Preface and acknowledgements

Europe encounters America. Clothed and armed Europe encounters naked America. Jan van der Straet’s remarkable engraving (Figure 1) epitomizes a meeting whose narrative European discourse has repeated over and over to itself ever since the end of the fifteenth century. Columbus and the cannibals, Prospero and Caliban, John Smith and Pocahontas, Robinson Crusoe and Friday, Inkle and Yarico: this book is structured by these five versions of the encounter between Europe and that primordial part of America, the Caribbean. It studies the structure of these narratives, addresses the significance of their repetitions, and attempts to contextualize them within the broader paradigm of colonial discourse. But repetitions are never identical, and the five versions also trace wistfully the story of an encounter between Europe and the native Caribbean that lasted 303 years, beginning with Columbus’ landing on Guanahani on 12 October 1492 and effectively ending with the deportation of the Black Caribs from St Vincent on 11 March 1797.

The mass of the book must therefore be considered historical, but it is not written by a historian and it deals with an area about which there has been little historical writing in the general understanding of the term. Two of the book’s chapters also discuss texts usually considered as significant works of literature here, while by no means read as historical documents in any simple sense, their status as ‘literary’ texts is put into suspension. This allows them to be seen as moments in a developing discourse which was attempting, in a variety of ways, to manage Europe’s
understanding of its colonial relationships with native Caribbean societies. In summary form, then, this is the book's project and terrain. Two points however should already be apparent. The chapters of the book stand on tall as textual analyses: they deal penetratingly, perhaps obsessively, with narrative structures, tropes, phrases, even single words, in the belief that these can be revealed as sites of political struggle. Yet the texts analysed and the matters raised, although all related to my particular definition of the Caribbean, range widely across the conventional boundaries of disciplinary practices. This disregard for disciplinary limits has made me especially dependent on both published scholarship and the help and advice of friends. So I must acknowledge as fully as possible the assistance I have received in writing this book.

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I have learned from two years from responses to seminars and lectures given on the topics of this book at the Universities of York and East Anglia: University College, Cardif, the Institute of Latin American Studies, London; the Museum of Mankind; the Université d'Alger; two Centre for Social History conferences in Oxford; and two Sociology of Literature conferences at Essex. In particular, presenting this material on the Sociology of Literature MA at Essex has acted as a constant reminder that teaching is the most effective test for ideas developed in the solitude of research. Some of the material in Chapters 1, 3 and 4 first appeared in,

respectively, the Euro-Americanisches Archiv, and the two sets of Essex Conference proceedings entitled 1662: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century and European, edited by John Drakakis (London, 1983). Full details of all four are given in the bibliography.

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Particular intellectual debts are referred to in the notes, but I want here to acknowledge the pervasive influence of a number of writers. The model of textual analysis employed owes much to the works of Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey and Fredric Jameson. Edward Said's Orientism helped clarify my thoughts about the discourse of colonization. And I am indebted to four great Caribbean scholars, Carl Ortwin Sauer, Gordon W. Lewis, José Juan Arroyo and Roberto Fernández Estévez. This book was conceived and developed within the framework of the School of Comparative Studies at the University of Essex and owes its existence to that comparative ideal, whose light still illuminates some dark days. I have received help and support from too many friends to list them individually, but I would like to mention - from Essex and elsewhere - Dawn Ates, Catherine Behery, Homi Bhabha, John Drakakis, Robert Clark, Valerie Fraser, Richard Gaty, Charles Guthick, Terence Hawkes, Margaret Iversen, Elaine John, David Misselwhite and Jonathan White. All have helped even more than they knew.

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Introduction

Language is the perfect instrument of empire
(Bishop of Avila to Queen Isabella of Castile, 1492)²

Jan van der Straet's engraving (Figure 1) will stand more reading as an emblem of this book's themes. In a variety of ways the 'discovery of America' has been inscribed as a beginning. It is the first of the great 'discoveries' that form the cornerstones of the conventional narrative of European history over the last five centuries: America is, typically, the 'New World' or later the 'Virgin Land'. The temporal adverbs of van der Straet's motto carry the same message: 'semel ... inde semper ...' (once ... from then always ...). Yet this very insistence on the novelty of the 'New World' evidences an anxiety, some of whose manifestations are charted in the chapters that follow. Put in its simplest terms that anxiety concerns the relationship between European, native and land - what is called in Chapter 5 the classic colonial triangle. The engraving figures a strategy of condensation: 'America', the single allegorical character, combines the terms 'native' and 'land' to create an identity that dissimulates the existence of any relationship at all between the two at the moment of their encounter with Europe. The gesture of 'discovery' is at the same time a ruse of concealment. That the gesture, which is always also a ruse, should then be repeated over a period of three centuries, giving a series of narratives of the 'first' encounter between European and native Caribbean, provides the
particular formulation of that colonial anxiety which is the subject of this analysis.

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The general area within which this study operates could then be named colonial discourse, meaning by that term an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships, an ensemble that could combine the most formidably bureaucratic of official documents—say the Capitulations issued by the Catholic Monarchs to Christopher Columbus early in 1492—with the most non-functional and unpretentious of romantic novels—say Shirley Graham’s The Story of Foschamonts. Underlying the idea of colonial discourse, in other words, is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were produced for Europe through a discourse that imbedded sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery, normally separated out into the discrete areas of military strategy, political order, social reform, imaginative literature, personal memoir and so on. But, as a case study, this book operates on a particular geographical and ideological terrain within that general area, which is to say that there is no presumption that the key tropes and narratives analysed here would play a central role within colonial discourse in general. For one thing, not sufficient work has been done to support such generalizations.

To say geographical and ideological terrain is to register two particular possibilities. One is that a central division within colonial discourse separates the discursive practices which relate to occupied territory where the native population has been, or is to be, dispossessed of its land by whatever means, from those pertaining to territory where the colonial form is based primarily on the control of trade, whether or not accomplished through or accompanied by a colonial administration. America and India can exemplify very roughly this division. The other possibility concerns a discursive divide between those native peoples perceived as being in some sense ‘civilized’ and those not, the indices of such ‘civilization’ being a different times and in different circumstances stone buildings or literacy or an ancient heritage. It is clear that Christianity never formulated a classification corresponding to the Islamic distinction between ‘people of the book’ and pagans proper, and equally true that the indices were often destroyed or explained away or both. But this proved difficult where the buildings or language were themselves claimed as part of a European or Christian heritage; as in Greece and the Holy Land, and later India. Such a claim hardly prevented the deployment of the language of ‘savagery’ but it did attenuate it, whereas in America that language was hosed into the sharpest instrument of enquiry. This gives a trope whose various lineaments the following chapters will be concerned to trace: the topic of land is dissimulated by the topic of savagery, thus moving being characteristic of all narratives of the colonial encounter.

Discursively the Caribbean is a special place, partly because of its primacy in the encounters between Europe and America, civilization and savagery, and partly because it has been seen as the location, physically and etymologically, of the practice that, more than any other, is the mark of unregulated savagery—cannibalism, ‘Caribbism’—and it will, until satisfactorily made sense of, be told in those invented contexts is the special, perhaps even defining, feature of the discourse of colonialism as it pertained to the native Caribbean. As such it will play a special part in all the chapters here, particularly the first, since the word itself comes to us via Columbus’s log-book and letter, and the third, where ‘canal’—the contemporary English spelling—makes an anagrammatic appearance on the Jacobean stage as Caliban.

Caliban’s struggle against Prospero in The Tempest is one moment of a larger discursive conflict in which a Mediterranean discourse is constantly stretched by the novelty of an Atlantic world. Time and again these Caribbean texts are set against or have introduced into them the terms of reference of a classical or Biblical text, and time and again those Mediterranean reference points are rejected or turned back against themselves. That conflict, visible again in van der Straat’s engraving, will be a constant theme in what follows.

Since place and territory are crucial matters in the book it should be made clear that by ‘the Caribbean’ is meant not the somewhat vague politico-geographic region now referred to by that term, but rather what Immanuel Wallerstein calls ‘the
than astronomically, as, say, the most suitable area for growing the 'tropical' crops of cotton, tobacco and sugar, or it is the belt of American coastline that lay within range of that other and equally frightening characteristic phenomenon, the hurricanes.

The area could also be viewed as a discursive entity, given the resemblances amongst the narrative and rhetorical strategies found within the relevant Spanish, Portuguese and English texts—resemblance that outweigh, or at least weigh equally with, those found between texts in the same language dealing with areas in the same sphere of interest, say Virginia and New England or Hispanic and Mexico.

Equally important (and the three definitions obviously interconnect) was the area where, broadly speaking, the native population was replaced by slaves brought from Africa. In other words the extended Caribbean is essentially an historical entity, one that came into being in the sixteenth century and that has slowly disappeared. However, it is worth remembering both that English colonial policy in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still had the Caribbean as its focus—as shown by the priorities of the Treaty of Paris (1763); and that the area's major socioeconomic feature, the plantation, produced a transnational legacy whose effects are still palpable.

Figure 2. The extended Caribbean showing many of the places referred to in this book.

extended Caribb-ean, a coastal and insular region that stretched from what is now southern Virginia in the USA to the most easterly part of Brazil (see Figure 2). Textually this region incorporates at its northern boundary John Smith's 'rescue' by Pocahontas (near Jamestown) and at its southern boundary Robinson Crusoe's plantation (near Baha). As an entity its logic clearly owes nothing to subsequent political boundaries nor even to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century national spheres of interest. Instead it emphasizes those features, environmental and ideological, that lay beyond national differences. The Caribbean is then the tropical belt defined ecologically or meteorologically, rather than

What follows is, then, a case study rather than a theoretical work on the subject of colonial discourse. Nevertheless, several theoretical questions demand explicit, if brief, mention. This book has been produced within a generally Marxist framework. Such a statement is not made in order to foreclose theoretical problems, but the political impetus behind the book does have particular consequences. For one thing it means that the colonial discourse studied here cannot remain as a set of merely linguistic and rhetorical features, but must be related to its function within a broader set of socioeconomic and political practices. It must be read, that is to say, as an ideology.

But to use the word ideology is inevitably to introduce a whole series of epistemological issues that have underlain much of the recent debate about the nature, or indeed possibility, of Marx
That, in brief, is the political context which places the study of this area of colonial discourse on the agenda. And equally it is within this political context that the answers - no doubt, but inevitably, provisional answers - to theoretical and epistemological problems must be sought.

To return then to the question of ideology. Much of the recent sophistication of the concept of ideology, associated with the names of Gramsci and Althusser, is in any case irrelevant in the present context because we are dealing not with a consummated model of the social formation in which ideology can be seen as fully pervasive, autonomous (of social and civil life itself), but rather with a model of division in which ideology is a discourse whose mode is largely textual in the narrow sense of whose address is largely internal, towards that group in society most directly concerned with colonial masters. The only notable exception, the requerimento - promulgated, in Spanish, at a safe distance (sometimes of many miles) from its addresses - only proves the point. In other words, if the notion of ideology employed here seems less nuanced than that, say, of hegemony, the crudeness of some of the early colonial manoeuvres, discursive and otherwise, needs recalling.

A further argument would address more directly Foucault's point about 'virtual opposition'. Truth has another conventional opposite-fiction. Indeed the post-structuralist argument must conclude that all statements are in a certain sense fictitious, no matter what particular form of words can on epistemological grounds alone, claim access to reality superior to any other form of words. This is useful so long as it is taken as a starting point rather than as the last word. What should follow is a careful examination of the claims and assumptions implicit within different statements, an examination which would involve attention to such elements as genre, rhetoric, pragmatics and so on; a politics of discourse. Only then could it be seen that matters of verification - seemingly made irrelevant by the universality of 'fiction' as a discursive mode - return in a minor key where a statement claims veracity. These somewhat abstract issues take on considerable importance in the colonial context since certain of the particular discourses involved - narrative history, historical linguistics, ethnography - stand or fall by their truth claims. It is therefore in the first instance politically rather than epistemologically important to retain the
prerogative to undertake their claims; and ideological analysis remains an essential tool for Marxism because it enables us to say not just that a particular statement is false, but also that its falsity has a wider significance in the justification of existing power relations. This does not, pue Foucault, provide a term in virtual opposition to a transcendent Truth as ultimate guarantor and arbiter. Its aim is a small scale and relative and provisional truth, one that acknowledges the naiveté of any supposedly direct access to reality but claims an explanatory superiority over its rival versions, particularly since it includes within its analysis an explanation of why those rival claims might appear plausible. This whole procedure, practiced so effectively by Marx in his readings of classical political economy, is known as critique. Its aims and methods will be adopted in the readings that follow.

