Main, Providence's promoters, like the notorious pirate magnate Robert Rich, the Second Earl of Warwick, hoped for their island

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<sup>1</sup> Quinn, *Raleigh*, 204-208.

<sup>2</sup> "24 November 1606. Dispensation for Richard Hakluyt and Robert Hunt," in Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609: Documents Relating to the Foundation of Jamestown and the History of the Jamestown Colony Up to the Departure of Captain John Smith, Last President of the Council in Virginia Under the First Charter, Early in October 1609*, vol. I (London, UK: Hakluyt Society, 1969), 62-64; Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise*, 260.

colony to serve as a thorn in the Spanish side. This Puritan colony differed greatly from the more long-lasting settlements in North America with its slave labor system, tropical agricultural aims, and its incorporation of piracy into its stated mission. The colony did not last, however, and suffered Spanish destruction much as the French Huguenot settlements in La Florida had in the 1560s.<sup>3</sup>

Ireland continued to frustrate succeeding English monarchs throughout the seventeenth century, but Elizabeth's sustained effort toward pacification of the island had brought most of Ireland under her heel by her death in 1603. The Munster and Ulster plantations, along with Dublin, served as the centers from which English control of the island emanated. John White lived his last years on the island, and Thomas Hariot and Walter Raleigh spent considerable time there in the early years of the seventeenth century. Indeed, after Roanoke's failure, Raleigh focused most of his energy on his lucrative lands in the Munster Plantation. General English control, however, did not signal an end to barbaric violence throughout Ireland. The seventeenth century was likely the island's bloodiest, with large Protestant populations of settlers from England and Scotland holding power over the much more numerous Catholic natives. Puritan ascendancy under Cromwell signaled further trouble for the majority of the Irish, and they suffered under a yoke similarly dreadful to that experienced by the host of Native Americans that faced English conquest in the century. As under Elizabeth, the Irish experience continued to shape English engagement with America, and as England established settlements on the fringes of North America, those experiences also came to inform the Irish enterprise.

Sir Humphrey Gilbert failed miserably in his efforts to establish a permanent English presence in the New World, but his anti-Spanish agenda embodied in his original plans to “annoy

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<sup>3</sup> For the preeminent work on Providence Island, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the king of Spayne” became fashionable again long after his death at sea in 1583. In 1625, Sir John Coke suggested a remarkably similar plan to seize one of the major islands in the West Indies for the purpose of continuing the assault on the Spanish Main.<sup>4</sup> Several such plans circulated through Parliament in the mid-1620s without implementation, but when the Puritans gained power after English Civil War, Cromwell moved with open aggression against the Spanish in the West Indies. His Western Design failed in its goal to take Hispaniola, but it did succeed in taking Jamaica, a backwater island neglected by the Spanish that became a jewel among English possessions with the ascendance of sugar. While John C. Appleby claims that Coke’s plan represented the “real ‘germs of the West Indian policy of the Protectorate,’” and Carla Pestana avoids comparing Cromwell’s efforts to those of the Elizabethans since “presenting the Design as backward-looking renders it inconsequential,” the Elizabethan proponents of overseas colonies first articulated such plans.<sup>5</sup> Historians have ignored them generally, and Gilbert most particularly, in their consideration of later developments. Perhaps the fact that no permanent English settlements emerged in the sixteenth century explains their willingness to neglect the precedents that Gilbert and his ilk established. Ironically, considering Cromwell’s crusade to the Caribbean without due consideration for the precedents that informed it renders the earliest era of English expansion into the Atlantic as inconsequential as Pestana fears that the Western Design has become in the historiography.

Despite the lasting influence of the Elizabethan promoters, the colonial environment had fundamentally changed. Successful English colonies never coupled state-sanctioned plunder

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<sup>4</sup> Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 84.

<sup>5</sup> John C. Appleby, “An Association for the West Indies? English Plans for a West India Company 1621-1629,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15, no. 3 (1987): 222; Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica: Oliver Cromwell’s Bid for Empire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 12.

with the colonial effort, as the efforts under Gilbert and Raleigh did. Barely-restrained piracy served as a powerful motivating force for the participants in the earliest colonies, but it created instability that continually sabotaged the effort. A successful colony in the seventeenth century never employed plunder so closely with its explicit mission. After initial failures, Gilbert and Raleigh actually understood that land and agricultural commodities held the hope for success in North America, a remarkable adjustment to their initial schemes that would have to be relearned by their successors; however, the climate of piracy prevalent in the late sixteenth century, and encouraged by the brothers, still hampered their second efforts. Their actions helped initiate an English colonialism that would be perceived as generally piratical to the colonized peoples of the world, a process with lofty aims to recommend it, but ultimately parasitic to those who opposed it.

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