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Face to Face: English Uses and Understanding of the Beard in Early Virginian Contacts

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by

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ABSTRACT

Many historians agree that categories of human division underwent a drastic change due to European New World encounters. The shift from religious divisions to ones based on ethnicity and skin color gradually developed in early modern Europe. Hence, before natives became "red," and Europeans "white" a period existed where the differences between these cultures were utilized in a variety of means to prove similarity and difference.

One element signifying difference during the early contact period was that of the beard. Hair as an identifier has a long history: through the middle ages, wildness was conveyed by hair and at times non-Christians were legally required to grow beards. Early in the sixteenth century the beard became a popular fad for white, Christian-European men, a change which some scholars have traced to European contact with beardless Amerindians. Within Europe, the beard came to represent more than otherness. A thick beard conveyed images of health, particularly sexual health; the beard came to represent virility and the beard helped to separate men from women and boys.

In this paper I argue that the beard assumed a special significance within early English contacts in the Carolinas and Virginia. I examine the changing meanings of the beard and the English adoption of these meanings. I first examine the European background which helped provide the context for their first permanent colonial settlements in the New World. I next delve into travel accounts, ethnographies and artistic portrayals of the Natives in these colonies to examine how and when both sides evoked facial hair as a signifier of difference. This examination will help reveal English views of Natives during a time when their views regarding the Natives' character could affect the success of English colonial ventures. Finally, I examine why the beard failed as a sign of difference between the region's Amerindians and the English. This failure led to the adoption of other means of distinction specifically that of skin color. Hence the beard served as a first stepping stone towards what would become a fully conceptualized racial theory.

Chapter One

Introduction

One "fatal Friday morning" in 1622 English and Native relations in Virginia took a drastic turn. According to Edward Waterhouse, it was on this morning in March that groups of Amerindians "basely and barbarously murdered" every settler they encountered regardless of "age or sexe, man, woman or childe." Waterhouse's account described this event as a major turn in intra-colonial relations. The English settlers' ability to convert the "perfidious and inhumane" barbarian Natives was cemented through this attack and the three hundred forty-seven lives lost on this morning. Those who had too much faith in the humanity of the Indians, such as George Thorpe, were not spared from cruel deaths. Hence according to Waterhouse's account, what would for over three hundred centuries be recounted as the Massacre of 1622 marked a deep change in Indian-English relations.[1]

[1] Edward Waterhouse and Virginia Company of London, *A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia With a Relation of the Barbarous Massacre in the Time of Peace and League, Treacherously Executed by the Natiue Infidels Vpon the English, the 22 of March Last. Together with the Names of Those That Were Then Massacred; That Their Lawfull Heyres, by This Notice Giuen, May Take Order for the Inheriting of Their Lands and Estates in Virginia. And a Treatise Annexed, Written by That Learned Mathematician Mr. Henry Briggs, of the Northwest Passage to the South Sea Through the Continent of Virginia, and by Fretum Hudson. Also a Commemoration of Such Worthy Benefactors as Haue Contributed Their*

Historians have long since agreed with Waterhouse's assessment of the changing nature of English-Indian relations in Virginia post-1622. Although earlier English-Native relations were not without problems or strains, the "massacre" alleviated any doubts English settlers had over the character of Natives. According to Bernard Sheehan, the massacre allowed the English to proceed with the systematic conquest and dispersal of the Powhatan people.[2] Gone were both the noble qualities previously assessed to Natives as well as any recognition of Indians' rights to land and freedom.[3] Along with the approximately three hundred fifty English settlers killed, so too were the English' hopes for an integrated society. The English settlers quickly dismissed the Indians' culture and categorizations of Natives as "brutish" and "beastly" greatly increased after 1622.[4]

Yet the inhumane descriptions that increased after this turning point were not only due to the negative qualities ascribed to Natives but also because of the positive qualities that were taken away. The previous ambivalence in English attitudes towards the Natives can be seen throughout their early contact literature and art. Although many eloquently

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Christian Charitie Towards the Aduancement of the Colony. And a Note of the Charges of Necessary Prouisions Fit for Euery Man That Intends to Goe to Virginia. Published by Authoritie (Imprinted at London: By G. Eld, for Robert Mylbourne, and are to be sold at his shop, at the great south doore of Pauls, 1622), 551-553.

[2] Bernard W Sheehan, *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 7.

[3] Alden T. Vaughan, "'Expulsion of the Salvages": English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 1, Third Series (January 1978): 78.

[4]Edward J Dudley, *The Wild Man Within; an Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 71.

stated this view, such as Waterhouse's account of relations prior to the "massacre," others depended upon visual signposts of similarity and difference. One such road marker was that of the beard.

The beard, I argue, served as a proto-racialist symbol in early Virginia. Its use in the descriptions of the Natives coincided with ambivalent English attitudes towards the original inhabitants of their new settlements. The Massacre of 1622 not only changed the Virginian settlers' attitudes into ones of condemnation but also lead to the replacement of the beard in favor of other signs. The beard's ability to minimize the risk Natives presented to English settlement and its demonstrability of physical similarity between Amerindians and Englishmen were discarded along with English hopes that Natives could be converted to Christianity and hence become civilized in English eyes. As a result, Virginia represented a microcosm of what would become a larger colonial issue of how to understand and handle Amerindians. The situation in Virginia progressed at a faster pace than other parts of the English colonies and as such is useful to study in isolation. Additionally, Virginia represents a unique situation regarding the establishment of race relations to come; primarily with the utilization of African labor and the establishment of differences based solely on skin color.

The utilization of the beard was a first step I argue for English settlers on the path to separating races by skin color; yet was not as fully conceptualized as racial theories which would later emerge. The historiography on race in the early modern period has undergone a drastic transformation in recent years. Joyce Chaplin nicely summed up the general position that racial ideas were dependent on the invention of "modern" science, which was not formulated until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However,

Chaplin concluded that cultural differences did matter to the early English colonists whereas "biological" ones did not.[5] The cultural patterns which established men's facial hair preferences was one such difference which I believe was embedded with multiple messages.

Beards and facial hair in general, experienced a radical shift in meaning within early modern Europe. The English capitalized upon this shift in their contact narratives. By using the messages that beards conveyed, the English were able to begin constructing an understanding of who the Natives were and disseminate these messages for purposes that best served their needs at the time. However, the signifier of the beard quickly disappeared from contact narratives, at the same time that the messages concerning Natives also switched. Hence beards proved to be a sign that was malleable towards the benefit of the early colonies, but had to be abandoned as views of the Amerindians within the areas of settlement changed. As the beard fell out of favor with English settlers other racial dialogues rose to replace this early sign.

The enigma of race, and how our society has landed upon a system that ranks people according to skin color, is an issue of much debate for historians. Instead of exploring the issue of race based on skin color, I seek to extend that debate into the further past, to explore other avenues of human difference and how the English settlers utilized these other physical traits to establish disparity and ultimately why they dismissed these traits in favor of skin color. During the time of the first permanent English settlements in the New World much of the early settlers' activities helped

[5]Joyce E Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.

establish the racial system that we have come to know. By problematizing contacts by using the changing meaning of the beard within Early Modern Europe and the early descriptions of the Amerindian inhabitants of the Carolinas and Virginia I intend to push back the enigma of race within early English settlements.[6]

Hence by isolating the use of the beard as a signifier of difference, the development of race relations within Virginia, and how those relations influenced the colonies and later America, may be better understood. The use and disuse of the beard as a signifier symbolized Virginian settlers' attitudes towards the Natives and how quickly those attitudes shifted. The beard was one early attempt at demonstrating the racial qualities of the Amerindians, but was soon disregarded after its' messages proved inadequate.

The beard, whether real, fake or non-existent, was a sign which historians have yet to devote much attention to in early contact accounts. Unlike skin color or clothing, there has been only minor debate over the significance of this sign. Yet, when these early contacts are read against the European and Amerindian understandings of the beard these

[6] The changing meaning of the beard within early modern Europe was argued for primarily in two articles. See Will Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 155-187 and Elliott Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 1181-1201. Within England the role of the beard within early modern theater displayed that many of the messages discussed by Fischer and Horowitz had been absorbed and were being utilized by theater troops as means of conveying certain messages. See Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, Cambridge studies in Renaissance literature and culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 94-95.

encounters unleash a torrent of meanings. Before skin color acted as the emblem of difference, other signs served to aid in the construction of the "other" in early English-Indian contacts.

For the English, a variety of concerns affected how they viewed colonized people. This mixture of concerns dominated their encounters and shaped their portrayal of the Amerindian living near their settlements in Virginia and the Carolinas. Hence, the beard was regarded on many levels in reaction to many of their concerns. The beard portrayed a wide variety of issues. The beard represented a powerful sign of physical diversity between Native and English. Yet it was simultaneously used to establish continuity both in the form of a historic memory and to establish a sense of familiarity. Although this continuity and diversity appear to be conflicting ideals they appeared simultaneously in the literature concerning Natives of the Carolinas and Virginia depending upon the goal of writer. In this way the English complicated the beard as a sign that indicated the safety of the new colonies including that it contained a healthy environment, sexual safety and a lack of violence from the Native population. Ultimately after 1622 the messages of the beard proved too malleable – no longer was a message of continuity desired but only one of difference. The messages the beard conveyed within these cultures shaped how each side viewed the other in the earliest years. Due to the wide ranging messages which a beard conveyed English writers could easily adapt it to fit their purposes. Prior to skin color being the emblem of difference, other signs played a large role in shaping conceptions and distinguishers between English and Amerindians. The beard was one such sign which played a large role in these early contacts.