A radical history presenting a new version of the past will usually draw on new sources, even though those sources might well be 'new' only in the sense that the dominant version had repressed them by never even considering them as sources. Within this mood of radical history there are then two interdependent but separable moments: first, a critique of existing versions, partly dependent upon, second, the presentation of alternative and contradictory evidence. This model has its anti-colonial equivalent in the rediscovery of native sources that offer a different and revealing light on colonial events and issues. None of this is as simple as it sounds, but it is relatively straightforward when compared with a situation in which there are virtually no alternative sources at all; a state of affairs brought about partly by our inability to read such documents as do survive from the native Caribbean, and partly by the devastating speed and scale of the destruction of its societies in the period following 1492. The only evidence that remains, in other words, are the very European texts that constitute the discourse of colonialism. The Europeans, engraved by van der Straet is appropriately enough not Columbus but Aytorteguesparciow, the first European to stand on the shores of the continent previously unknown to Europe but the first European to give that land a name, a European name, his own, feminized. Such a cosmologic encounter can only masquerade as a dialogue: it leaves no room for alternative voices. In this instance, therefore, the burden of the radical task necessarily falls upon the protocols of procedure. Procedures, the first aspect of critique concerns the choice of texts. The focus on colonial beginnings and the geographical restriction to an extended Caribbean, the texts that have largely chose themselves. Others could no doubt be added, but the aim is a detailed study of representative texts rather than any attempt at coverage of the whole area.

Even so, the five European stories are very different kinds of text, or at least texts that are equally seen as genetically distinct. One point needs careful marking in this connection. It is probably not accidental that two of the texts considered here (The Tonton and Robin Hood's Cruise) are 'literary' inasmuch as they have become essential parts of English Literature in its current form. To focus on these texts is therefore in one sense to introduce into a singular discourse a rhetorical plurality or heteroglossia that might be seen to compensate for the absence of critical periphrasis noted above. But there should be no suggestion that such 'literary' texts, qua 'literary', produce any normal dismantling of the crisis of the supposedly pure ideological texts. A different perspective operates here: that while all the texts have their generic particularities that require careful attention — log-book, play, historical memoir, novel, anecdote, in mention only the major texts — no intrinsic discursive significance reaches to their current classification as 'literary' or otherwise. Even within current conventions that borderline would almost inevitably draw down the curtain. The colonist's log-book has been read as 'literature'; Smith's account of his rescue has sometimes been seen as a fictional embellishment to his history of Virginia; Yarico begins her career embedded in an anecdote in a biographical/historical memoir and is transmitted by means of an 'essay' to the whole gamut of 'literary' genres. It may be significant that answers to pressing ideological problems should be sought through account to largely imaginative narratives — and obviously inevitable that this could be the case once the original historical circumstances had been lost so long behind — but it is still essential, and therefore the first line of approach here, that colonial discourse operates certain strategies and tropes that can be seen at work in texts whose superficial differences
according to current classifications—might appear very striking. This is another way of saying that questions of texture and rhetoric will be central.

Differences of emphasis inevitably occur between chapters simply because some parts of the material are much better known than others. Familiarity has been presumed in the cases of The Tempest and Robinson Crusoe (Chapters 3 and 5) but not with Coleridge's Journal (Chapter 1) or John Smith's account of Pocahontas (Chapter 4). The contemporary and equally unknown ways between England and the native Caribs of St Vincent (Chapter 6).

6

Forty years ago, in The Idea of History, R.G. Collingwood developed an analogy between the historian and the natural scientist.

As natural science finds its proper method when the scientist, in Bacon's metaphor, puts Nature to the question, torture her by experiment in order to wring from her answers to his own questions, so history finds its proper method when the historian puts his authority in the witness-box, and by cross-questioning extracts from them information which in their original statements they have withheld, either because they did not wish to give it or because they did not possess it.

The analogy may not work, but its failure is revealing. Collingwood offers three densely woven figures: Bacon's analogy between the procedures of natural science and the inquisitorial method; his own analogy between the procedures of history and the adversary method; and a comparsion ('as ... so ...') between natural science and history which is tightened into an analogy by the simile of phrasing ('wring ... extracts ...'). But even if we let Bacon's extraordinary metaphor for the protocols of natural science stand, it should be apparent that history lacks not only an experimental method that would 'torture' its authorities, but even (and perhaps especially) a representational method that would give those authorities a voice with which to answer the historian's questions. Within the terms of Collingwood's figure, historical documents, put to the question or cross-examined, will always tell the same story. Word for word. What is interesting about the paragraph is that its dual metaphorical structure veils the internal contradiction: in other words the statement embodies a restraint, its own point about what can be hidden within original statements. Collingwood's expression is flawed, one might say, because it is working against the grain of language, that far-from-neutral medium. Seeking to escape the traps of positivism and empiricism he is driven up against the ideological limits of a language that always encodes knowledge in terms of consciousness.

Frederick Jameson, confronting the same problem, takes a surprisingly open resuscitative line: the poet, 'like Tiresias drinking the blood, a momentarily returned to life and warmth and allowed once more to speak, and to deliver his long-forgotten message in surroundings utterly alien to it'; only to recognize that, in practice, the Tiresian message yields considerable piecing together.

It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrogated narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.

So the historian here is some kind of picture-reconstructor, scraping off excrescences to reveal the fundamental history' that lies beneath—although of course texts no more have 'depth' (and therefore 'surface') than they have 'voice'. It is not difficult to 'detect' beneath the 'surface' of Jameson's text the repressed operation of a model in which the revealed narrative of class-struggle is so well known in advance that the picture-recovering is devoid of any suspense. But, as in Collingwood's case, the residual model resists itself only by dint of the power of linguistic inertia, here to be foiled at the last by the fine oxyymoron of a 'political unconscious'.

The point of this dual introduction is to show how difficult it is to develop the kind of critical vocabulary necessary for textual interrogation. Jameson's 'political unconscious' is important because, drawing on Althusser and Macherey, it recognizes that Freudian theory offers the one model of reading.
we have that can claim to make a text speak more than it knows. Within psychanalysis that speaking is again dependent upon a 'cross-questioning' of the subject (the knowing unconscious rather than the knowing text), so 'the textual unconscious' is just one more metaphor, but it is the one wagered on here: hence the vocabulary of symptom, trace, the unconscious and so on, torn from their mythic context to bolster the scandal of putting texts to the question.2

In particular, following Macherey’s deployment of the Freudian model, the chapters of this book will work to identify key locations in a text — traces, to extend a conventional term — where the text stutters in its articulation, and which can therefore be used as levers to open out the ideology of colonial discourse, to spread it out, in this text, in an act of explanation. The venture, it should be said, is archaeological: no smooth history emerges, but rather a series of fragments which, read specularly, hint at a story that can never be fully recovered.

1

Columbus and the cannibals

[Some seafarers had arrived who had gobbled in funny old talk because they made the word for sea feminine and not masculine, they called canoes poll parrots, canoes rifles, harpoons javelins, and when they saw us going out to greet them and swim around their ships they climbed up onto the yardarms and shouted to each other look there how well-formed, of handsome body and fine face, and thick-haired and almost the horns of a ram, and when they saw that we were painted so as not to get sunburned they got all messed like wet little parrots and shouted back there how they draped themselves gray, and they are the hue of many birds, not white nor yet black, and that there be of them, and we didn’t understand why the hell they were making so much fun of us since we were just as normal as the fay our mothers bore us and on the other hand they were all decked out like the jack of clubs in all that heat . . . and we loaded everything we had for these red Indians and these strips of glass beads that we hung around our necks to please them, and also the brass bells that can’t be worth more than a penny and for chokers and eye-glasses . . . but the trouble was that among the I’ll swap you this for that and that for the other a wild motherfucking trade got up and after a while everybody was swapping his parrots, his tobacco, his wads of chocolate, his eggs, everything God ever created, because they took and gave everything willingly, and they even wanted to trade a velvet doublet for one of us so show off in Europe land.3]
alternative, 'anthropology'. Both words exist in English as nouns describing 'the practice of eating the flesh of one's fellow-creatures', to quote the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s entry on 'cannibalism', but both words once existed as proper nouns referring to whole nations who were to be characterized by their adherence to such a practice. So, originally, rather than 'cannibalism' or 'anthropology', 'Cannibals' and 'Anthropophagi'! But the histories of the two words are very different. 'Anthropophagi' is, in its original Greek, a formation made up of two pre-existing words ('eater' of human beings) and bestowed by the Greeks on a nation presumed to live beyond the Black Sea. Exactly the opposite applies to 'Cannibals', which was a non-European name used to refer to an existing people—a group of Caribs in the Antilles. Through the connotation made between that people and the practice of eating the flesh of their fellow-creatures, the name 'Cannibal' passed into Spanish (and thence to the other European languages) with that implication welder indissolubly to it. Gradually 'cannibal' = 'eater of human flesh' became distinguished from 'Carib = native of the Antilles', a process only completed (in English) by the coming of the general term 'cannibalism', for which the first OED entry is dated 1796—a date that will gather resonance in the final chapter of this book.

One of the ways in which ideologies work is by passing off partial accounts as the whole story. They often achieve this by representing their partiality as what can be taken for granted, 'common sense', 'the natural', even 'reality itself'. This in turn often involves a covering of tracks: if something is to appear as simply 'the case' then its origin in historical contingency must be repressed. Generally speaking this repression can take two forms: the denial of history, of which the most common version is the argument to nature, or the historicized ab jure, in which a story of origins is told. The power of the second form is that it usually offers a true story, in the restricted but powerful sense of true as 'not false'. It might indeed offer several true stories but these would never be in conflict because they would be isolated from one another in separate compartments, often called 'disciplines'. Here the most pertinent disciplines are ethnography and historical linguistics, and it is the latter that seems to have provided what will look, at least for a while, like a real beginning, the first encounter.
The primary OED definition of 'cannibal' reads: 'A man (esp. a savage) that eats human flesh; a man-eater, an anthropophagist. Originally proper name of the man-eating Caribs of the Antilles.' The morphology or, to use the OED's word, form-history of 'cannibal' is rather more ecosenssive. The main part of its entry reads:

'(In 16th c. pl. Canibales, s. Sp. Canibales, originally one of the forms of the ethnic name Carib or Canibales, a fierce nation of the West Indies, who are recorded to have been anthropophagi, and from whom the name was subsequently extended as a descriptive term ...)

This is a 'true' account of the morphology of the word 'cannibal' in English, yet it is also an ideological account that functions to express important historical questions about the use of the term - its discursive morphology, perhaps, rather than its linguistic morphology. The trace of that repression is the phrase 'who are recorded to have been', which hides beneath its blandness - the passive term, the absence (in a book of authorities) of any ultimate authority, the assumption of impartial and accurate observation - a different history altogether.

The case of who 'are recorded to have been' suggests a sixteenth-century ethnographer sitting in the shade with notebook and pencil, calmly recording the savage rituals being performed in front of him. However unacceptable that might now seem as 'objective reporting', it still appears a model of simplicity compared with the complexities of the passages that constitute the record in this instance.

On 23 November 1493 Columbus approached an island 'which there Indians whom he had with him called "Bohio"'. According to Columbus's Journal these Indians, usually referred to as Arawaks, said that this land was very extensive and that in it were people who had one eye in the forehead, and others whom they called 'canibales'. Of these last, they showed great fear, and when they saw that this course was being taken, they were speechless, he says, because these people ate these and because they are very warlike. (168–9) In their speech they said: if you eat such a large fish, it was in the sea the one that is before you, and others that se llamaban cañibales, a quien mostrabat tenia gran miedo. Y des que vieron, que lleva este canino, dicen que se podian hablar porque los comían y que se gana muy armada. (4)

This is the first appearance of the word 'canibales' in a European text, and it is linked immediately with the practice of eating human flesh. The Journal is, therefore, in some sense at least, a 'beginning text'.

But is just what sense is that noun and that adverb a 'record' of anything? For a start the actual text on which we presume Columbus to have inscribed that same description, along with its only known copy, is the middle of the sixteenth century. The only version we have, and from which the above quotation is taken, is a handwritten abridgment made by Bartolomé de las Casas, probably in 1542, and probably from the copy of Columbus's original then held in the monastery of San Pablo in Seville. There have subsequently been various transcriptions of Las Casas's manuscript. So the apparent transparency of who 'are recorded to have been' is quickly made opaque by the thickening layers of language: a transcription of an excerpt of a copy of a lost original. This is shattering, but to some extent contingent. More selling is what might be called the internal opacity of the statement. Columbus's 'record', far from being an observation that those people called 'canibales' ate other people, is a report of other people's words: moreover, words spoken in a language of which he had no prior knowledge and, at best, six weeks' practice in trying to understand.

Around this passage clutters a whole host of ethnographic and linguistic questions, some of which return in the next chapter. But the general argument here will be that, though important, these questions take second place to the textual and discursive questions. What first needs examination, in other words, are not isolated passages taken as evidence for this or that, but rather the larger units of text and discourse, without which no meaning would be possible at all.
To write about the text we call 'el diario de Colón' (Columbus's journal) is to take a leap of faith, to presume that the transcription of the manuscript of the copy of the original stands in some kind of meaningful relationship to the historical reality of Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic and down through the Caribbean islands during the winter months of 1492-3.

It would be somewhat remarkable if there were no such relationships exist, but credulous and unthinking to speak — as some have done — of the Journal's 'frank words, genuine and unadorned.' Circumstantial evidence would certainly seem called for. Yet if the Journal is seen not as a privileged eye-witness document of the discovery, nor as an accurate ethnographic record, but rather as the first fable of European beginnings in America, then its complex textual history and slightly dubious status become less important that the incredible narrative it unfolds.

This is not an argument in favour of somehow limiting Columbus and his Journal out of history. Just the opposite in fact, and gradually, throughout this chapter, the Journal's context will be inscribed on to the text. But it is an argument in favour of bracketing particular questions of historical accuracy and reliability in order to see the text whole, to gauge the structure of its narrative, and to chart the interplay of its linguistic registers and rhetorical modalities. To read the Journal in this way is also to defer the biographical question: the Columbus of whom we speak is for the moment a rhetorical function, the 'I' of the Journal who is occasionally, and scandalously, transformed into the third person by the intervention of the stenographer's 'Y.'

The Journal is a formally peculiar text. It is in part a log-book, and throughout records the navigational details of Columbus's voyage. Commentators have usually accepted that it was written up about every evening of the six-and-a-half-month journey, not revised or rewritten, and not constructed with a view to publication. It certainly gives that impression, which is all that matters here. Columbus is presented by the Journal as responding day by day to the stimuli of new challenges and problems. Yet if its generic shape is nautical the Journal is also by turns a personal memoir, an ethnographic notebook, and a compendium of European fantasies about the Orient: a veritable panopticon.

From whom the name was subsequently extended as a descriptive term. Linguistic morphology is concerned only with the connection made between the term 'cannibal' and the practice of eating human flesh. We have seen how the first mention of that term in an European text is glossed with reference to that practice; and for the linguist it is satisfactory, but not of intrinsic interest, to note how that reference is almost, neither implicitly nor explicitly, in any recorded use of the word 'cannibal' from Columbus's on 25 November 1492 onwards. It was adopted into the 'yossen' of the European family of languages with a speed and readiness which suggests that there had always been an empty place kept warm for it. Poor 'anthropophagy,' if not exactly orphaned, was sent out into the cold until finding belated lodging in the nineteenth century within new disciplines seeking authority from the deployment of classical terminology.

All of which makes it even stranger that the context of that beginning passage immediately puts the situation between the word 'cannibal' and the eating of human flesh into doubt. Las Casas continues:

The admiral says that he well believes that there is something in this, but that since they were well armed, they could not be an insensible people [ignorantes], and he believed that they might have captured some men and that, because they did not return to their own land, they would say that they were eaten. (J 69)

This passage is of no interest to linguistic morphology since Columbus's perception failed to catch this upon the history of the word. Ethnographically it would provide a case of SECONDARY DEFINITION, showing how Columbus's initial septicism, and therefore making 'am a more credible witness' in the end. Even from the point of view of a teasing ethnography that wanted to discount suggestions of native anthropophagy the passage could only be seen as evidence of the momentary voice of European reason so soon to be reaffirmed by the persistence of Arawak deformations of their traditional enemy. Attention to the interpretative complexities of the text will suggest a different reading.

The great paradox of Columbus's Journal is that although the voyage of 1492-3 was to have such a devastating and long-lasting
effect on both Europe and America, and it is still celebrated as one of the greatest achievements of humanism, the record itself tells of misunderstandings, failures and disappointments. The greatest of these — that he had not reached Asia — was too overwhelming for Columbus ever to accept. The minor ones are in some ways even more telling.

According to the account given by the Journal the Spaniards arrived with a whole series of objectives and expectations, and pined their native hours with questions. For the most part, Columbus gives the impression of fairly straightforward communication with the natives, but this was hardly the case. The Spanish ships carried only one interpreter, Luis de Torres, specially chosen because he spoke Hebrew, Aramaic and some Arabic; so there is no reason to think that there was any initial communication at all. The natives presumably remained baffled, not gave (largely by way of signs) what seemed to be the right answers to expedite their visitors — pointing enthusiastic index fingers at the horizon; the Spaniards, pleased to find that whatever they had asked about was so near, thought they were understanding each other famously. On 13 December, three months after the first landfall, Columbus admits: 'Every day we understand these Indians better and they too, although many times there has been misunderstanding' (1/3). This is not about credible, even if there is little subsequent indication of improved communication in the months that follow. From October to December (the months at issue here) there is no evidence and no reason to suppose that what Columbus presented as a dialogue between European and native was other than a European monologue. Las Casas has a marginal note by one of the exerts under consideration (23 November 1492), commenting on Columbus's misunderstanding of the word 'bobo' (in fact 'house') as the name of an island: 'this shows how little he understood them!' And yet the monologue is, in no sense simple or homogeneous: Columbus's initial expectation is to be explained not as the flickering light of European reason, but rather as the result of a discursive conflict internal to that European monologue itself.

In brief, what a symptomatic reading of the Journal reveals is the presence of two distinct discursive networks. To bold outline each discourse can be identified by the presence of key words: in one case 'gold', 'Cathay', 'Grand Khan', 'intelligent soldiers', 'large buildings', 'merchants'; in the other 'gold', 'savagery', 'monotony', 'anthropophagy'. Even more boldly, each discourse can be traced to a single textual origin, Marco Polo and Herodotus respectively. More circumspectly, there is what might be called a discourse of Oriental civilization and a discourse of savagery, both archives of topics and motifs that can be traced back to the classical period. It is tempting to say that the first was based on empirical knowledge and the second on psychic projection, but that would be a false dichotomy. There was no doubt a material reality — the trade that had taken place between Europe and the Far East over many centuries, if not millennia. In pursuit of, or as an outcome of, this trade there were Europeans who travelled to the Far East, but their words are in no way a simple reflection of 'what they saw'. For that reason it is better to speak of identifiable discourses. There was a panoply of words and phrases used to speak about the Orient: most concerned its wealth and power, as well they might since Europe had for many years been sending east large amounts of gold and silver. Marco Polo's account was the best-known deployment of these topics. The discourse of savagery had in fact changed little since Herodotus's 'investigation' of Greece's 'barbarian' neighbours. The location moved but the description of Amazon, Anthropophagi and Cynocephali remained constant throughout Ceuta, Plyno, Solimans and many others. This discourse was hegemonic in the sense that it provided a popular vocabulary for constituting 'others' and was not dependent on textual reproduction; textual authority was however available to Columbus in Pierre d'Ailly and Atanas Sylvis, and instead in the text that we know as 'Marco Polo', but which is properly Divisament du Monde, authored by a writer of Romanins in French, and itself already an unrepeatable discursive network.

To the early weeks of the Columbian voyage it is possible to see a certain jockeying for positions between these two discourses, but no overt conflict. The relationship between them is expressed as that between present and future: this is a world of savagery, over there we will find Cathay. But there are two potential sites of conflict, one conscious — in the sense of being present in the text, the other unconscious — in the sense that it is present only in its absence and must be reconstructed from the traces it leaves. The conscious conflict is that two elements, 'the soldiers of the Grand...
Khan' from the discourse of Marco Polo and 'the man-eating savages' from the discourse of Herodotus, are competing for a single signifier - the word 'cannibals.' Columbus's hesitancy on 21 November belongs to a larger pattern of references in which 'cannibals' is consistently glossed by his native host as 'man-eater' while it ineluctably calls to his mind '0 Gran Can.' In various entries the phonemes echo each other from several lines' distance until on 11 December they finally coincide:

It appears likely that they arearrassed by an intelligence race, all these islands living in great fear of those of Canis. And so I repeat what I have said on other occasions, he says, the Canis are nothing else than the people of the Grand Khan (see Canis no es otra cosa sino la gente del Gran Can), who must be very near here and possess ships, and they must come to take them captive, and as the prisoners do not return, they believe that they have been eaten. (J 92–3)

The two 'Can' are identified as one, the crucial identification is backdated, and 'cannibal' as man-eater now simply disappear having no reference to attest itself to.

Except of course that it does not disappear at all. That would be too easy. In fact the assertion of the identity of 'Canis' with 'gente del Can,' so far from marking the victory of the Oriental discourse, signals in very defeat; as if the crucial phonemic evidence could only be brought to textual presence once its power to control action had faded. To understand this it will be necessary to look back in some detail at the course of Columbus's voyage through the Caribbean (see Figure 4).

Gold was not simply the one element common to both the Oriental discourse and the discourse of savagery, it was in each case the pivotal term around which the others clustered. Oriental gold and savage gold would prove to be very different animals but in the early weeks of the voyage they happily share the single signifier which guided Columbus like a magnet through the bewildering archipelago of the Bahaman islands:

Figure 4 Columbus's route through the Caribbean, 1492–3.

Monday, October 15th . . . These islands are very green and fertile and the breezes are very soft, and it is possible that there are in them many things of which I do not know, because I did not wish to delay in finding gold, by discovering and going around many islands. (J 30)

Thursday, October 22rd . . . I did not delay longer here . . . since I see that there is no gold mine . . . I say that it is not right to delay, but to go on our way and to discover much land, until a very profitable land is reached. (J 42)

Gold was the object of desire but 'gold' could be articulated by both discourses. What is more, at this stage both discourses pointed...
in the same direction. According to the medieval geography of Oriental discourse the coastline of Cathay ran from NNW to SSW, and the large island of Cipangu (Japan) lay to its north-east a cluster of smaller islands (see Figure 3). So the initial landfall on Guanahani was not problematic; it was clearly one of these smaller islands. A course south-west would take him to Cipangu or, if he missed Cipangu, to the coast of Cathay. As it happened the native fingers pointed south-west too, no doubt for their own reasons, but serving to barrest the traditional link between the source of gold and the tropics:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST. From this hour, which the admiral says that he experienced there, he argued that in these Indies and there where he was, there must be much gold. (J 68)

On 21 October Columbus first heard of Cuba:

I wish to leave for another very large island, which I believe must be Cipangu, according to the signs which these Indians whom I have met make; they call it 'Colba'. They say that there are ships and many very good sailors there... But I am still determined to proceed to the mainland and to the city of Quinsay and to give the letters of Your Highnesses to the Grand Khan, and to request a reply and return with it (J 41)

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The determination is still to go beyond the island to the mainland. They steered west-south-west and reached Cuba on 28 October:

The Indians said that in that island there are gold mines and pearls; the admiral saw that the place was suited for these. And the admiral understood that the ships of the Grand Khan come there, and they are large; and that from there to the mainland it is ten days' journey. (J 46)

Columbus immediately sets off north-west up the Cuban coast, but his geographical notions quickly lose their assurance (see Figure 6). This is not one of the smaller islands but neither, evidently, is it the rich and civilized island of Cipangu:

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30TH... After having gone fifteen leagues, the Indians who were in the caravel Pinta said that behind that cape there was a river, and that from the river to Cuba it was four days' journey. The captain of the Pinta said he understood that the Cuba was a city, and that land was a very extensive
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beyond the cape. The ambassadors are primed in all seriousness and dispatched. Columbus takes his latitude again, this time with a quadrant, and again comes out with a2° north. He then spends four days waiting for the embassy to return, trying all the while to communicate with the natives:

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH... The admiral showed to some Indians of that place cinnamon and pepper - I suppose some of that which he had brought from Cattier as a specimen - and they recognized it, as he says, and indicated by signs that there was much of it near there, towards the south-east. He showed them gold and pearls, and certain old men replied that in a place which they called 'Bosph' there was a vast amount, and that they wore it round the neck and on the ears and legs, and also pears. He further understood that they said that there were large ships and merchandise, and that all this was to the south-east. He also understood that far from there were men with one eye, and others with dogs' noses who ate men, and that when they took a man, they cut off his head and drank his blood and castrated his bits. The admiral determined not to return to the ship to await the two men whom he had sent, intending himself to go in search of those lands if they did not bring some good news of things they sought. (J 52)15