The study of the significance of the beard problematizes contacts between Natives and English; the settlers' initial view of the Natives becomes richer than a simple dialogue of otherness. I contend that during initial contacts, the English were concerned with figuring out just how different the Amerindians inhabiting these regions were, in order to best understand how to interact with their cultures. By manipulating the messages that the beard conveyed the English were also able to change the views of their fellow men in ways which would benefit their own self-interests. Ultimately, the sign of the beard proved to be faulty and was abandoned. Although short lived, this sign had an influential role in shaping how each side involved in early English-Virginian settlements viewed each other. I argue that though it would take nearly a century before the racial ideology based on skin color emerged the beard was a stepping stone to this ideology. Hence by studying the few times beards were specifically invoked in the contact narratives I intend to dissect not only how the English latched onto the European understanding of the beard, but also how they used that understanding for their own purposes in literature intended for audiences and potential settlers and investors back in the homeland.

The use of skin color as the primary signifier of difference was a phenomenon of the eighteenth century, that became commonplace in the nineteenth. As Nancy Shoemaker noted in her book *A Strange Likeness* both the English and Indians often failed to mention the color of each other's skins at the beginning of the eighteenth century. By mid-century, however such observations were becoming more

commonplace.[7] Many attributed the first division of human life into categories which emphasized skin color to Carolus Linnaeus, and his work, *Systema Naturae* first published in 1735. In this work, Linnaeus divided all human life into categories based on appearance, habits, relations to each other and uses. His description of *homo sapiens Americanus* included the phrase "red," which many historians including Robert Berkhofer and Nancy Shoemaker have latched onto as a pivotal moment in racial divisions.[8] Race, Shoemaker argued, was a useful system of categorizing people because it fulfilled "Europe's ideological needs by creating the illusion that human difference was biologically ordained."[9]

The emphasis on race being determined by skin color and hence not established until the mid-eighteenth century as a true category of difference leaves a gaping hole in early relations. Many have sided with Alden Vaughan's theory that only when a true racial inequality became fixed, and Englishmen established Indians as inherently inferior "redmen" rather than unenlightened "whites," did their status become truly separate and unequal. The establishment of this biological and visual difference, proved that Indians

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[7] Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 129.

[8] For more on this division and its development see Robert F Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1978), 40; Nancy Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 626; and Shoemaker, *A Strange* Likeness; Joyce E Chaplin, "Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian Bodies," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1, 3 (January 1997): 229-252.

[9] Shoemaker, "How Indians Got to be Red," 625.

were inferior by nature and not due to education or environment.[10] Some, such as Joyce Chaplin, have begun pushing this common assumption and argued that natives were understood as an "other," even earlier but not through a system based solely on skin color. By examining natural philosophy and medical theory, Chaplin argued that racial thought in North America has a long past. Chaplin recognized that the earliest manifestations were not as coherent as the later descriptions in their nineteenth-century counterparts.[11] Chaplin succinctly argued that corporeal nature was a powerful means of representation of human differences even in the early days of English colonization. Yet she only pushed back her dialogue to the time when English colonial ventures were well established. Chaplin was quick to note that this was not a coherent ideology, but rather a racial idiom. Theories which explained generational transmission of bodily variants had yet to be fully established. Nature in the new world, according to Chaplin, provided the English with a material substructure for their power.[12] Although in many ways this paper builds upon those works by both Vaughan and Chaplin, it seeks to push into even earlier times of contact. According to Karen Kupperman, it was during this time of initial settlement and contact that English writers who spent time in the Americas showed signs that they believed Natives came from the same stock as Englishmen and that all

[10] Alden T Vaughan, "From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian," *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (October 1982): 919.

[11] Chaplin, "Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America," 231.

[12] Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 160.

differences between the two were accidental.[13] How the change between the two understandings of racial difference, between the similarity which Kupperman viewed and the differences which Chaplin argued for, occurred in a small time period is part of the focus of this paper. This change is further exemplified by small signs such as the beard. Hence the study of the beard also helps exemplify changing English-Virginian attitudes towards Natives based on events specific to that colony.

Before they embarked on their own colonial settlements, the English explorers knew of French and Spanish accounts of the New World as well as works such as Mandeville's *Travels* which allowed them to pre-formulate ideas about what they might find in their settlements. Due to the wide variety of accounts the idea of an alien other was not unknown. Throughout Europe messages were disseminated as to the terrain, goods and people that inhabited these new territories. Hence the English who initiated relations with colonized peoples in Virginia had a wide ranging background which pre-informed their encounters.

According to historian Elliot Horowitz, the beard became a single image of European identity on both sides of the Atlantic after Spanish contact with hairless Amerindians.[14] Before this period, the beard endowed its wearer with very different messages. Prior to 1492 and the discovery of a new people, the beard within early modern Europe functioned largely as a sign of the non-Christian male. Based upon

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[13] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Presentment of Civility: English Reading of American Self-Presentation in the Early Years of Colonization," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1, 3 (January 1997): 193.

[14] Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," 1181.

religious beliefs, the wearing of the beard was often times forced upon peoples as a means of quick visual identification and separation unto a lower rung of humanity.

The beard and hair in general carried substantial messages before the early modern period in Europe. Hair has long been used as an identifier and the history of its' messages can be traced back as far as the ancient Greeks. A primary image excessive hair conveyed was that of the wild man. One of the earliest documented examples of such a man occurred in the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh. Up through the Middle Ages, the image of a man covered from head to toe in hair, just as an animal is covered in fur conveyed the image of a wild man. By this time, the hairy wild man was present throughout Europe, a facet of not only of medieval art but life in general.[15] Hairlessness was one of the qualities which separated men from animals, according to Johann Blumenbach, whom many regard as the father of physical anthropology.[16] Hence, to minimize the hair on the body, such as by shaving or plucking out facial hairs, would be to further elevate oneself above the beasts of the land. Due to the association between hairlessness and higher levels of humanity, forcing groups to wear a beard not only allowed this hair to serve as an identifier but also helped rank humankind.

The beard as the identifier of the "other" was not only present in popular culture but was sometimes prescribed into law. For example, in 1412, Valladolid, Spain enacted

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[15] Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages; a Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 2-3.

[16] Londa Schiebinger, "The Anatomy of Difference: Race and Sex in Eighteenth-Century Science," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, no. 4, Special Issue: The Politics of Difference (Summer 1990): 387-405, 392.

a statute which prohibited Moors and Jews to shave, hence legislatively making beardlessness a sign of Christianity.[17] As the "others" predominantly present within Spanish society, Muslims and Jews were portrayed as bearded immediately prior to their conquest and resulting expulsion or assimilation which also was formally completed in 1492. To Europeans hairstyles conveyed not only gender but also regional background, status and occupation.[18] Upon encountering a people who were typically without facial hair the beard shifted from a sign of alien otherness to "a single image of European identity."[19] Horowitz argued that as the American Indian became the radical new other for Europeans facial hair patterns also changed. The beard, or lack thereof, was one means of making an easy distinction between a white European and a Native American who was perhaps no less white. The beard became a popular fad for white, Christian-European men early in the sixteenth century.[20] By mid-century most leaders of Europe wore beards.[21] In England well over ninety percent of men painted during this period sported beards according to one estimate which utilized portraits of the period. At a minimum, according to Will Fisher, at least fifteen distinct and recognizable beard styles were worn during this period.[22] Those who initiated contact and settlements within Virginia followed this pattern as well. John Smith, Thomas Hariot, Sir Walter Raleigh,

[17] Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," 1188.

[18] Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 102-3.

[19] Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," 1181.

[20] Ibíd., 1187.

[21] Ibíd., 1199.

[22] Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, 94-95.

Sir Francis Drake, and Sir Richard Greenville were all portrayed as bearded (see Figure 6). With the exception of Drake, all these men had very heavy and full beards according to their portraits. Although a fashion trend at the time, within England and Europe these beards carried many more messages. Upon their initial contacts they would also represent a physical divider between these men and the hairless natives they encountered. On both sides of the Atlantic these men provided clear physical distinctions of their power through their display of beards.[23]

The beard not only transformed into a popular fashion but acquired meanings which promoted its wearer. Not only did a beard display that one was European, but also that one was sexually healthy and virile. Medical understandings of the time linked the production of facial hair to the production of semen.[24] Hence, growing a thick and full beard was a visual signal that one produced a large quantity of semen. This sign of sexual health was enhanced as syphilis spread across Europe.[25] In the final stages of the disease, one was often left hairless. Hence, a beard was not only a masculine badge of honor, but also proof that one was free from sexually debilitating diseases. The beard had become strongly intertwined as a sign of masculinity since the Renaissance.[26]

Enhancing the message of masculinity which beards conveyed was the fact that lesser beings also failed to produce facial hair. Women, African-Americans and

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[23] For examples please see portraits in figure 6, all obtained from Stefan Lorant, *The New World; the First Pictures of America*, A new, rev. ed. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1965)

[24]Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard," 173-4.

[25] Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," 1200.

[26]Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard," 156.

Amerindians all failed to fully produce beards, with some exceptions. For Amerindians the lack of a beard lead to a debate that played out within early travel narratives and ethnographic accounts, over whether this was a sign of their malleability into proper English subjects or their inferiority.[27] Hence beards served not only to separate the men from the boys, but also to divide humankind into hierarchical subdivisions.[28] The subdivisions which early-modern physicians and natural philosophers constructed utilizing the beard endured well into the time period when skin color dominated. From François Bernier's 1684 division which noted that flowing beards were a blessing endowed to Europeans and North Africans of which others were deprived to Charles Hamilton Smith's 1848 chart which utilized the beard to separate races, authorities repeatedly cited the beard as that which separated levels of men. For some, such as Richard Bradley in 1721, the beard was the sole differentiator between certain groups. Both Europeans and Americans were white he argued, and they only differed from one another through the beard.[29] Repeatedly authorities of the early modern era turned towards this secondary sexual characteristic to explain the racial divisions and hierarchy which best served their interests.

[27] For information regarding this debate and how facial hair played into a broader discussion see Schiebinger, "The Anatomy of Difference." Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* also provided a succinct summary of the later division of humanity by Carolus Linnaeus.

[28] Fisher, "The Renaissance Beard," 167 and 175.

[29] Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 120-126.

Although Horowitz and Fisher claimed that the message of the beard spread rapidly throughout Europe, how this affected what the first English settlers in Virginia expected to find is unclear. Theatrical studies conclude that actors utilized the beard as a trope of extreme manliness. According to literary analyst Will Fischer, boy actors needed beards in the early theater to stage masculinity similar to the way dresses and wigs were required to stage femininity.[30] The adoption of the beard to convey this message by theater troops illustrates that it would be understood by the English viewing audience.

Beards are difficult to trace in the early contacts between the English and the area of their first settlements, the Carolinas and Virginia. Due to the fact that beards were absent in the Amerindian populations that Englishmen were describing the attention paid to this absence is enlightening. Other physical elements were rarely touched upon. For instance, I have found no description of a Native's eyebrows. On the other hand, the English settlers and explorers frequently mentioned the lack of beards, even if only as a side note. Hence, it is not only the moments in accounts and pictures where beards were mentioned that are important but the context in which they were discussed, when merged with the meaning of the beard within early modern Europe and England, which provide insight into the utilization of the beard in these early contacts.

Historians of Colonial America, with the exception of Axtell and Kupperman, have not given much emphasis to the beard. Instead they have stressed clothing and skin color by moving analysis of encounters in the context of the eighteenth century. Instead, I want to push back this analysis of encounters and place them in a European-Colonial context. The beard in the new world can only be understood by looking backward to

[30] Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, 87.

fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe and relating the knowledge and messages of the beard from that situation to the colonial context. Such an analysis also pushes back the understanding of the construction of difference, which leads to the construction of races, into a further time than has been currently studied.

Historians have not completely ignored the mention of the beard within contact narratives. Instead, they have provided brief mentions of the cultural and physical differences between the smooth skinned Indians and the hairy Europeans. Yet their analysis has not delved into meanings that this physical dichotomy may have conveyed. Instead, clothing and skin color have largely constituted the main focus of this debate. Karen Kupperman, for instance, argued that clothing was the fundamental demarcation and most immediate emblem of difference for European colonizers and Amerindians.[31] Kupperman invoked physical differences but conversely argued that the lack of description of native faces indicated a lack of interest in this subject on the part of the English reading public.[32] Nancy Shoemaker provided one of the more succinct discussions of the development of skin color as the primary signifier of difference. Unlike clothing, skin color was a more fixed category of difference, one that could not be easily replaced or changed.[33] This changed over the course of the eighteenth century she argued from being a little mentioned fact to being a commonplace categorization. The

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[31] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 53.

[32] Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, N.J: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 34.

[33]Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness*, 129.

development of this racial ideology over time depended not only upon science, but activities of settlers as well. The degree of difference in skin tone between Natives and mariners has been questioned. James Axtell pointed out a radical difference in skin color should not have existed between mariners and Amerindians. After several weeks at sea, mariners most likely acquired or maintained a deep tan. Hence the supposed pallor of Europeans would not have been a considerable demarcation of difference.[34] Although perhaps this may have mitigated the degree of difference, some level of disparity was often noted. Mariners alone were not involved in these contacts, but rather those of the middling and upper classes as well, for whom maintaining a paler color was a sign of status. Rather it was hair, according to Axtell, which held the greater fascination for Amerindians as that which set the Europeans apart physically. Axtell provided a superior analysis of the view that different Amerindian groups held towards hair and beards. Yet this analysis did not delve into the Europeans' use of this sign. Axtell's analysis, which shows how Amerindians viewed hair and beards, correlates with Horowitz and Fisher's argument that hair operated as the primary signifier of difference within early contacts. Others have also noted the role that hair played as the key distinction between Europeans and Indians. One noted example comes from John Smith's encounter with a bearded Indian who provided him aid. Both sides of the account, according to records, considered this Indian to have a French father, hence explaining his bearded state. This was a

[34] James Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 132.

distinction that the Indian himself apparently accepted, as he named himself Mosco – the word applied to strangers, including the English.[35]

For the English settling in Virginia and the Carolinas a number of concerns dominated their first areas of permanent settlement. As reflected in their writings, much time was spent trying to figure out both who these new people were that they were encountering and how their own bodies would adapt to the new environment. Key to both concerns was the worry that harm would befall on them from living in such a space. As such, English settlers spent a large amount of time observing both Indian bodies and cultures to utilize as a predictor for their own success or failure in colonization.

The separation of the sexes and the demarcation between men and women was often a key concern in early contact accounts. English settlers considered the demarcation of genders a sign of civility amongst Indian tribes. Hence, the degree to which a civilization was considered civilized for the English, depended on their recognition of gender differences, their adherence to a hierarchy based upon these differences and their use of visible signs to outwardly display these differences according to Kupperman.[36] Such an insistence on the maintenance and display of gendered divisions, according to her work, were of heightened importance due to English fears of the degeneracy in their own society of these distinctions. These concerns would be reflected in explorer's and settlers' accounts of Indian societies.

The body itself was an area of contention in early modern knowledge. The body's susceptibility to change was of large concern for both settlers and investors. As Trudy

[35] Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, 40.

[36]Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 18.

Eden noted in "Food, Assimilation and the Malleability of the Human Body in Early Virginia" six influences could affect the internal humeral balance. Of these six: food, environment, exercise, sleep, excretion and repletion, and the passions, authorities viewed the most powerful to be food and the environment. According to Eden the early problem for the English was to prove that the new environment would not significantly weaken English bodies.[37] Her work provided a better understanding of the concerns of early English colonist when viewing the bodies that had already been affected by this new environment – those of natives. Hence factors such as skin color were noted by early settlers, but often with the goal of understanding if the skin's color was due to human intervention or not. Hence, other factors were also carefully noted which could display the effect on a body living in such a terrain.

The racial dialogue which slowly grew out of the European contacts with others after the discovery of the New World was founded upon many concerns. Whether English bodies could sustain themselves in this new environment, or better yet flourish, was a prime worry. How the English were to relate to the newly discovered peoples in this land also dictated the viewing of the other's bodies. Initially the beard became a key part of this discourse, and was manipulated to suit many purposes.

This paper builds upon Chaplin's vision that the establishment of a racial idiom occurred much earlier than traditional histories have recognized. As Chaplin noted, these beliefs had not been developed as a fully coherent racial idiom, yet they contributed

[37] Trudy Eden, "Food, Assimilation, and the Malleability of the Human Body in Early Virginia," as found in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001), 32.

greatly to the establishment of racial difference. The process of creating the categories "white" and "red" can be traced back to the days of initial contact.

In the numerous encounters between the English and natives in Virginia, the element of facial hair was rarely invoked. However, as it was an unusual feature this was hardly surprising. Indications were given that the English expected to find a hairless people, hence it is only in those few encounters when these expectations were not meet that writers paid attention to the beard. These encounters, however, illustrated the extent to which the English used facial hair as a sign to convey manhood, sexuality and power. These messages seem to have been absorbed so that the failure to display this sign by the Amerindians helped correlate with the English self conceptions of superiority and ability to dominate. Those few Amerindians who upset this fashion trend were also those who were armed or described as more powerful. The beard not only acted as a sign for the English, but as a trope which their culture reiterated.