The following night (November 5th) the men returning having found no Oriental city. Columbus relates this story and then makes a statement. Las Casas, catching the portentous tone, quotes the words directly:

'They are,' says the admiral, 'a people very free from wickedness and unfaithful; they are all naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them. It is true that the women wear only a piece of cotton, large enough to cover their privy parts and no more, and they are of very good appearance, and are not very black, less so than those of the Caribes. I hold, most serene Princes, the admiral says here, that having devout religious persons, knowing their language, they would all at once become Christians, and so I hope in our Lord that Your Highnesses will take action in this matter with great diligence, in order to turn to the Church such great peoples and to convert them, as you have destroyed those who would not confess the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and after

mainland which stretched far to the north, and that the king of that land was at war with the Grand Khan... The admiral resolved to go to that river and send a present to the king of that land, and send him the letter of the Sovereign... and he says that he must attempt to go to the Grand Khan, for he thought that he was in the neighbourhood, or to the city of Cubay, which belongs to the Grand Khan, which, as he says, is very large, as he was told before he set out from Spain. (J 40)

The refusal of the Caribbean islands to conform to 'Oriental' expectations is by now becoming embarrassingly evident. Yet Martin Alonso Pinzón's interpretation of his guide's remarks offends a way out. It Cuba is a city then this must be the mainland and Qaiusay not too far to the north (given that it supposedly has the same latitude as the Canaries). There then follows an extraordinary series of events, which will be given in outline before being dissected in detail:

Columbus begin by saying, quite reasonably since he now imagines himself to be on the mainland, 'that he must attempt to go to the Grand Khan'; yet in the same sentence he announces that he is 42° north of the Equator, an evidently hectoring assessment of his position. The next day he makes one desperate effort to sail north-west:

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31ST All night, Tuesday, he says, he was becalmed, and he saw a river where he could not enter because the mouth was shallow... And navigating farther on, he found a cape which justly very far out and was surrounded by shallows, and he saw an inlet or bay, where small vessels might enter, and he could not make it, because the wind had shifted due north and all the coast ran north-north-west and south-east. Another cape which he saw jutted still farther out. For this reason and because the sky showed that it would blow hard, he had to return to the Rio de Maraes. (J 49)

The next day he帖子 around on shore but announces firmly that this is the mainland, and that I am,' he says, 'before Taiton and Quaqay, a hundred leagues, a little more or less, distant from one and another'" (J 51). Amazingly, the next day, rather than sailing north-west again, he sends his embassy inland. Cuba, he had discovered after all, was only four days' inland from the river, but not this river (Rio de Maraes), rather the one north-west
a hundred leagues. Coastline, wind, and current all led west. A purely local change of coast to the north was construed into a continuing change of direction. The passage of cool northern air for several days he interpreted as the arrival of winter cold, although he wrote at the same time about his delight in the tropical verdure. A brief change in wind became the adversity of head winds out of the north.14

The written dispatch of the embassy into the Cuban interior has also provoked much comment. Las Casas speculated that when Columbus produced a gold object the natives pronounced the word 'Cubanacán' (mid-Cuba) — a district where a limited quantity of gold existed — and pointed up river to the interior; Columbus, of course, immediately connected Cubanacán with 'El Gran Can'.15 Alternatively, Morisco suggests that the natives 'simply mistook the Spaniards' dumb-show of imperial majesty for a desire to meet their captors'. In the event Luis de Torres was entranced with the Latin passport, the Latin letter of credence from Ferdinand and Isabella, and a royal gift. As the Arabic speaker of the expedition he was supposed to make direct contact with the Grand Khan. All of this proved superfluous. The party travelled 25 miles up the valley of the Cocoyugun where they found, not even a walled city, let alone Qumayr (Hanguow), at that time the biggest city in the world, but a village of filthy houses. They were treated with deference but saw no signs of the civilization they expected. But the most interesting (and most problematic) piece of evidence concerns Columbus's ridiculously inaccurate assessment of his position. Las Casas was clearly sceptical when reporting the 5 October reading: 'In the opinion of the admiral, he was distant from the equinoctial line four or two degrees to the north, if the text from which I have copied this is not corrupt' (§46); but the figure is twice confirmed: on 2 November when Columbus takes the latitudes with a quadrant, and on 21 November, by which time an element of doubt has crept in ('it was . . . his opinion that he was not so far distant' (§69)). Puerto Cabello, on the estuary of Columbus's Rio de Mares, is in fact 21° 50' south. Having plotted a course due west from the Canaries and then sailed south-west through the Bahamas, Columbus must have known that he could not have been more than 25° or 30° south even allowing for some

In six days an absolute determination to sail north-west has been transformed into an equally absolute determination on the part of the rest of the crew to sail south-east to seek for gold and spices and to discover lands.13

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When I came to Jua [Cuba], I followed its coast to the westward, and I found it to be so extensive that I thought it must be the mainland, the province of Cadiz. And since there were neither towns nor villages on the seashore, but small hamlets only, with the people of which I could not have speech because they all fled immediately, I went forward on the same course, thinking that I could not fail to find great cities or towns. At the end of many leagues, seeing that there was no change and that the coast was bearing me northward, which I wished to avoid, since winter was already approaching and I proposed to make从 the to the south, and as, moreover, the wind was carrying me forward, I determined not to wait for a change in the weather and retraced my path as far as a remarkable barrow known to me. [194–22]

It should be noted that 'many leagues' was in fact two days' sailing, and that the rest of the Lavour is almost totally devoid of navigational detail. Carl Sauer points out the illogical nature of Columbus's reversal:

Columbus made too many excuses for not continuing to the land of the Cocos Khan, whose seaports lay at ten days' sail or at

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your days, for we are all mortal, you will leave your realms in a most tranquil state and free from heresy and wickedness, and you will be well received before the eternal Creator, Whom may it please to give you long life and great increase of many kingdoms and lordships, and the will and inclination to spread the holy Christianity, as you have done up to this time. Amen. Today I refitted the ship and I am preparing to set sail on Thursday in the name of God, and to go to the south-east to seek for gold and spices and to discover lands.' [137]
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In simple terms the traces mark the defeat of the Oriental discourse as the articulating principle of the Journal. Until 29 October 1492 Columbus had, at least to his own satisfaction, been able to get positive answers to his Marco Polo-based questions to operate that interpretative grid. More to the point, the directions indicated by Marco Polo coincided with those both Columbus's received notions and native pointed toward gold. On the coast of Cuba Columbus immediately, without hesitation and without comment, sailed north-west before, in the flurry of explorations, strange manoeuvres and nonsensical assessments of position, changing direction. The basic point, at Sauer recognized, is that when the terrain made a south-westly course no longer possible and forced a choice between north-west and south-east, Columbus chose south-east because he was more likely to find gold in that direction, not of course the gold of Cashay, but exploitable stores of 'savage gold'. This was not just a difficult decision, it was one that could not be brought to textual consciousness, for to do so would have been to admit that the whole discursive structure of the Columbusian enterprise had been in vain. As a result the text has so be studded with convincing reasons for the decision to sail south-east but, like Freud's example of the neighbour who fails to return the borrowed kite, Columbus gives just too many. The metareferential points are adequately covered by Sauer's comment: they enable the text to suggest that moving northwards in winter (or the coast of Cuba) might be unwise, but they need firm support. This is provided by the unconsciously deliberate mis-taking of Affrak for Polaris.

In this light the embassy can be seen not so much as a genuine attempt to locate an Oriental court as Columbus furnishing himself with a decisive piece of emiprical proof as to the absence of Oriental courts. Nobody had even suggested there were any inland from the Río de Marés — the earlier news had been of a city inland from a more westerly river; there was no reason at all for supposing there were any large cities to be found. But by creating the sense of expectation and therefore subsequent disappointment the text can proceed, as it were, a screenscreen behind which the direction of Columbus's departure will not seem of significance. In other words the embassy was sent with such excessive solemnity in order that it return a failure. The incident is given
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extensive coverage in the Journal. The Letter can afford to be

I sent two men inland to learn if there were a king or great
cities. They travelled three days' journey, finding an infinity of
small hamlets and people without number, but nothing of
importance. For this reason they returned. (J 192)

The departure of the embassy creates a space of four days that
prove to be the still centre of the Journal. The relentless forward
momentum of the enterprise is halted. Time is almost suspended.
There are the pages of the Journal richest in description of the
natural world. It is the first European idyll in the tropics.
Teaually, too, a space has been opened up into which the
Herodotean discourse can unfold itself, particularly (since this is
what concerns us most here) in darker side, because it is while the
embassy is away, while, as it were, the Oriental discourse is
occupied elsewhere, that we stand for the first time of 'men with
one eye, and others with dog's noses who eat men' (J 52):
deployment of the standard Mediterranean terminology.

Again it is no accident that at the end of this idyll (in fact as a
way of announcing the end of it) Columbus presents his most
important policy statement so far, quoted in direct speech by Las
Casas. It begins as an argument for the natural goodness of the
American natives ("very free from wickedness and unwhitkle ...
asked . . . not very blackly") trusts that Ferdinand and Isabella will
be well received by their Creator for having converted so many
captives (trying to salvage at least something from the goddess
and spiltless and Khanless monks since the last landfall; pray for the
life and empire of their sovereigns; and only then can say what the
last four days and unnumberable words have been building up to:

Today I reflected the ship and I am preparing to set out on
Thursday in the name of God, and so go to the south-east to
seek for gold and spices and to discover land. (J 57)

These words were written on Tuesday 6 November. The entry
ends on a note of unparalleled barbous:

All these are the words of the admiral, who thought to set out on
the Thursday, but, as he had a contrary wind, he was not
able to set out until the twelfth day of November. (J 57)

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So much for the coast of the northerly winds of winter. There are
no more entries at all until the wind changes.

6

During this period of stasis on the coast of Cuba the Ojibwal
discourse is displaced as the articulating principle of the
Columbian text by the Herodotean discourse of savagery. The
first-reaching nature of this displacement, evident only in the
texual upheaval, is disguised to some extent by the continuity
apparently given by the signifier common (and indeed prototypical)
to both discourses 'gold'. But the shift can in the end be charted
by the gradual displacement of the synonymous of Oriental gold by
those of savage gold. In October Columbus was hearing of "a
king who had large vessels of it and possessed much gold" (J 26),
of "very large golden bracelets on the legs and arms" (J 29), and
of 'bracelets on their arms and on their legs, and in their ears and
noses and around their necks' (J 30). After October this becomes
natives digging gold (J 58), or sieving and smelting it (J 107), or
collecting grains as large as lentils (J 142), or larger than grains of
wheat (J 140), or larger than beans (J 140). (One can note a
displacement concern with sustenance in the language.) As a result
Quinamay is no longer mentioned as a destination; the Grand Khan
and his merchant ships make occasional appearances still, but only
at moments where there is no danger of empirical contradiction.
Displaced as an articulating discourse, Oriental terminology
remains only as vestigial.

The shift in the dominiant signified of 'gold' is, it should be
emphasized, determinate. One of its effects is to determine the
outcome of the struggle over the signifier 'canibal', but an
immediate resolution could hardly be expected in so fraught a
text. The glossing of 'canbail' as 'soldier of the Khan' figures a
rearguard but essentially diversiory action (3 November), and
the phonetic equivalence, its most powerful weapon though not
brought into play until 11 December, is in essence a Pahlan show,
gesture as empty as the Cuban embassy. There is nothing now
to prevent the 'cannibals assuming their role as manoeuvring
savages. On 16 December, just fifteen days after the supposedly
'decisive' phonetic conversion, Columbus promises the destruc-
tion of the 'people of Casuba' without it now appearing worthy of mention that they may be the soldiers of a civilized potentate.

7

This then, in considerable but necessary detail, is the discursive morphology of the word 'casubal', demonstrating just how it becomes attached to that meaning of 'man-eating savage', a process which, although in constant response to the events of Columbus' voyage through the Caribbean islands and to his intercourse with their native inhabitants, has nothing at all to do with simple observation or record. The 'historical principles' of the Oxford English Dictionary serve here to occlude history.

But this kind of 'intertextual' analysis can never be purely formal or autonomous in the sense of being generated solely by the level of the textual operations that are laid bare. Any political reading must interpret the narrower textual conflict in terms of larger politico-narrative units - must see it, in Medvedev's word, as an ideologically, whose significance only becomes apparent in the larger context. But neither does this imply giving explanatory priority to this broader level. The interplay should be dialectical.

For particular purposes the focus here has been fixedly on the 'level of vocabulary'; but out of the wider issues must also be broached, since it will prove to be a theme of some importance in almost all the succeeding chapters. Over the last five centuries many of the intellectual and political debates about America have centered on the question of how to approach its 'novelty': whether the categories of the Old World are sufficient to contain the New World within them, or whether that novelty needs recognizing by the formulation of 'new', more appropriate categories. Similar debates have taken place within natural history, archaeology, political theory and many other areas, always haunted by the impossibility of inventing purely 'new' categories, and by the radical difficulties in understanding the indigenous American categories on their own terms.

Within the terrain of colonial discourse the problems have always been slightly different to the extent that novelty, as will be seen in Chapter 3, has always played a limited and very particular role, while the main thrust has always been toward America to the established norms of the Old World. This tendency has several aspects of which the legal was probably the most crucial since it was obviously important that America should be subjugated under the jus gentium used to establish European rights to possession of land. Imaginatively, too, it was probably understandable that points of comparison and contact should be sought with the experience of the Old World, but here the relevant discourses have tended to be those which already dealt with worlds other than Europe. As the European nations, especially England, took on their imperial roles, the classical world of the Mediterranean grew in importance as a repository of the images and analogies by which those nations could represent to themselves their colonial activities. Much, as we will see in Chapter 6, turned on an unlikely comparison between St. Vincent and Carthage. The court party in The Tempest and Robinson Crusoe both follow - or are taken on - triangular courses, from Europe to Africa to America, as if in part to facilitate this discursive transference this will help manage the fearful novelty of the New World.

Of course this Mediterranean discourse (conjoining the classical and the Biblical) had not stood still since classical times; even though, since one of its purposes is to stereotype otherwise, the discourse does not often have an openly historical dimension. The threat from Islam was obviously a factor, although it does not impinge significantly on the story here. And we have already seen how the classical image of the Orient was, though not constructed, given a significant new input of detail and imagery by the western travellers who had taken advantage of the Tartar peace (1241–1369).

The large historical irony, though, whose consequences Columbus never escaped, was that however fantastic the etymologies of colonial discourse, however wonderful the riches of Cathay, however much, in a word, we read these discourses as telling more of the collective fantasies of Europe than of the cultures of the Nubians, the Scythians or the Tartars, the products of the Far East did reach Europe; the spice trade was material evidence that could not be gainsaid.

For centuries Genoa and Venice had been competing in the import of Oriental products. The routes from the East were long
and-difficult, the midlent men. During the Tarter peace the prospect was opened, briefly but tantalizingly, of a more direct commerce that would lower prices and raise profits. A Genoese expedition had attempted the western circumnavigation at early as 1393.27 The fall of Constantinople (1453) and tight Turkish control of the Middle Eastern trade routes made that task more vital. Columbus himself was deeply implicated in the Genoese commercial network. Cipolla calls him quite simply the 'agent of Genoese capital'; his chief supporters and financial backers were certainly Genoese.28 But this search was - as a commercial enterprise - doomed to failure. For one thing it was based on a profound ignorance of Asia - no one in Europe knew that the Mongols had been expelled from China by the Ming dynasty in 1368. For another, European supplies of gold, the traditional payment for eastern spices, had been almost exhausted.22 China had always scorned even the best European merchandise; Columbus with a ship full of cheap taubles was hardly likely to make much impression on Chinese entrepreneurs. It was obvious, at least in retrospect, that Europe needed either sufficient arms to force an entry into Eastern trade, or an alternative source of gold to ensure the continuity of the traditional exchange. Portugal managed for a while to follow both these options at the same time, diverting at least part of the ancient trans-Saharan gold trade away from the North African coast towards the Lower Guinea coast, while forcing a violent entry into the East Indies spice trade.29 Spain, having had to forswear a share of the African trade, had little option but to pursue the western route, either, as the Genoese wanted, to find a direct sea route to Asia, or, as the Castilian potentates suggested, to follow through the acquisition of land and natural resources in the Atlantic, after all medieval geography populated the ocean Sea with plenty of land, some of it gold-bearing.30

The discoveries which conflict within the text of the Journal are therefore irrevocable, and not fairly comprehensible apart from the same commercial concerns. Oriental discourse was the only available language in which the project of Genoese commerce could find articulation. The Herodotean discourse of envy, which, in however refracted a way, deals with issues of disputed land and frictional subjugation, was appropriate to an emergent Castilian expansion which had already begun its westward translation with the conquest of the Canary Islands and their native Guanches, probably a more significant precedent to their American adventure than the less direct relationship with Andalusian Islam.26 Columbus's change of direction on the Cuban coast can therefore be seen in this broader perspective as, if not the end then at least the beginning of the end of a particular Genoese dream. The last straw would come with Sebastian Cabot's abortive 1553 voyage which confirmed that Spain had lost much of ground to the Portuguese to be able to compete for the trade of the East.26 The Genoese had to contest themselves with controlling Spanish trade with the New World and developing their finance capitalism into the complex web that entangled the Spanish monarchy. Fernand Braudel has seen all this as a defensive action on the part of the Mediterranean world to hold off what, after the event, can be seen as the inevitable rise of the Atlantic economies. With the consequent move northwards of the pivot of European capitalism.

To some extent all this reflects a very old and vexed question concerning Columbus's 'motive'. The vexation comes at least in part because of the difficulty of finding concrete evidence for something so tenuous as 'motive'. Nevertheless, it could be that the position outlined here would reconcile some traditionally antagonistic views. The Columbus of the Journal and the Letter 'believed' he had reached Asia. But Henry Vignaud and Cecil Joes were making vivid observations in Spain, especially, respecting that 'those islands and Mainlands which ... should be discovered or acquired in the said Ocean Seas' (the formula of the Capitulations agreed between Columbus and the Catholic monarchs)27 is an odd way of referring to the Canary Islands and Cathay of Marco Polo; and that it would have been 'an entirely favourable undertaking' to send practically unarmed vessels to take control of a powerful and reputedly friendly kingdom.28 Totally fanciful, though, are the hypotheses that Vignaud and Joes construct regarding Columbus's 'real motive' of reaching unknown lands, with their subsequent need to deny the authenticity of the corresponde with Toscanelli and even to question Columbus's ability to read at all in 1492.29 But many of these differences can be defined if the language of the Capitulations is seen as necessarily ambiguous, precisely to embody two different sets of
ever have been accomplished by someone convinced, if for entirely the wrong reasons, that he was going to find land as relatively quickly as Columbus did—quickly, that is, bearing in mind the actual distance of the Asian coastline from the western coast of Europe. Such an achievement could only be based on a profound misapprehension of the nature of the enterprise. And yet, while all the evidence suggests that Columbus remained convinced to the end of his life that he had achieved what he set out to achieve, it has been argued here that the journal, Antilias perhaps, or another cluster of islands like the Azores. Perhaps it could be said, paraphrasing Nusszide, that the whole point of language, particularly the language of legal agreements, is that it enables you not to specify what you mean, so that the two sets of commercial assumptions and the two discourses associated with them could happily, for a while anyway, share the same signifiers. It was in the end a question of a form of words which temporarily allowed two incompatible positions to proceed as if they were not incompatible.

To say more than this would be to enter the murky waters of psychological speculation. It would hardly be over-bold, ya the light of supportable textual evidence, to suggest that Columbus “had in mind” China and Japan, while Ferdinand and Isabella were more concerned with the possibility of finding other Atlantic islands. But any statements of intentionality—in that Columbus framed the Cagulassions to allow that very compromise, or that Ferdinand and Isabella deliberately took advantage of Columbus’s obsession to embark on a gamble by which they had little to lose and possibly much to gain—remain purely hypothetical. It is difficult to see how the conjecture that the unconscious sexual processes analyzed here from the unconscious processes of its author—Columbus, the character produced by the text from the real Columbus. At the heart of any explanation of how “cannibal” came to take on this meaning, it has since borne in the major European languages is the suggestion that the discourse of savage gold—the discourse that articulates Castilian expansionism—is not the last analysis the controlling motor of the journal despite the fact that the enterprise had been initiated and framed within the discourse parameters of Genoese commerce. It is easy for us to see why that had to happen and why therefore, in part, the journal is such a fraught text: the crossing of such a large expanse of unknown ocean could only
they found somewhat with bows and arrows, with whom they paused to talk, and they bought two bows and many arrows, and asked one of them so to go speak with the admiral in the caravel, and he came. The admiral says that he was more ugly in appearance than any whom he had seen. He had his face all stained with charcoal, although in all other parts they are accustomed to paint themselves with various colors; he wore all his hair long and drew back and tied behind, and then gathered in masses of parrot feathers, and he was as naked as the others. The admiral judged that he must be one of the Caribs who eat men [que debes ser de los caribes que comen los hombres]. (J 140)

This is the first of many descriptions of 'caribes' that will be quoted in this book. Modern ethnography is of the opinion that the man was not a Carib, but rather a Ciguayo Arawak, a small group separated culturally and linguistically from the Taino Arawak with whom Columbus had had more contact. But irrespective of who the native really was (and this is one of the issues considered in the next chapter) what is of most interest is the process whereby Columbus arrives at his attribution. The man is a native American, but uglier in appearance than the natives already encountered. 'Ugly in appearance' is glossed in such a way as to make it clear that what is being referred to is not intrinsic physical characteristics but rather exotic cultural features. From these alone - charcoal stain and parrot's feathers - Columbus 'judges' that the native is a man-eating Carib.

The encounter then follows the classic pattern. Columbus asks about gold, the native points east towards the next island in the chain, Bimimpun (Puerto Rico). 'The Indians told him that in that land there was much gold, and pointing to the poop of the caravel, which was very large, said that there were pieces of that size' (J 116). If one could postulate a direct correlation between the natives' desire to see the back of the Spaniards and the size of the gold nuggets to be found on the next island then the Ciguayos were very keen to be left alone. This would be confirmed by the fact that the first skirmish between Spaniards and American Indians followed directly upon this exchange, occasioned (according to the report received by Columbus, who was not among the landing party) by a Ciguayo attack on seven Spaniards during the trading session:

COLUMBUS AND THE CANNIBALS

Afterwards the Christians returned to the caravel with their boat, and who the admiral learned of it, he said that on the one hand he was sorry, and on the other hand not, since they would be afraid of the Christians, for without doubt, he says, the people there are, he says, civilized, and he believed that they were those from Carib and that they eat men. (J 148)

The soldiers of the Grand Khan are no longer worth a mention. 'Caribs' could not exactly be said to mean 'anthropophagi' as yet, but it is very clearly a place, and the most prominent characteristic of its inhabitants - indeed the only one worth mentioning at all - is that 'they eat men'. Once again this process takes place in a discursive vacuum at some distance from what it purports to refer to. There is no evidence that these people are 'caribes' or 'cannibales' other than Columbus's unsupported supposition; there is no evidence at all that they eat men. Two things have changed. The words 'carib' or 'cannibal' are now being used consistently with the ever-present and unqualified gloss 'those who eat men'. And those whom the Spaniards consider as 'cannibals' have demonstrated a capacity for resistance.

Gold now lies to the east to the east are the lands of Carib. What more could Columbus want? to load gold and to confirm the teratology of Herodotus at one and the same time. On Tuesday 15 January 1493 he seems to hesitate: the island of the 'caribes' is difficult to visit 'because that people is said to eat human flesh' (J 119). On Wednesday the needle is grasped: 'He set out from the gulf ... to go, as he says, to the island of Carib' (J 152). But the wind blew stronger than his determination and the course was set for Spain. The journal is a wonderfully rich and strange text but nothing in it can compete with the final irony that desire and fear, gold and cannibal, are left in monstrous conjunction on an unvisited island.

9

Before its rediscovery in 1971 only a handful of people had read Columbus's Journal; many thousands however had read the letter, written on the homeward voyage, in which Columbus summarized and amplified the complexities of the longer document. Dated 15 February 1493, the Letter was given wide publicity. The
The Letus, addressed in different editions to various high officials although its contents are invariable, stresses the fertility of the Caribbean islands and the tractability of their inhabitants. As would be expected in a document of this kind—which was basically a publicity brochure to attract further investment—the tortures of the Journal has been rounded out into simple findings. For obvious reasons the emphasis is now on the guiltlessness and generosity of the natives of Juna (Cuba) and Hispaniola.