Although evidence is scant with which to represent the Amerindians' view of contact, a bit of their reaction to Europeans can be reconstructed. Beards were not always naturally missing from Amerindian populations. Instead, men often plucked or otherwise removed facial hairs. Among native tribes inhabiting Canada, Axtell recounted that they saw beards as "very ugly," a "monstrosity" and the "greatest disfigurement that a face can have." Among these populations, the beard held almost the exact opposite meaning than what it carried in Europe, as a sign of both weak intelligence and limited sex appeal. The mention of a beard became a primary insult for the Hurons.[38] Other groups were

[38] James Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 78-79.

also confused about the true nature of Europeans. Around the Green Bay area, the Potawatomis and Menominees believed the French were themselves a separate specie due not to their skin color, but to their observation that the French were 'covered with hair.'[39] Beards were the primary target of aggression in the French settlements. Because short hair was so repulsive to natives it was the first target in fights. This manifested in the killing of any Frenchmen the Outagamis encountered in the 1660s because they could not endure the sight of their beards.[40]

In Virginia, as in other parts of the Americas, the beard played a primary role in the prophesies of a new people who would come and take over the lands. A Powhatan shaman predicted that "bearded men" would come and take their country and that within a hundred and fifty years none of the original Indians would remain.[41] Although this account was given only after the fact of European arrival and settlement, the sole identifier the Indians utilized to describe these conquering people was the beard. Even if influenced by contact itself, the focus on the beard for both Amerindians and the English revealed its primacy in Virginia as the distinction between both sides.

Though European explorers who were describing native faces most often discussed only the simple absence of facial hair, facial hair was manipulated and not simply absent in many of these cultures. Axtell once again provided an insight into this world, by commenting that simple coils of brass wire were a tool of all trades, including

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[39] James Axtell and American Historical Association, *Imagining the Other: First Encounters in North America* (Washington, D.C: American Historical Association, 1991), 24.

[40] Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, 78-79.

[41] Axtell, *After Columbus*, 129.

being fashioned into "squeezable hair pluckers."[42] Such a facial modification was not unknown to Europeans. Indeed, according to a 1545 work, *Toxophilus*, Emperor Leo mandated that his archers have their hair pulled and their beards shaved so that neither hair would get in their eyes, nor the beard interfere with the bow's string.[43] Hence, the English were not only familiar with such methods but had recently utilized such bodily alteration for a practical purpose, one possibly shared by the natives they were encountering.

Ultimately my study reveals several important factors when considering Native and English relations in the colonial world. First, it re-emphasizes the need to understand the European context from which the settlers and explorers came. Without this context a feature, such as the beard, can be easily overlooked. Yet when merged together the use of a physical feature such as the beard can reveal many of the views of each other which occurred before divisions such as skin color existed. By uncovering these views that predated the racial divisions based on color this study further pushes back the discussion of the enigma of race within colonial America into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Hence on both sides of the Atlantic, both before and after English contacts, the beard served as a sign of powerful European manhood. The beard was a sign of strength, conquest and desire that was visibly manifested on the faces of European men during the

[42] Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, 137.

[43] Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 86-87.

sixteenth century. On both sides of the Atlantic the beard became closely associated with whiteness, and hence with European culture in the broadest sense.[44]

[44] Horowitz, "The New World and the Changing Face of Europe," 1194 and 1181.

Chapter Two

The Beard in Early Virginia

John White provided one of the most influential rendering of first hand views of the Natives of the Carolinas and Virginia in a series of watercolors which he painted during his stay in the Roanoke colony. In 1590 the publisher Theodor De Bry utilized White's paintings as the basis for several engravings to illustrate explorer Thomas Hariot's first written accounts of the people who inhabited Virginia..[45]

The illustrated *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* marked a pivotal moment in the distribution of information regarding the settlements to the English public.[46] According to Kupperman, the English public desired to know who the Indians were and answered such questions by studying how one presented one's self. Hence de Bry's engravings combined with Hariot's text enabled both the literate and illiterate with a means to make such assessments. Portraiture of the period was more concerned with illustrating a person's status and place in society rather than bearing an exact replication of the person's appearance, and De Bry has at times been faulted for the classical appearance of his natives.[47]

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[45] Lorant, *The New World; the First Pictures of America*, 182.

[46]For examples see Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, 42; Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 59; Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, 34.

[47] Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 42.

De Bry's edition of Hariot's *Report* was an immense success in Europe. First published in 1590, it went through seventeen editions in thirty years and quickly appeared in four languages – Latin, English, French and German.[48] Illustrated with twenty-eight engravings, this work provided both visual information and captions which explained each scene. This report had a wide circulation and the illustrations allowed information about Amerindians to spread among even the illiterate.[49]

In this report, both Hariot and De Bry paid great attention to hair – often the hairs of the head constituted the first description of people pictured. Given the association between hairiness and wildness which Europeans had already established, there was difficulty in aligning images of smooth-skinned natives and the hairy, godless and cruel cannibals which appeared in their mythology.[50] Only one male native was portrayed with facial hair among De Bry's engravings. The caption which accompanied this engraving, entitled "An ageed manne (sic) in his winter garment," (Figure 1) was careful to explain that unlike the older men, young men did not allow any hair to grow upon their faces. However, the author noted that the hairs of both old and young "come up verye thinne." As in all his engravings De Bry took some liberties in his renditions of the subjects featured in White's watercolors. However, like most of his depictions, de Bry's engravings based on the natives that White had portrayed remained true in detail. Instead of changing the individuals, for example, De Bry simply added in backgrounds which

[48] Lorant, *The New World; the First Pictures of America*, 182.

[49] Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 59.

[50] Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, 45.

featured village life, as in the case of the aged man.[51] Several important themes emerged in this early work which later colonists would further carry out in their descriptions of the natives.[52]

Within this caption, Hariot provided several key pieces of information that were important for the English understanding of these unknown people that can be best understood when placed within the European understanding of the beard. First, it was not that the Amerindian males were incapable of growing facial hair, but rather that they eradicated them from their faces when they appeared. Hence, the absence of facial hair was by choice and not biology. Thus, when beards were not displayed in the pictures of a chief lord of Roanoac or a weroan of Virginia, this was understood to be a choice and not due to the environment or physical differences. This information was critical based upon the concerns of English settlers and investors regarding the chances for success in this new land.

De Bry's use of the beard as a sign that was possible among native American inhabitants of Virginia, as hairs did grow but were only not present by choice and manipulations, helped quell initial English fears. One prime worry for English settlers was the effects that the environment might have upon the settlers' bodies. Indian men could be used to prove that those who had endured the longest exposure to the environment had not suffered physical harm and that their bodies could still function as

[51] For both Figures 1 and 2 an enlargement of the Native's face appears directly below to allow for closer examination.

[52] Thomas Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, Rosenwald Collection reprint series (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 52.

those of strong, virile men. This proof, as seen both in their muscular bodies as well as through the manifestation of beards, helped to convince both settlers to immigrate and investors to not fear for the safety of their finances.

Images of Natives with facial hair were important and the lack of hair was understood as a choice rather than due to environmental or biological causes. Hence the beard helped connect Natives to Europeans. According to De Bry and Hariot's early account, the ability for hair to grow upon the faces of Amerindian men helped to elevate them to a specie similar to the European, although somewhat less civilized. De Bry emphasized that it was by choice that young Amerindian men "suffer no hair at all to grow upon their faces."[53] Yet the one male portrayed with facial hair within the work, the aged man in his winter garment, was utilized to convey several of the meanings attributed to the beard within Europe. Although old, the aged man maintained a strong physique evident by the muscle tone in his arm, chest and calves. Despite the fact that nothing about his sexual health could be ascertained from either the engraving or accompanying caption, as he is nearly fully clothed with a skin, the visual image of a strong and seemingly physically powerful male remained. Only when the factor of age appeared did the message of strength and physical ability require an accompanying signifier. While it may have been a custom for only older Amerindian men to allow hair to grow, it served a useful purpose for English colonizers to convey that age did not necessarily correlate with feebleness or loss of sexuality within Amerindian societies around the areas of English settlement. Hence, the environment in the colony could even arguably be healthier than that of England as this old man was still the symbol of masculinity whereas

[53] Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 52.

men his age in England may not have been. Taken to this level, the portrayal of the aged, bearded, man not only quelled English fears of settling in this new land but may have even provided increased encouragement to do so. This association between age, strength, sexuality and facial hair pervaded the texts of early English encounters in Virginia.

The remaining engravings by De Bry displayed a people who were physically strong, yet peaceful. Instead of scenes of war, the focus of the pictures were split between the portrayal of individual native peoples and domestic activities such as the cooking of fish, the manner of dining, dancing, praying, and childrearing. Although very "simple and rude," Hariot contended that he could not "remember, that ever I saw a better or quieter people then they."[54]

To address further fears of potential settlers or investors the peacefulness of Natives needed to be conferred, even when these Natives appeared armed. With two exceptions, the Indian men were portrayed as unarmed, which furthered the lack of a threat that they presented within this author's portrayal. Of the individual portraits only the "weroan or great Lorde of Virginia" was armed. The caption described his bow and quiver of arrows, explaining that he carried these "radie to defend themselves." The caption elaborated that although the Natives carried these weapons into war, they also brought them to solemn feasts and banquets and utilized them to hunt the deer which were abundant in this new world. Hence, the sighting of an Indian thus armed should not immediately indicate that he was ready for battle.[55]

[54] Ibid., 74.

[55] Ibid., 46.

Instead of weapons, it was the manner of painting on their bodies that would indicate if a weroan was going to battle, according to Hariot (Figure 3). Although normally painted in a manner to indicate to which tribe they belonged, as De Bry later illustrated, their bodies were adorned in the most "terrible manner that thei can devise" when a battle was at hand. Therefore, as was displayed in the scene behind the great lord where a group of Amerindian males were engaged in a deer hunt, his bearing of arms was intended only for hunting or self-defense.[56] Hence the only armed, and non-bearded, male-Indian in this work was not presented as a direct threat. The lack of beards among the Natives correlated with their peaceful and non-threatening nature according to the illustrated copy of Hariot's *Report*.

These peaceful and non-threatening natives stood in great contrast to the old savages with whom Englishmen were familiar. The last section of De Bry's illustrated edition of Hariot's report contained pictures of these old savages, included to illustrate that "Inhabitants of the great Bretannie have bin in times past as Sauvage as those of Virginia."[57] These savages were none other than their own ancestors. The inclusion of the Picts within a work on Virginia served many useful purposes. According to Axtell, the inclusion of the Picts served to remind the English that the Indians they were encountering were not culturally inferior to their own ancestors.[58] As Joyce Chaplin and Nicholas Canny also suggested, the English did not view the American frontier as highly

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., 75.

[58] Axtell, *Natives and Newcomers*, 43.

different from the Irish frontier that lay in the recent past.[59] Hence, the future that Englishmen in Virginia were confronting was one with which they had direct and successful experience in the past.

Yet, the pictures served as stronger symbols of the Natives peacefulness than other historians have suggested and a key component that was utilized to convey the image that even the violent savages could and had been overtaken was the beard. These Pict men (Figures 4 and 5) furthered the association between facial hair, a physical threat, and the ability to become civilized in two key ways. Firstly, both Pict men pictured sported not proper beards, but only mustaches. Secondly, the men pictured were armed and a direct risk. This armor was clearly not for use in hunting, but as a clear threat to anyone who should cross his path. For instance, the first male Pict pictured had one severed head lying at his feet and another in his hand, with blood still dripping. In contrast to his mustache the head in his hand and the one lying at his feet were fully bearded, with neatly trimmed styles which displayed a more civilized population.[60] This man not only indicated his propensity to violence through the heads around him, but also with his weapons. Whereas the werowan of Virginia had only a bow and several arrows, the Pict had both a long curved, "Turkie soorde" and a spear that was armed at one end with a point and at the other with a large round ball. Also in contrast to the Virginian

[59] Chaplin, *Subject Matter*, 115 and Nicholas P Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*, Johns Hopkins studies in Atlantic history and culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

[60] Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 76-77.

natives, this Pict carried a shield for protection.[61] The lack of such an item amongst the Amerindians White and De Bry portrayed was further proof that they were not intent upon being a threatening people. The Virginians' weapons were fewer in number and more rudimentary. The lack of items for protection, such as a target or shield reinforced the captions' message that the arrows the natives possessed were only intended for hunting or self-protection. In contrast to the menacing Picts of times past, the Virginian natives appeared tame.

The second man pictured in this section was of a nation neighboring the Picts. This nation also wore "their mustaches, butt the chin wear also shaved as the other before." Also similar to the Picts, this man was heavily armed. He carried the croket sword, a target and a lance that had a round ball at one end. In the background of this portrait were three other men who were similarly armed, displaying that this man was not an exception. Unlike the first Pict, however De Bry's work did not portray this man as negatively; no signs of his murderous tendencies appeared.[62] Though this man represented a diminished direct threat in comparison to the male Pict, he remained more heavily armed than the natives previously featured. This neighboring group was also a relic of the past, indicated by the past-tense wording of the pictures' accompanying descriptions.

By means of comparison, the Amerindians were portrayed as more docile than the previous savages whom the English had encountered and conquered: the Irish and the Scots. Both groups displayed improper facial hair patterns, one by complete eradication

[61] Ibid.

[62] Hariot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 82-83.

and the other by allowing only partial growth. Yet, these smooth faces were superficial as both groups were capable of growing such hair and simply chose to "improperly manipulate" this sign. The English had managed to incorporate into the rubric of English civilization one group who had chosen such an improper manipulation in the past according to the work, providing hope that the Amerindians could be similarly civilized.

Yet, unlike the Scots, the Amerindians who chose to allow their hair to grow illustrated that this hair was much sparser than that of the English. Due the signs of health and virility which a beard conveyed, this inadequate hair demonstrated their inferiority when compared to English civilization, both physically and legally, and hence they were of little threat physically and imperially.

De Bry however never saw the people he was portraying. Instead he relied solely upon both Hariot's written account and the images which White's watercolors provided. Hence, De Bry largely drew off of the European understanding of the beard, unfiltered through any influence of the Natives themselves. Firsthand accounts demonstrated what conceptions Englishmen carried with them upon entering the settlements. George Percy's account indicated that he did not walk into Virginia without clear expectations as to what and whom he would behold. Percy was one of the colonists who survived the first settlement of Jamestown and served as governor of Virginia for several months between 1609 and 1611. Instead, Percy was shocked when he encountered a savage who had a "reasonable bigge beard." Percy elevated this sighting to a "miracle" as he had "never

saw, read, nor heard, any have the like before."[63] All previous reports available to Percy, of undisclosed origins, were that the Amerindians did not have hair on their faces.

The savage whom Percy encountered was distinct in a variety of ways beyond his facial hair. Over one hundred and sixty years old, with sunken eyes and no teeth this man was miraculous in other ways. Namely, Percy found it strange that this native was "as lustie and went as fast as any of us."[64] The observation that this man was lustie could convey several meanings at the time; Percy gave little guidance as to which he intended. It could have been an observation that the man was either well built, arrogant, powerful, vigorous, full of sexual desire, or even cheerful.[65] Given the spelling and time period when this phrase was written, the options of either arrogance or power emerged as the most likely interpretations. Coupled by the following observation that he "went as fast as any of us," the comment would seem to allude that this savage was physically powerful. The sign of the beard in this instance correlated with the messages of strength and vigor that it conveyed in early modern Europe. The sign was so dominant in this encounter that it overrode the physical attributes that displayed signs of weakness, such as the lack of

[63] Philip L Barbour, *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*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society (London: published for the Hakluyt Society [by] Cambridge U.P, 1969), 142.

[64] Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609*, 142.

[65] OED online accessed 11/18/07, http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/cgi/entry/50137091/50137091spg1?single=1&query_type=misspelling&queryword=lustie&first=1&max_to_show=10&hilite=50137091spg1

teeth and sunken eyes, in addition to his great number of years. While one might expect a man of one hundred and sixty years of age to be weak and feeble, this bearded old man was instead able to keep pace with the younger conquerors.

In this instance, Percy not only confirmed that those entering the territories had read, listened and looked for information about what the new people would be like, but also that he had adopted the meanings behind the sign of the beard. Percy's account emerged early in the chronicles of the settlement of Jamestown, as it was written just one year after settlement.

The beards continued importance in the settlement years prior to 1622 can be seen through a variety of means. From dictionaries, proto-anthropological accounts to settler's continued descriptions of those they encounter the beard continued to be manipulated to suit the interests both of the writer and his colony. In these early days while the means of handling Natives was still uncertain the beard served as a means of distinction between the peaceful non-threatening natives and those who were more powerful.

Unlike Hariot and de Bry's careful attempt to clarify that native beards were not absent due to physical differences of the natives, many writers simply noted the absence as fact without questioning why. One who displayed this tendency was William Strachey, who chronicled the founding of Virginia in his work *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*. Estimated to have been commenced in 1609 and published in 1612, Strachey carefully described the natives' appearances and ways of life. In his "true description of the people," Strachey's work briefly proclaimed that "the men have no beards." Although other accounts would detail that it was not that beards would not grow, but rather that

many Amerindian males plucked out any hair, Strachey instead noted the absence as a biological fact. [66]

Strachey's description of these people was a little more critical than other descriptions which viewed the lack of a beard as a choice and not natural. Strachey concluded that these people were "very barbarous."[67] In addition he described the men as very physically able and used to enduring hardships. Strachey mainly typified their character in unfavorable terms. The Natives were, according to Strachey's warning, "Soone moved to anger, and so malitious that they seldom forget an Injury; tey are very thievish, and will as closely as the can convey any thing away from us." Despite the negative depictions, few worries emerged that they would present a threat to the English. As before, Strachey maintained the pattern that the beardless natives possessed many qualities similar to the wild man of Europe's legends. They were not to be feared either sexually or imperially as a threat.

Yet, the lack of beards within the native population did not make them unimportant in Strachey's account. In the appendix of his work, Strachey included a dictionary of the Indian languages to be utilized by those who "shalbe thither ymployed," so that they might know "the readyer how to confer, and how to truck and Trade with the People."[68] Two copies of the appendix exist in two separate copies of the manuscript. Within both of these appendices "beard" was listed among the relatively brief list of

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[66] William Strachey, *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania (1612)*, Works issued by the Hakluyt Society (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1953), xv.

[67] Ibid., 77.