They refute nothing that they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite any one to share it and display as much love as if they would give their hearts. They are content with whatever trifle of whatever kind that may be given to them, whether it be of value or valueless. I forbade that they should be given things so worthless as fragments of broken crockery, scraps of broken glass and lace tips, although when they were able to get them, they fancied that they possessed the best jewel in the world (J 194).

This was especially good news since on Hispaniola ‘there are many spires and great mixtures of gold and of other metals’ (J 194). Possible drawbacks and dangers are not dwelt on but the Caribs do make a late and rather tentative appearance:

‘Thus I have found no monsters, nor had a report of any, except in an island ‘Carib,’ which is the second at the coming into the Indies, and which is inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh. They have many canoes with which they range through all the islands of India and pillage and take whatever they can. They are no more malformed than are the others, except that they have the custom of wearing their hair long like women, and they use bows and arrows of the same cast seems, with a small piece of wood at the end, owing to their lack of iron which they do not possess. They are ferocious among these other people who are cowardly to an excessive degree, but I make no more account of them than of the rest.’ (J 300)
John Smith and Pocahontas

John Smith stood close beside her as he spoke, with his back to the others in the room. For the first time they really looked at each other. Pocahontas blinked back her tears and she said softly:

'I remember well how my father called you son. I remember that my teachers called you brother. I remember that you called me dear child. Now you say only "Lady Rebecca!"'

The tea cup in John Smith's hand trembled ever so slightly.1

1 The early history of the English colony of Virginia contains one story — perhaps its most famous — that has tantalizing parallels with The Tempest. At the beginning of this century MortimerJoue suggested that Shakespeare’s account of the relationship between Mardra and Ferdinand might have been affected by the story of how Pocahontas, a young American ‘princess’, saved the English colonist John Smith from the wrath of her father by throwing her body over his as he was about to be executed.2 The dates are certainly interesting. Pocahontas’ ‘rescue’ of John Smith, happened in December 1607. John Smith’s A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of note as hath happened in Virginia since the first planting of the Colony was published in London in August 1608. It tells of mounting hostility between the English and the Virginia Algonquians, and of how the Algonquian chief Po-
barest footed friars chanting responses in the former temples of Jupiter. It was given to me, equally discomfit on the edge of a jungle of central Africa, to have thrust upon me the mission of expounding what I took to be the innermost propinquity of the United States, while supervising, in that barbaric tropic, the unloading of drums of case oil bound out of the inhospitable wilderness of America... The vision demanded of me that I begin at the beginning, not at the beginning of a fall... but at the beginning of a beginning... It seemed obvious that I had to commence with the Puritan migration. (I recognize, and hence pay my tribute to, the priority of Virginia, but what I wanted was a coherence with which I could coherently begin.)

The historical topics can speak for themselves. What will be taken from here is this rich piece of writing: its obsession with beginnings and coherences, and the bracketing of Virginia's uniquely acknowledged chronological 'priority'.

New England has a complex history, but it has always been possible in retrospect to see it as having a coherence devoted to Virginia. That coherence was largely provided by the ideology of Puritanism, and one of its main planks was the establishment of a very clear division between civilization and savagery, between the city on the hill and the alien and unredeemable forces that lay beyond the pale. Much of the history of the United States, down to its current defence policies, can be traced back to that image of righteousness under threat from savagery.

Virginia is doubly incoherent. Its proper 'beginning' is unsatisfactorily hesitant. The first 'settlement', from Greeneville's 1653 expedition, returned home with Drake in 1586, except for fifteen volunteers who were never seen again. John White's more substantial 1587 colony had disappeared without trace by 1590. Even the 1607 settlement was nearly evacuated in June 1610, and only just survived the 'massacre' of 1622 (see Figure 11). There is little in Virginia's early history to give a satisfying sense of an 'innermost propinquity' at work. Even worse, perhaps, Virginia had difficulty maintaining the coherence it was revealed to him in 1590.
The founding but most problematic moment of that story is the ‘rescue’. During a reconnaissance mission towards the end of 1607 John Smith and Pocahontas (now Lady Rebecca) with their young son Thomas travelled to London where the ‘Indian princess’ was an object of much interest, being paraded to the Royal Family and attending the famous Twelfth Night masque in January 1617. Pocahontas was eventually visited by John Smith, who wrote a fascinatingly elliptical account of their conversation. Then, preparing to return to Virginia, she fell seriously ill on board ship and died shortly afterwards. As Samuel Purchas puts it: ‘she came at Gravesend to her end and grave’.

Around this skeletal narrative has grown a vast body of material — novels, poetry, history books, comics, plays, paintings — that constitute what can only be ranked the myth of Pocahontas. The major feature of this myth is the ideal of cultural harmony through romance. What is lacking in Smith’s telling of the story, and what the mythic version always feel the need to supply, is any elaborated motive for Pocahontas’s behaviour. Smith just speaks of her ‘compassionate pitiful heart’. The mythic version resorts to the established literary model and posits Pocahontas’s instant love for Smith, very much in line with Miranda’s ‘I might call him A thing divine; for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble’ (II.404–2). The rest of the story then falls into place. Distressed at Smith’s sudden return to London Pocahontas marries Rolfe on the rebound, only to have her heart broken when she meets Smith again in London, almost immediately dying of the shock. Smith never married. Inseparable from Pocahontas’s love for Smith is her recognition of the superiority of English culture. It is this that leads her to act as mediator between the two communities, to inform the English of an impending Algonquin attack and, finally, to accept English religion and culture as her own. As a recent reteller of the story, Philip Barbour, puts it, deep and unconscious, ‘this myth of Pocahontas has its own interest, although strictly speaking it is a product of the early eighteenth-century search for a United States national heritage, while the task here is to understand the story as a colonial beginning in its seventeenth-century context.’
The first point to make about Pocahontas’s crossing of the cultural rift—however that crossing is interpreted—is that it was quite exceptional. The Algonquians were on the whole remarkably slow to perceive the superiority of English culture. And the predecessors of Pocahontas did have tended to set bad examples. Around 1500 a Spanish ship had picked up an Algonquian who was probably Pocahontas’s uncle. He was baptized Don Luis de Velasco, educated in Cuba and Spain, and taken back with a group of Jesuits to the York River to establish a mission. His family called him Opechancannough, ‘he whose soul is white’. In 1572 he defined his name by organizing and leading the massacre of the Jesuits and the destruction of their mission.1

Similarly in 1584 Raleigh’s expedition to Roanoke brought back to England two Algonquians with the idea that they should learn English and serve as interpreters; one of them immediately defected when taken back to America. 

Crossing cultures was a fraught business right the way through the colonial period. Particularly during the early years interpreters were crucial to the survival of colonies like Virginia which depended on barter and sympathy. Many of the colonists obviously had a smattering of Algonquian—Smith, Hariot and Strachey all left word lists—yet these were presumably Algonquian equivalents, but there was no substitute for genuinely bilingual interpreters. The problem was that to know enough Algonquian to ensure accurate and reliable interpretation they had to be so steeped in Algonquian culture that their very identity as Englishmen, and therefore their political reliability, became suspect. They became, as it were, cultural half-breeds inhabiting that dangerous no-man’s-land between identifiable cultural positions, and therefore seen as inherently suspicious and potentially dangerous translators who might quite literally be traducers, crossing cultural boundaries only to double-cross their king and country. There was a series of this sort of interpreter in colonial Virginia, usually either released captives or voluntary exchanges, and they were all at one time or another suspected of treachery. One of them—who enters this story at a later stage—was called, ironically, Thomas Savage.

So Pocahontas’s successful ‘crossing’ was exceptional in that it did not lead to her being perceived as occupying a dangerous position—possibly because she was seen as young enough for the formative influences still to be English. But the crossing was even more exceptional in the sense that it was also against the run of play. It had always been clear—though not of course palatable—that captives might end up having considerable sympathy for their captors, to the extent of not wanting to leave them. But there is also evidence of a persistent flow of Englishmen voluntarily leaving the harsh conditions of Jamestown for the Algonquin towns in the surrounding area where, at least before 1622, they were rapidly and unproportionately assimilated.2— Even the other contestant for the founding myth of the United States, the lost colony of Roanoke, is shadowed by the suspicion that it might simply have gone native, which would be much too incoherent to count as a national beginning. The only surviving mark made by the lost colony of 1587 was the word ‘Croatoan’ (the name of the neighbouring Indians) scratched on a tree, without the agreed distress signal of a cross.

Historically this seems in part to have had to remain a mystery because the obvious explanation, that the settlers simply became Croatoans, is too uncomfortable to be seriously contemplated. So the Pocahontas story has gained at least some of its potency from being the one single exception to the rule of cultural crossing in early Virginia, the one possible match between ideological expectations and historical—or at least attested—occurrence. In other words Pocahontas was indeed, as John Smith called her, a ‘non-pareil’, though not in quite the way he meant.

That one of the motives for that widespread crossing of boundaries was the anticipation of sexual relationships is indicated by Rolfe’s strenuous denial of the role of his own carnal desires in his wish to marry Pocahontas, ‘silvered in the long letter he wrote to Sir Thomas Dale in the early months of 1614.17 The path to the marriage was discursively convoluted, although there are no recorded objections beyond that of King James who was said to be worried about the propriety of an English commoner marrying an Indian princess. That is a particularly fascinating intersection—between the boundaries of race and class; and Pocahontas—like many similar figures—can in the end assume an ideologically potent mythic status despite her race only because she is an intelligent, pure and, above all, noble Indian. Purchas says
that she 'still carrie her selfe as the Daughter of a King, and was accordingly respected' and there was obviously a period about 1700 when a high density of blue blood could lighten the skin. In the nineteenth century the eastern seaboard of the United States, seeking a heritage and secure from the violence of the frontier, would look back to its Amerindians for a genuinely native ancestry, as long as it came with something like Pocahontas's acceptable nobility and was well diluted with white genes.

All the same, Rolfe's letter is a classic Puritan document because of the doubts that he himself had to overcome, and those doubts clearly centre on miscegenation. The conversion can only be gauged from a long quotation:

Lett therefore thi my full advised profession, which I make betweene God and my owne Convience be a sufficient wytnesse, at the dreadfull day of Judgeth (when the secretts of all men hartes shall be open'd) to condemn me hereunto if my chief intent & purpose be not to serve with all my power of body and soule to vindication of soo weathy a matter (soe waye lead soe far forth as maye weaken may permit, with the obdurated desire of Carrolls affections) for the good of the Plantation, the honour of our Country, for the glory of God, for soo owne salvation, and for the Conversion to the true knowledge of God and Jesu Christ an incomparable creature, namely Pocahontas: To whom my hart and best thoughts are and have byn a longe tymwy intangled & interschled in soo intricate a laborish, that I was even sweared to vvinwyde my self therefrom. But Almighty God whose never faitheth his that truly avocate his holy name, hath opend the Gate and ledd soo by the hande that I might plainly see and discern the safest pathes wherein to tresse.

The classical reference here needs a Puritan rewriting. Rolfe is Thesaurus; but Pocahontas as Ariadne, rather than helping, has Rolfe so intangled in her erotic threads that he has to unwind himself out of the labyrinth in order to escape the unmentioned Minotaur, that monstrous result of unholy unions which appears paraphrased a few lines later in the words of the Book of Ezra as 'the inconveniences which sweye ... arise' from the 'marriage of strange wyvres'.

Pocahontas's barbarism is freely, even excessively, admitted: 'whose education hath byn rude, her manners barbarous, her generation Cursed, and soe discreant in all nature from my selfe'; but one of the strengths of the Bible and its commentaries as a source of authority is that such actions can be justified if you know where to look. Rolfe's marriage to Pocahontas would be politically expedient for the Virginia Company: God therefore shows the safest path; Rolfe refers to Calvin's Institutes for the idea that the children of Christians are to be accounted holy 'although they be the yssue but of one parent faithfull'; and there is a further and powerful argument implicit in the intertextual strategy whereby Pocahontas is baptized as Rebecca. The relevant passage is, in the Geneva Bible, from chapter 26 of Genesis. Rebecca was barren; Isaac - her husband - entertained the Lord, and his wife conceived twins:

... But the children strove together within her: therefore she said, seeing it is so, why am I dead? wherefore she went to ask the Lord.

And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be devis'd out of thy bowels; and the one people shall be mightier than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.

Therefore when her time of delivery was fulfilled, behold twins were in her womb.