[68] Ibid., 174.

words, consisting of less than one thousand entries in both instances (968 in the first copy). Interestingly, it was listed both under the English to Indian section and the Indian to English – under B's, beard was translated into "Weihsatonowans." However, "Wysotonoans" was translated into English under the W's.[69] Providing both means of accessing the meaning of the word not only would help the English utilize this signifier of difference when talking to the Indians, but also to understand what the Indians meant when they utilized the term. Through this double listing, Strachey illustrated that both sides utilized this word frequently enough to necessitate its listing in both languages. Though the dictionary emphasized words to express parts of the body, including such differentiation as "the Fore-finger," "the long Finger," "the ring Finger" and "the little Finger" these listings were typically only from one language to another, not both. The differentiation of the fingers, for example, was only provided from English to the Native tongue. Hence if one wanted to look up the meaning of "Nummeisutteingwah," or "the Fore-finger" their task would be much more difficult.[70] Such a dual listing was not provided for other terms, further highlighting the use of the beard as a signifier by both sides.

Strachey's dictionary placed an extreme emphasis on physicality. Most parts of the body were generally listed in at least one of the editions of the dictionary. Hence, in order to express the physicality of different groups, those who had access to this work would find it helpful. Notable, however, were the descriptors that were lacking. Although one could differentiate between a beard and the hairs of the head, Strachey offered no

[69] Ibid., 177 and 205.

[70] Ibid., 183.

similar means for distinguishing between differences in skin color. Although white did have an entry, other descriptors which were utilized by settlers to describe the Natives' skin color – red or tawny for example – did not.[71] The emphasis of facial hair over skin color which this dictionary provided aligned with the explorers' and settlers' own emphasis. Skin color isn't absent from these accounts, indeed it appeared in Strachey's own "True Description of the People."[72] However, skin color was not the sole or primary distinguisher within these accounts.

The one encounter with a bearded native Strachey described was also the most in-depth description of any one individual within his chronicles. This depth was not due to the individual's beardedness, but rather this Indian's importance to the history of Virginia. This exception was also the native Strachey considered the most powerful within the Indian societies he encountered, the chief Powhatan. In this portion of his history, Strachey utilized the beard as a sign of power, sexuality and masculinity within an Amerindian society while managing to retain English superiority.

Within his description, Powhatan's facial hair operated as a signifier that unified with the meanings of the beard in Europe. Powhatan was a "great Emperour" who "by reason of his Powerfulnes" ruled over a larger territory than any of his predecessors. Not only was his rule powerful, but Strachey also described his physical condition to be "strong and able" with a "daring spirit." Powhatan, according to Strachey, conquered

[71] Ibid., 206.

[72] See Strachey, 70.

neighboring tribes either through force or because they submitted to his rule in fear and "awe…of his power."[73]

Instead of a full, thick beard which the English would desired as the ultimate sign of authority, manliness and health, Powhatan bore only "some few haires upon his Chynne, and so on his upper lippe." These few hairs were adequate to elevate him above the other, hairless natives, yet sparse enough for the full bearded Europeans to remain firmly entrenched in both a biological and a divine position of man's hierarchy. These few hairs enabled Powhatan to rule over his people, through Strachey's interpretation. Yet Strachey provided indications that Powhatan's rule was not universal. He failed to conquer his neighboring tribe, the Chickahamanias. These "mighty people" not only refused to come under Powhatan's rule but attacked the English as well.

This encounter did not ignore the beard's allusions to sexual health and virility which the beard expressed in Europe. Rather, Strachey's narrative described Powhatan as one who "may have as many women as he will." Strachey estimated that Powhatan had "many more than one hundred" women. His sexual attractiveness was accompanied by virility as he was rumored to have sired, due to his "delight" and "amourous entertainment," some twenty sons and ten daughters.[74]

Interestingly, Powhatan did not utilize the beard as the marker of distinction between himself and the Europeans, according to Strachey's account. While others had utilized the phrase "the bearded ones" to refer to the European conquerors, within this account, Powhatan instead utilized the term "straungers ("Tassantasses"). Yet, these

[73] Ibid., 56-58.

[74] Ibid., 61-62.

strangers were not hopelessly distinct to Powhatan, who later declared that these "strangers," King James and his people, should become one with his people. Hence, within Strachey's account, the bearded savage viewed the English simply as unknown, but not as a different species of humans or gods. For the Amerindian who most similarly resembled the Europeans in facial characteristics, the distinction between the two groups was insignificant. Instead, according to Strachey, Powhatan declared that these two groups "shalbe all one, brothers, and freindes (sic)."[75]

Powhatan's sparse beard also aligned with the minimal English fear of him as Strachey's *History* described. Instead of fearing this mighty werowance, Strachey commented on the strangeness of the native's "great feare and adoration" with which they would "obey this Powhatan." Strachey marveled that at times Powhatan's own people were struck by "awe and sufficient wonder" when encountering their chief. He was particularly perplexed as to how Powhatan managed to convey such majesty given that he was "adorned and set forth with no greater outward ornament and munificence."[76]

Therefore this one native who bore facial hair in Strachey's account, Powhatan, partially lived up to the signs which a beard conveyed. He was the epitome of powerful, virile manhood within his culture. He was the sole bearded male, according to Strachey, and coincidentally was the most powerful; a man most of the other tribes feared. Although his virility was not contrasted to that of other men, women did flock to Powhatan's side. Yet, unlike other native accounts, Powhatan did not utilize facial hair as an indicator of difference between his people and the English. Though Strachey attributed

[75] Ibid., 58.

[76] Ibid., 56 – 62.

many powers to this chief, he remained careful to indicate that Powhatan's beard was inferior to those of the English, which paralleled to his inferior rule.

Strachey was not alone in commenting on Powhatan's pathetic excuse for a beard however. In *Of the Natural Inhabitants of Virginia*, John Smith also provided a physical description of the chief. Smith's description began in a complementary tone as he referred to Powhatan as tall and well proportioned. Focus, however, quickly shifted to his head, which Smith described as somewhat gray, and then to the beard which was "so thinne that it seemeth none at al."[77] Harkening back to De Bry's one bearded aged man, Smith then quickly segued into the chief's age. Yet, like De Bry's aged man in a winter garment, Smith was quick to note that this sparsely bearded and aged body was still "very able and hardy" and could "endure any labour."[78] Although Smith's description varied wildly in details from Strachey's, Smith did follow the established pattern regarding bearded natives. As in Percy's account, it was an unexpected feature and hence constituted one part of a very brief physical description. Like Hariot and De Bry's work, the one bearded individual in this group was also a man of some age. Smith continued his description by detailing how Powhatan was ordinarily accompanied by a guard of about forty to fifty of the tallest men. This accompanying detail decreased the threat that this chief provided. Instead of being a fierce warrior who was able to defend himself he

[77] John Smith and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.), *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631)*, vol. 1, (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va. by the University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 173.

[78] Ibid.

required a full time accompaniment of the most physically intimidating men. Both Strachey and Smith therefore utilized the beard as a sign of power, even within Indian societies. Yet these accounts diminished and questioned Powhatan's rule, just as they critiqued his wimpy beard.

Although Powhatan displayed many of the attributes a beard conveyed in early modern Europe, he failed to fully live up to its meaning just as he failed to grow a proper beard. Throughout early contact accounts – from Hariot and De Bry to Strachey the lack of a beard was often correlated with the lack of a threat while manifesting Powhatan's role of power within Native society. Though Strachey briefly mentioned the cruel punishments that Powhatan employed on not only his people but also an English settler, a lack of fear was present throughout his account. In the earliest of accounts – from the English's first permanent settlements, mention of the beard occurred with some regularity. These accounts all latched onto the meanings beards represented in Europe of power, sexuality, masculinity and health in order to diminish the threat that smooth-faced natives provided. Hence their settlements proved to be less of a risk for both prospective settlers and investors. These early promoters of the English settlements manipulated the messages of the beard into serving their own self interests and those of their colony.

In *Man Transformed*, John Buwler's account of worldwide physical variations written in 1653, Buwler both described and illustrated the "Naturall Inhabitants of *Virginia*". Buwler noted that his information came from Captain Smith's *History of Virginia*. These inhabitants "weare halfe their Beards shaven, the other halfe long." In lieu of brass wire "pluckers," they instead allowed their women to operate as their

barbers who "with two shells will grate away the haire of any fashion they please."[79] The accompanying illustration displayed that this hair removal applied only to facial hair and that the hairs of the head were permitted to remain long and intact. For Englishmen and Europeans familiar with utilizing hairstyles to identify occupation, status and regional background combined with a similar mandate in their recent past for occupational purposes, they might recognize this hairstyle in a variety of fashions. The half-beards provided proof that the natural inhabitants of Virginia were physically capable of growing beards, but they instead chose to eradicate these hairs. The style in which those chose to do so may have signified a practical purpose similar to that of Emperor Leo's mandate and made hunting less complicated. Such a style could have proven either familiar or threatening to English readers. Compared to other descriptions in Buwler's work, these half-beards were neutrally conveyed. Unlike the natives of Florida or Mexico, who eradicated their beards out of vanity, Buwler gave no reason for the modifications made by the natural inhabitants of Virginia. Other groups who chose to alter their faces to remain beardless Buwler described as "Barbarians," and these same people feared those who did wear beards.[80] In contrast to others within the American continent and other heathen lands, the natives of Virginia did not manipulate their beards as improperly as others. However they still failed to manifest the proper understanding of this sign.

[79] J[ohn] B[uwler], *Anthropometamorphosis: man transform'd: or, the artificiall changling historically presented,* 2nd ed. (London: William Hunt, 1653), 201.

[80] Ibid., 201-205.

The natural inhabitants of Virginia were not the only ones who demonstrated a possible improper understanding of the signs available to them. Buwler himself appeared to have taken some liberties in the information he was conveying. Buwler noted on the side of his illustration that his information regarding these inhabitants came from "Capt. Smiths *Hist. of* Virginia." Found within Smith's *Of the Natural Inhabitants of Virginia* was the matching description –with the exception of one key detail. Smith described these people as varying in size, although most were "generally tall and straigt, of a comely proportion." Yet Smith's description of the natives' faces varied greatly from Buwler's. In Smith's account "few have any beards." Instead of half-shaved, as Buwler recounted, Smith stated that they "weare half their heads shaven, the other halfe long." Unlike Buwler, Smith seemed to indicate that it was the hairs of the head, not the face, which were partly shaven off. Smith's account differed from Buwler's in other key ways as well. Whereas Buwler's account remained a neutral depiction, Smith continued to provide a summary of this people's character. "Inconstant in everie thing", "all Savage" and "craftie" were these people.[81] Quick to anger and slow to forget wrongs, they however seldom stole from one another. Buwler ignored this part of the description, a choice that he did not make for other groups. Given Buwler's assumption that half the head shaven implied the face and not the hairs of the head, this could have led him to also ignore the negative qualities which Smith's cited. Buwler's emphasis upon the beard revealed its importance into the mid-seventeenth century as a physical distinguisher. Significantly, the account which detailed that the natives did grow beards, if somewhat

[81] Smith and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.), *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631)*, 160.

improperly, remained neutral whereas the one which depicted the natives as generally beardless offered a negative account of their character was a pattern which was manifested in other physical and character based descriptions.

Although Buwler's account was not published until 1653, it is important to note that in this instance his cited source was written decades prior to that time. As such, Buwler remains neutral in his remarks. Yet, he lacks the kindness which other writers granted to the Natives he described. Buwler's neutral account stands in great contrast to the previous works such as Hariot's report which highly praised Natives. In between these accounts events in Virginia altered the Englishmen's views of the Amerindians and as a result the beard was discarded as a useless signifier of difference.

After 1622, colonists' views towards natives changed drastically, coinciding with massacres and rebellions. From this date forward, according to Dudley and Novak, the Indians' culture was of little consideration to the English. Abusive language increased in English descriptions of Natives and more often negative images accompanying words such as "brutish," "deformed," and "beastly" appeared with greater frequency.[82] About this time the mention of beards, either among natives that possessed them or their general absence, largely disappeared from travel narratives and ethnographies.

One such example of this increased negativity occurred within the travel narrative of John Lederer, who traveled into the interior of Virginia and the Carolinas between 1669 and 1670. Lederer described the native men he met in his travels as "effeminate and

[82] Dudley, *The Wild Man Within; an Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, 71.

lazie."[83] For some colonists, both earlier and later, the lack of beards implied the lack of proper gender divisions in native societies. A letter from an unknown settler, sent in the early summer of 1607 from Jamestown also effeminized his Indian contacts. "The wemen are like the men," the writer proclaimed, with the only difference being that the women allowed their hair to grow long over all their heads while the men only had long hair on the left side of their head.[84] The lack of a beard often correlated the Indian male to the female. When settlers made these equivalents the Indians were typically not described in a way that would be a threat, but rather as a peaceful people. Though this unattributed letter and Lederer's work expressed similar views - namely that the lack of physical characteristics which separated men from women equated with a lack of separate gender roles - the later account by Lederer was much more negative. The early letter focused on the physical similarities whereas Lederer utilized the physical similarities to convey a negative character for the entire Native population.

Writers who did not view Indian men as a formidable threat often correlated them with their women. The demarcation of genders was a sign of civility amongst Indian tribes. The degree to which a civilization was considered civilized for the English, depended on their recognition of gender differences, their adherence to a hierarchy based upon these differences and their use of visible signs to outwardly display these differences according to Kupperman.[85] Such an insistence on the maintenance and

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[83] John Lederer, *The Discoveries of John Lederer*, March of America facsimile series (Ann Arbor [Mich.]: University Microfilms, 1966), 18.

[84] Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609*, 102-103.

[85]Kupperman, *Indians and English*, 18.

display of gendered divisions, according to her work, were of heightened importance due to English fears of the degeneracy in their own society of these distinctions. With men dressing too elegantly and women in a manner that was too masculine, the beard could serve as one clear outward sign of gender division. The earlier letter, however, elevated women within native societies and downplayed the threat which the men posed. Although Lederer's account later sought to fulfill the same diminishment of a threat, it did so by degrading the native men.

Lederer's account was not alone in such a switch, though his example is one of the feminization of Indians and the increased negative views after 1622. After this date beards fall out of all accounts of Natives while the derogatory views continue to mount. Even amongst those who earlier praised the Natives for certain virtues showed a drastic change. For example John Smith in his works changed his descriptions of the native to being "treacherous and rebellious Infidels" and that the English should copy the Spanish model and make slaves of the Natives.[86]

[86] Smith, *Travels and Works,* II, 579.

Chapter Three

Conclusion

Although Europeans and Amerindians frequently mentioned and portrayed the beard in the early settlement accounts it quickly fell out of favor as the sign of difference between the two groups. This decline coincided with the changing views of the natives and the permanence of the settlement. Though by no means securely guaranteed, English presence in Virginia was on much firmer ground by 1622, when the beard quickly disappeared from English descriptions of the natives. The messages which beardless natives conveyed proved to be wrong. People who would massacre a settlement were clearly a threat. The hope of reforming natives to a civilized people according to the English ways became dim. As a sign, the beard proved to be too malleable once these views changed. Just as beards could be put on or taken off in the theater, the ability of natives to put on this sign by allowing hair to grow diminished the differences between them and the English.

Instead, a more permanent and ostensibly more fixed sign was needed and developed. Initially, the same narratives that described the bearded natives alluded to their skin color. These accounts typically related that Amerindians were born white but acquired their tawny or red color due to their mother's alterations.[87] As skin color slowly

[87] See Smith and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.), *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580-1631),* 160 for a recounting of how this

became the emblem of difference, the English views of the natural color of the skin also changed.

Additionally, the changing messages of the beard in early Virginia would have long ranging impacts. Initially, the possibility for beards served as a common thread between the English and Natives. Hope for their conversion to civilized citizens could be visibly seen on the faces of their men who simply needed the proper training through practices such as proper facial hair cultivation. These Natives were not a large threat to the English and did not significantly differ from them. However as Natives proved to be resistant to such acculturation and worse proved that they were a formidable threat, objectives quickly changed in Virginia as did the views of the natives. The positive associations with the natives' facial hair disappeared, and the lack of a beard became a sign that Natives were lower on the rungs of humanity than the English. As Winthrop Jordan noted in *White over Black* in many ways Indians were more like Negroes than like Englishmen. In addition to the list which Jordan provided: complexion, religion, nationality, savagery, bestiality or geographical location, both Natives and Africans shared a common hairlessness, or near hairlessness, of the face.[88] Hence, the changing

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alteration occurred quickly after birth and Barbour, *The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606-1609*, 130 for another account of how the native's color was due to paint they applied for protection from mosquitoes in the summer, and as an extra layer of warmth in the winter.

[88]Winthrop D Jordan and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.), *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 89.

messages of the beard may have affected more than one population within early Virginia. As race relations, particularly in regard to slavery, took on a unique character in Virginia and the Carolinas looking into the lack of a beard as a further sign of debasement for slaves might prove interesting. As racialist logic did not become fully established until the mid-eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, other factors could have compounded the Africans plight for equality. Perhaps having already made the association between beardless Natives being a debased species eased the way for Virginians, and other European inhabitants throughout the colonies, to later make a similar leap with Africans. Although certainly not solely responsible, the beard may have been yet another quality which eased the transition to slavery based on skin color to emerge.

The use of facial characteristics as a determination of character was not solely restricted to the beard. Instead, the characteristics that both sides considered important changed over time. Though the beard was one element of fifteenth and sixteenth century physiognomy, the practice of using characteristics, especially those of the face, as a racial division would strongly reappear in late eighteenth and nineteenth century science. Perhaps best known among the practices of physiognomy was phrenology, a belief that thirty-seven components of human behavior could be assessed through a careful analysis of head size and the strength of features.[89] Like the beard which was a sign of both

[89] Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 208-210.

physical attributes and behavioral characteristics, phrenology developed means of proving that women and non-whites were inferior as proven by their bodies.[90]

For many, the question of the development of racial thought has been haunting. Edmund Morgan provided a succinct summary of one question which has long gone unanswered; that regarding the development of racial hatred in Virginia. As Morgan noted both xenophobia and national consciousness could have lead to the development of racial consciousness, but something more always seemed to be behind the story as well.[91] Although only a small portion, I believe that the use of the beard helps us gain one piece of the puzzle of racial development and degradation in early Virginia. For early settlers, who had arguably not fully developed an idea of Natives as a racial other, at least not solely based upon skin color as race may now be understood, the beard or lack thereof conveyed messages that could be either comforting or frightening. At the very least it was demonstrable of otherness.