So he that came out the first was red, and he was a son over as rough as a garment, and they called his name Esau.

And afterward came his brother out, and his name was called Jacob.

Now Esau sod pasture, and Esau came from the field and was weary.

Then Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat, I pray thee, of that pasture so red, for I am weary: And Jacob said, Sell me even now thy birthright.

And Esau said, Lo, I am almost dead, what then this birthright to me? Jacob then said, Swear to me even now. And he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

So much for the mythic version of a single culture. Rebecca will give birth to two nations, a red and a white, and the red will
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despite his birthright and sell it for a mess of porridge. An odd exchange, perhaps, but a legally binding contract about which Jacob need not reproach himself. No text could have sat more comfortably with English desires. The colonists were of course impermeable to the irony that their settlement had only survived its early years through constant infusions of Algonquian porridge.

So, fortified by biblical precedent, the governor allowed the marriage and quickly packed off Rolfe and his new wife to London to demonstrate how successfully the Virginia Company had been purveying Christianity and impressing the high-born natives, who were not - as popularly believed - cruel savages, but in fact gentle and potentially cultured natives who could be relied upon to see the error of their former ways.

London's atmosphere proved so baleful that Rolfe had to take Pocahontas away to the healthier climes of Brentford to rest, and it was there that Smith finally went to see her:

hearing shee was at Brentford with dines of my friends, I went to see her: After a modest salutation, without any word, she turned about, obscured her face, as not seeming well contented; and in that humour her husband, with divers others, we all left her two or three hours, repenting my selfe to have writ she could speak English. But not long after, she began to talk, and remembered mee well what courteous shee had done saying,

You did promise Powhatan what was yours should be his, and he the like to you; you called him father being to his land a stranger, and by the same reason so must I doe you: which though I would have excused, I durst not allow of that title, because she was a Kings daughter, with a well set countenance she said. Were you not afraid to come into my father Countrie, and caused feare in him and all his people (but mee) and feare you here I should call you father; I tell you then I will, and you shall call mee child, and so I will be more ever and ever your Countrieman. They did tell vs alwaies you were dead, and I knew no other till I came to Plimoth; yet Powhatan did command Witmatomokkin to seeke you, and know the truth, because your Countriemen will lie much.

None of Pocahontas's words have come down to us directly, so we have no immediate access at all to what she might have

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thought of the strange pattern of events in which she was caught up. Smith is not universally regarded as a reliable witness, and we certainly have no reason to presume that he could recall his conversation verbatim. And yet these words are worth taking a chance on, if only because they so clearly make no sense at all to Smith and yet had so impressed him as a statement of Pocahontas's opinion that he quotes them without further comment. So a case will be argued for the importance of this quotation, but that can be done only by broadening the argument considerably, and drawing together strands from this and earlier chapters.

5

What was the fundamental difference between Algonquian and English cultures? In so much as a large and single answer to this question can be risked, it could be claimed that the native American cultures under discussion here acted according to norms of reciprocity; and that the European cultures did not. More accurate general distinction could be made; but it is obvious at the same time that such a statement raises more questions than it gives answer.

Some of the larger and more difficult questions must be given less attention than they deserve. The classic study of reciprocity is Marcel Mauss's Esai sur le don (1925), where it denotes the complex system of exchanges between individuals and villages by mean of which undivided (i.e. pre-state) societies function. "The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State."2 Divided societies are, by definition, no longer reciprocal, although the ideology of reciprocity has a long and continuing history, in at least certain subsequent modes of production something that might ostentatiously be called 'unequal reciprocity' could be seen to operate, for example the complex and unequal, but reciprocal, system of duties and responsibilities between lord and vassal under feudalism. Only under the fetished social relations of capitalism does reciprocity disappear altogether, however loudly its presence is trumpeted - "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay".

24
Reciprocity itself refers to a series of practices distinctly unus-
able to breakdown into the economic, social, political and ideological. This is the gist of Mauss's argument:

In tribal affairs, in ceremonies of rival clans, allied families or those that assist at each other's initiation, groups visit each other; and with the development of the law of hospitality in more advanced societies, the rules of friendship and contract are present—along with the gods—to ensure the peace of markets and villages; at these times men meet in a curious frame of mind with exaggerated fear and an equally exaggerated generosity which appear stupid in no one's eyes but our own. In these primitive and archaic societies there is no middle path. There is either complex trust or mistrust. One lays down one's arms, renounces magic and gives everything away, from casual hospitality to one's daughter or one's property. It is in such conditions that men, despite themselves, learnt to repudiate what was theirs and made contracts to give and repay.

But then, they had no choice in the matter. When two groups of men met they may move away or in case of mistrust or defiance they may resort to arms; or else they can come to terms. Business has always been done with foreigners, although these might have been slaves. . . . It is by opposing reason to emotion and setting up the will for peace against rash follies—those peoples succeed in subordinating alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation. This is probably as accurate a brief account as could be given of the native American societies of the extended Caribbean functioning in the centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. It is particularly useful for the emphasis placed on the vital importance, yet constant tentativeness, of that nexus of relationships between selves and others. Without the authority of a state all intercourse would teeter between alliance and hostility. To treat with others was the indispensable requirement for life, yet it entailed a constant risk of death. Mauss's account highlights too the importance of ritual as a way of attempting to control these risky encounters. Boundaries, whether physical or social, are places of danger. Strangers are to be feared. Fear is coped with by ritual. Hospitality dissolves the category of stranger, reworking it into either alliance or hostility. 59

JOHN SMITH AND POCOHANTAS

In stateless societies these categories are a matter of constant lived experience; they make up the very fabric of economic, social, political and cultural life. As it happens, the native societies of Virginia and the Caribbean were at least on the brink of forming states: what is usually called the Powhatan confederacy of tidewater Virginia (the 'Senecanmacah') was probably a chiefdom of the sort discussed at the end of Chapter 2. Though far from a sovereign in Hobbes's sense, Powhatan himself was a powerful enough figure to act as guarantor for internal intercourse. But the confederacy was a recent enough alliance for dealing with strangers still to be a constant source of anxiety.

The native position, whether in the Caribbean or Virginia, was, as far as it can be judged, entirely consistent. Strangers were dealt with hospitably, fed and honored, until their intentions could be assessed. Transients and traders would be welcomed and, if appropriate, alliances entered into. Settlers, rivals for limited resources, would be sent on their way or killed. European transients and traders benefited greatly from this attitude. The ships carrying the 1607 Virginia colony called in at Damindac, headquarters of the dreaded Caribs, and traded peacefully; and such examples could be multiplied. But settlement was always a different matter. Here again the Virginia example can stand as typical of the deep misunderstanding that existed from the start. Smith writes 'where now is Jamestown, then a thick grove of trees'—civilization out of wilderness, but the growth of trees was in fact secondary, the site an ex-settlement of the Paspahegh that had been left to grow into a hunting ground. Misunderstanding of this kind was rife; the English clearly had as little notion of American ideas of communal property rights as the Algonquians had of English ideas of private property.

What emerges from Smith's narrative is precisely what the English were blind to—that Powhatan acted in accordance with a set of established social and political practices. It is difficult to judge just how novel the arrival of the three English ships would have been to Powhatan, but the establishment of the fort clearly called for a response. In accordance with the concepts outlined earlier, Smith, the stranger, already perceived by the Algonquin as a figure of some importance within the English ranks (he cleverly passed himself off as a runaway or slave), was put into the limbo of hospitality and fed men-stop for several days, no
doubt partly as a softening up process and partly to impress him with the bountifulness of the local produce. With a modicum of exaggeration Smith later remembered this lengthy meal as a six-week fattening up process in readiness for a cannibal feast. At the end of the three days Powhatan and Smith exchanged descriptions of their respective kingdoms. I re-visited his discourse (seeing what pride he had in his great and spacious Dominions, seeing that all knew were under his Territories) in describing to him the territories of Europe, which was subject to our great King whose subject I was, the innumerable multitude of his ships, I gave him to understand the nosey of Trumpets, and terrible manner of fighting under Captain Newport my father ... As his greatnesse, he admired: and not a little feared. A 'troubl consultation' was then held by the chiefs of the confederacy. Powhatan's decision must have been that the English were too dangerous to be alienated: an alliance should be made, perhaps with a view to absorbing them into the confederacy. The appropriate ceremony was prepared. The powworowe was brought in, Smith laid upon it, and clubs raised above him. At a prearranged signal Pocahontas threw herself upon him and pleaded for his life. Powhatan granted her request. Smith — though he was obviously unaware of it — had passed through an elaborate ritual of mock-execution whereby he allied himself with Powhatan. What exactly was the nature of the alliance? The ceremony seems to bear out Maus's general analysis. There is no middle path: at the end of the liminal period of hospitality Smith's identity as stranger would be dissolved. Depending on whether there was 'trust or mistrust' he would be a friend or dead. The Algonquin word for the relationship established has not survived, but the evidence clearly points to what was earlier encountered under the Taino term guain, the closest relationship that two individuals of different kin could achieve; it could in fact be described as a 'kissing' of strangers. There were two major forms: the familiar one of connection through marriage, and the relevant one here — a form of sponsorship in which a relationship between two individuals was cemented by one of them becoming sponsor to the other's child. It is possible that the Spaniards in the Caribbean were able to make such good use of this relationship because it had a close equivalent in the Mediterranean compadrazgo where sponsorship at baptism sealed an alliance between sponsor and natural parent (companheiro) that would often prove stronger than blood-ties. In England — certainly in seventeenth-century Protestant England — the relationship had no equivalent. Religious sponsorship existed, godparenthood, but the relationship between godparent and natural parent could not even be named, the ancient term godship surviving only in the derogatory form of 'gossip'. Although Smith was unable to perceive this formal establishment of compadrazgo, the English clearly sensed Pocahontas's special status with respect to their community. Smith was careful, as we have already seen, to present Newport as his 'father', rightly presuming that the kin term would carry greater weight than the merely military title. Soon afterwards an exchange of children took place to facilitate later communication. One of Powhatan's young servants, Namontack, was exchanged with an English boy called Thomas Savage. But the English told Powhatan that the boy's name was Thomas Newport, thereby appearing to reciprocate Powhatan's 'gift' of his daughter, an action which may have affected Powhatan's subsequent behaviour since he seems never to have detected the deceit. This formal, almost political, relationship between Pocahontas and Smith has universally been read as romantic, at least from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Pocahontas's otherwise inexplicable action 'explained' as the spontaneous gesture of an instant love. The reunion at Brentford is therefore a tragic climax. Pocahontas confronting her true love, the man she should have married if only she had known it, a final meeting that would break her heart. To such a reading Pocahontas's words must remain impenetrable, a piece of clootted rhetoric to be rephrased into the more comfortable clichés of romantic fiction, as in the epigraph to this chapter. On any reading Pocahontas's words constitute an extraordinary passage of writing, and nothing is stranger than Smith should have reported in direct quotation what so obviously was nothing to him at all, almost as if he recognized, even if only fleetingly, the extent of his ignorance of this woman and her culture and, as a final gesture, perhaps a sort of homage, recorded her alien words
in his text, for all the world like a nugget of the strange Algobitan language set amongst the familiar cadences of Jacobean prose.

The sentences are pellucid, their balance the balance of reciprocity: 'You did promise Powhatan what was yours should be his land a stranger, and by the same reason so must I do yours.' All that Smith can oppose to that is a demurral based on his inferior rank, which only serves to bring down the full weight of Pocahontas's scorn. Can Smith, who did not fear to be a stranger in her land, be afraid of her calling him father in his own land? She insists on the relationship: she is the 'child' to his 'father', a kinship established at Weroanocomo. The insistence is on a reciprocity of which Smith has no conception at all.

This is perhaps as close as we can get to the native world of reciprocity, a tentative and no doubt idealized picture of a society that no longer exists. But the subject here is the European response to that world. So far this chapter has isolated two moments of evident exist for that response, two moments when the discourse of colonialism proved to be less than a seamless web. Those places in the fabric of that discourse where the stitching is loose stand against the critical reading, enabling the task of unravelling to begin. Stranger, though, are the places where the pattern seems deliberately irregular, where the inevitable discrepancies between words and deeds are highlighted rather than concealed. This is odd, since ideologies are almost by definition the construction of what can be counted as 'truth': they might, according to certain sorts of Marxist analysis, be revealed as false, or at least as 'constructions', but they are not generally supposed to flout their falseness. For example, during the course of Smith's conversation with Powhatan at Weroanocomo:

He asked me the cause of our coming.
I told him being in light with the Spaniards our enemy, being overpow'red, near put to retreat, and by extreme weather put to this shore ... our Pil[ma]te being leak[y], we

were enforced to stay and mend her, till Captain Newport my father came to conduct us away."