Ultimately, the discourse of the beard and its application within early Virginian contacts coincided with the slow and non-linear development of racial thought. Though many have studied how Indians became "red", historians have given less attention to what came before such a division. Prior to the racial thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries separations of groups remained physical. These separations, like the

[90] For more on the gendered divisions of nineteenth-century science, including phrenology see Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[91]Edmund Sears Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*, Norton pbk. ed. (New York: Norton, 1995), 130.

beard, could be manipulated to suit the message one wanted to portray. Ironically, the beard was utilized as a signifier of similarity and difference, often simultaneously. As some, such as De Bry, suggested, the beardless natives were not so different from the English's own ancestors. As most accounts detailed, the beard was absent only by choice and hence could be grown, just as these accounts provided hope to Englishmen engaged in these colonial ventures that the beardless natives could choose to become civilized peoples. As these hopes diminished, and natives proved to be less than willing subjects, another less alterable division was necessitated.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Figures

Figure 1: “An Ageed Manne in his Winter Garment”

Close-Up of Figure 1

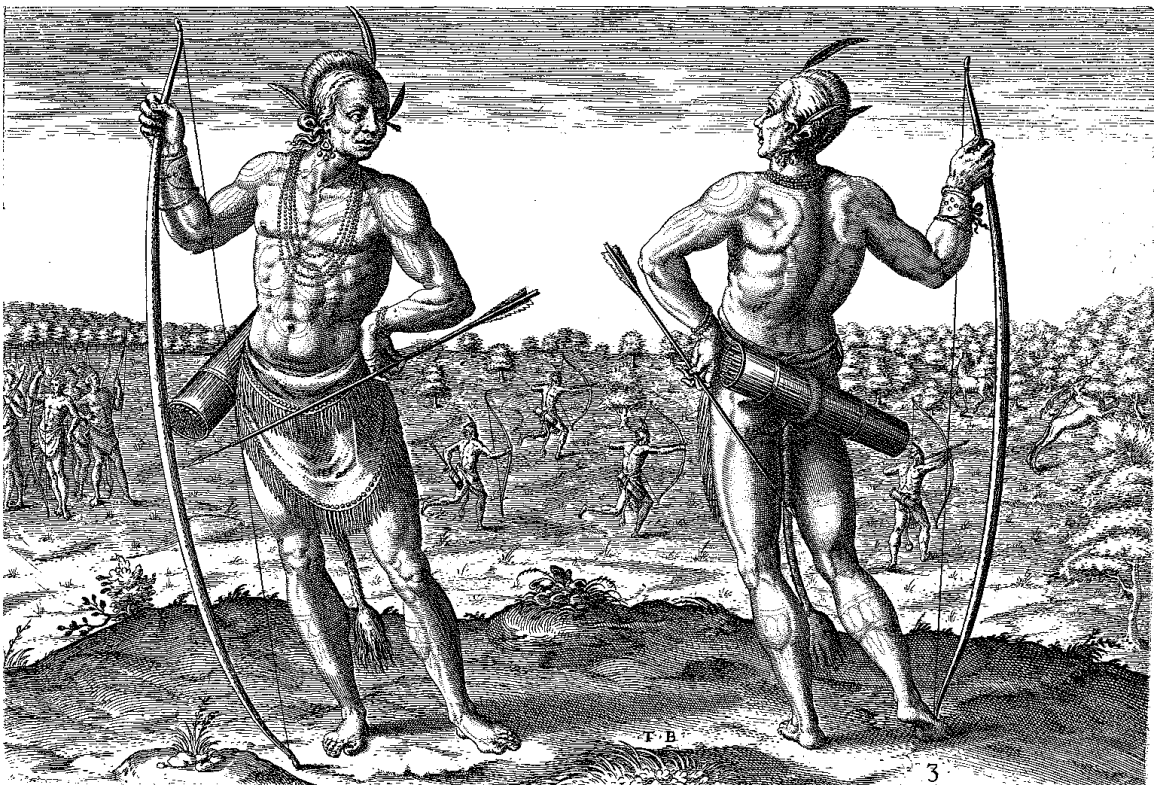


Figure 2: “A Werwoan or Great Lord of Virginia”

Close-up Image of Figure 2

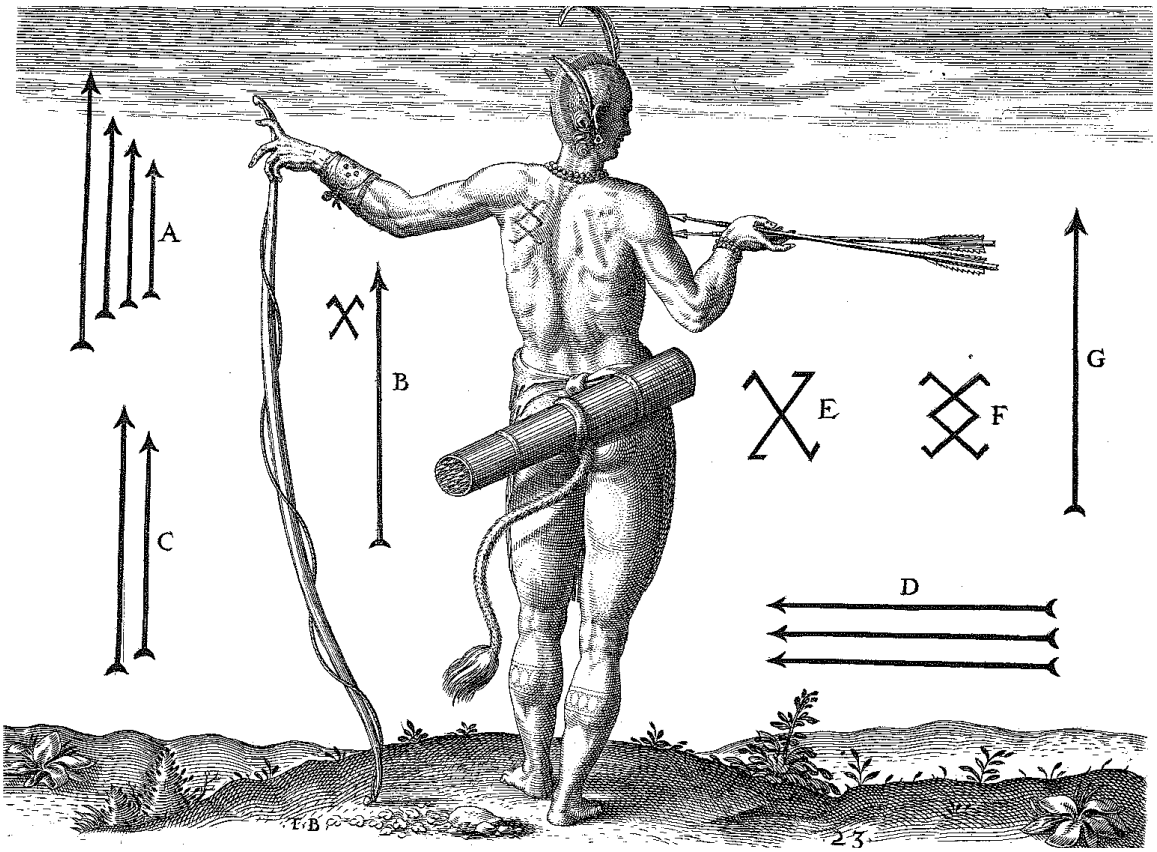


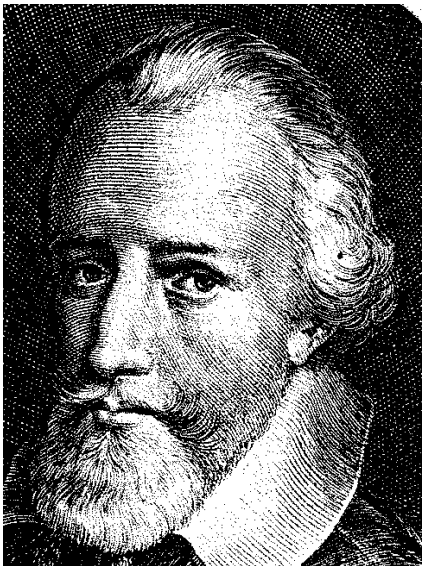
Figure 3: “The Marckyes of Sundrye of the Chief mene of Virginia”

Figure 4: “The true picture of one: Picte I”

Figure 5:“The true picture of a man of nation neighbor unto the Pict”

Figure 6: The Explorers and Settlers

Thomas Hariot



Sir Richard Greenville

Sir Walter Raleigh

Sir John Smith