There is obviously no attempt here on Smith's part to pass his words off as anything other than a tacit lie: they certainly bear no relationship at all to the earlier part of his narrative. The question, it should be stressed, is not about the making of such statements, but about their presence in the 'relations' of early colonial history: it is a matter not of what happened, but of what is recalled and articulated within the connected narrative. In a case of this kind 'truth' is clearly not perceived as having any relevance at all: the discourse is concerned instead to create a particular kind of colonial hero with the ability to escape from difficult situations — something at which Smith, judging at least from his own accounts, was indeed an expert.

It is impossible, then, to decompose such moments by setting an alternative account against them: the tactic must rather be to unsettle the image of the ever-resourceful hero. Smith presents himself as a consummate improviser, master of discourse, turning the thrust of Powhatan's question. But the improvisation proves on closer inspection to be a repetition of words already spoken, by Odyseuss, when asked Powhatan's question by Polyphemus:

But after he had briskly done all his chores and finished, at last he lit the fire, and saw us, and asked us a question: 'Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing over the watery ways?' ... and I said to him: 'We are Achaians coming from Troy, beaten off our true course ... Poseidon, Shaker of the Earth, has shattered my vessel. He drove it against the rocks on the outer coast of your country, cracked on a cliff, it is gone, the wind on the sea took it; but I, with these you see, got away from sudden destruction.'

The situations are certainly not dissimilar. Odyseuss covets the land of the Cyclops in familiar terms, versions of the topoi of the golden age still in use in the Virginia Company's propaganda: even if it is not a bad place at all, it could bear all crops in wazon, and there are meadow lands near the shores of the gray sea, well watered and soft; there could be grapes grown there endlesly, and there is smooth land for plowing, men could reap a full harvest always in season, since there is very rich subtil. Also
there is an easy harbor, with no need for a hawser nor anchor stones to be thrown ashore nor cables to make fast; one could just run ashore and wait for the time when the sailors’ desire stirred them to go and the right winds were blowing.39

The Cyclops’ only crime seems to be that they keep themselves to themselves: Odysseus implicitly criticizes their lack of civic institutions and their lack of commerce with other islands. But their misanthropy is epitomized by their supposed lack of hospitality. Odysseus goes on shore specifically to test whether they are “hostile to strangers”40 and is not backward at demanding his rights as ‘guest’ from Polyphemus. And Odysseus’s final taunt, flung from the safety of his ship (which had of course not suffered from Poseidon’s attentions), is that Polyphemus has been punished for daring “to eat your own guests in your own house”.41 Cannibalism, here as elsewhere, seems to have much less to do with dietary practices than with acting as a potent emblem for strangers’ failure, for whatever reason, to supply food to their visitors.

As it happens the Virginian enterprise—or at least its intellectual—a was well aware of the precedent. Between 1621 and 1653 George Sandys, treasurer and director of industry at Jamestown, completed his translation of an commentary on Ovid’s Metamorphoses. The commentary includes this passage:

Now the Cyclops (as formerly said) were a saliva people given to spoyle and robbery; unsociable amongst themselves, and inhumane to strangers: And no marvell; when lawless, and subject to no government, the bond of society; which gives to every man his owne, suppressing vice, and advancing vertue, the two maine columes of a Common-wealth, without which it can have no soppertance. Besides man is a politcal and sociable creature: they therefore to be numbred among beasts who renounce society, whereby they are destitute of laws, the ordination of civility. Hence it ensues, that man, in creation the best, when averse to justice, is the worst of all creatures. For injustice, armed with power, is most outrageous and bloody. Such Polyphemus, who feasts himselfe with the flesh of his guest; more salvage then are the West-Indians at this day; who one by one their enemies, whom they have taken in the warre, whose slighthe of death and patience sufferance is remarkable; receiving the deadly blow, without distemper, or appearance of sorrow; their fellows looking on, and heartily feeding on the meate which is given them; yet know how they are to supply the shambles perhaps the day following. . . .

Injustice and cruelty, are ever accompanied with Atheisme and a contempt of the Deity.42 This is probably as good a short statement of seventeenth-century political commorophacies as any, illustrating in the process the way in which the familiar Mediterranean copy of classical literature were used to gauge the novelty of Caribbean savagery. Emanating from Virginia the commentary offers a slight but significant displacement. A comparison with Virginia itself would probably be too fraught: if the English were not ‘guests’, as they clearly were not, then what were they? so the Caribs make a safer point of colonial reference for the establishment of native injustice and cruelty—and therefore implicit identification of the Greek and European civilizing ventures. They can even be allowed a certain militaristic virtue in their scorning of death since that virtue is directed at the Spaniards. It would ironically be only a matter of months after Sandys wrote this passage that tegrenman, the Carib chief of the Caribbean island called by the English St Christopher’s, asked Thomas Warner about the suspicious-looking loopholes in the wooden fort he had just constructed. Warner told him they were for keeping an eye on the chickens.43

The classical parallel, then, is in many ways close, yet, as in The Tempest, it tends to haunt Smith’s text with its uncanniness rather than bolster it as a welcome precedent. Smith, to draw on an earlier contrast, belongs to the world of Antonio rather than that of Gonzalo; he is, in other words, fully at home within that ideology of individualism so essential to a developing capitalism, which insists that all actions are singular and irrepeable. Humanist historiography—deeply collusive with that ideology—can say only that Smith at this point in his story was telling a tactical lie, any tone of moral disapproval in his statement merely acting as a screen for the blindness to the larger colonial pattern. Both Odysseus and Smith are involved in a very particular discursive manoeuvre. They present to their interlocutors miniature narratives that function to close off the larger narrative frames that Polyphemus and Powhattan are seeking to
establish. In each case their arrival is presented as the result of a set of accidental circumstances unsusceptible to larger diegetic explanation. Odysseus and Smith refuse to be characters in the narratives that Polyphemus and Powhatan try to construct for them. They are both playing for time.

Pocahontas’s last recorded words are, ‘because your Countrysmen will lie much’. Words that have been read as a sexual reproach speak the language of reciprocal obligation. What baffles Pocahontas more than anything is that the words spoken at Werowocomoco should not be just as valid at Brentford: words are, after all, spoken only to be remembered. But for Smith there are two worlds: the world of civility – of Sion Park where the conversation may have taken place, of legal and governmental institutions, of contracts and guarantees, where words are embedded in solid and stable discursive practices; and an alien and hostile world where words, like actions, are improvised in a savagery void, having no resonance beyond their immediate effect. Colonialist discourse has no memory – which is only another way of saying it has no narrative – until it provokes the occurrence that it will never forget. So Smith, at Brentford, in 1616, can make no sense of Pocahontas’s pellucid words. ‘Civility’ – European civility – can only guarantee the stability of its own foundations by denying the substantiality of other worlds, other words, other narratives.

Whilst Smith’s colonial narratives present a picture of our hero on the leading edge of the frontier, that large distinction between civilization and savagery was articulated for the most part by the European ideologues who remained at home, processing the first-hand material from the colonies in the light of classical precedent and canon law. In a sense Francisco de Vitoria reading Cicero in Salamanca improvised no less than John Smith facing Powhatan in Werowocomoco, though Vitoria called what he was doing ‘commentary’.

The strategies of colonial discourse were directed in the first place at demonstrating a separation between the desired land and its native inhabitants. Baffled at the complex but effective native

system of food production, the English seem to have latched on to the one (minor) facet of behaviour that they thought they recognized – mobility, and argued on that basis an absence of proper connection between the land and its first inhabitants.44 During the planting season the Algonquian would live in their villages. Their agriculture was intensive and productive. After storing the season’s produce the entire population would migrate for the climax of the year’s hunting, returning home to live off the stored supplies. In times of shortage the villages might break up into smaller groups and live off the land, gathering shellfish and nuts. According to classical slash and burn technique, fields were used intensively for a short period and then allowed a long period of fallow. If necessary villages would be moved to new sites, but even this movement would usually be cyclical. Production was no doubt as precarious as it always is in agricultural societies, but food appears to have been usually plentiful judging from the Algonquian ability to supply the English with a good deal, if not on demand, then at least after their harvests. The widely attested stature and physique of the Amerindians would suggest a good and plentiful diet. Communities lived in clearly marked out territories with an agreed system of property rights, mainly communal although family and individual property rights seem to have existed as well.45 On one level the English colonists were aware of something of all this. They could, most basically, see seeds planted and food grown on a regular basis. They visited villages, described them in their texts and drew them in their pictures. Yet this settled pattern of living became in the discourse of colonialism an aimless, nomadic wandering that, by extension, left the land empty and virgin.

Francis Jennings has traced the path of the key phrase in this argument. In 1614 the Jesuit missionary Pierre Biard, describing Canadian Amerindians, wrote:

Thus four thousand Indians at most roam through, rather than occupy, these vast stretches of inland territory and sea-shore. For they are a nomadic people, living in the forests and scattered over wide spaces as it natural for those who live by hunting and fishing only;

‘roam rather than occupy’ being a translation of Biard’s ‘non
of the 'maidens' of Guiana or Virginia was to condense into one potent image the absence of significant native agriculture and the joyful masculine thrift of Elizabethan expansion. But it was one thing for Raleigh to assert that 'Guiana is a country that hath yet her maydenhead', and quite another for the ideologues to articulate that image discursively, especially when the representative of English masculine thrift was a Virgin Queen. Chapman, in his celebratory 'De Guiana carmen Epicurn' (1596), has Guiana 'whose rich feece are mines of golde, / Whose forehead knockes against the rooife of Starres', standing on tippoe looking at fair England. 'And every signe of all submission making towards our most sacred Maid'. Faced at this point with the risk of having to specify the relationship between the two, Chapman opts for comprehensive cover. Guiana wants 'To be her sister, and daughter both', Elizabeth will in 'this affaire / Become her father, mother, and her heire'. In the event Guiana proved a little too Amazonic. The articulation of Virginia showed an increase in rhetorical subtlety. Personification was dispensed with as too unreliable, as was the acceptance of native names. 'Virginia' was not in any sense a pre-existing entity, as Raleigh had imagined Guiana to be, along the lines of Peru, its putative model. 'Virginia' denoted that enormous stretch of coastline from Newfoundland to Florida, and connoted what was assumed to be its pure state: 'Virginia', a virgin land awaiting its English suitors. But even if you have the Virgin Queen bringing fruitfulness to a barbarous yet virgin chaos through the surrogates of her male countours, the coyness of this colonial romance is inevitably disturbed by the unfortunate presence of the other parties who were there beforehand and who could only be seen as, at best, recalcitrant fathers or brothers holding back the love-match, at worst already the husbandry to the 'virgin' land. This then was the classic colonial triangle memorably rearticulated by Samuel Purchas in his 1625 essay 'Virginia's Verger'.

Winthrop's distinction between 'civil' and 'natural' rights can usefully be read back into 'Virginia's Verger'. Many of Purchas's arguments are pitched at the civil level, concerned with England's rights under the Law of Nations to trade freely and to settle on unpeopled lands. Yet however sophisticated these arguments were, it was quite clear under the Law of Nations that it was not...
lawful for Christians simply ‘to usurp the goods and lands of Heathens’. Such usurpation could only be justified by infractions of Natural Law. Writing in 1635 Purchas is able to speak confidently of such infractions having taken place:

But when Virginia was violently ravished by her owne ruder Natives, yea her Virgin cheeks dyed with the blood of three Colonies ... the stupid Earth seems distempered with such bloody potions and cries that there is ready to spue out her Inhabitants.

The initial separation of land from inhabitants to the bestowal of the name Virginia pays handsome dividends here. Not only can the ‘virgin’ land be savagely raped by its own natives (Purchas is referring to the ‘massacre’ of 1622), lest the blood thereby split on to its (posterior?) cheeks is that of the English colonies themselves, which are, in the process, identified with the Virginia that has been ravished. The Amsterdams become satisfactorily ‘unnatural Naturalists’, forfeiting any rights they may have had under Natural Law. In other words the ‘massacre’ has performed a miraculous reversion by which the settlers have become the natural inhabitants — identified with the land — and the original inhabitants have been discursively ‘spewed out’ by their own territories. The master narrative of Christianity then enables Purchas to complete the romance plot with Virginia, restored to her pristine condition, marryng England — easier to manage now that England has a king — and the Algonquian reduced to suffer and rejected suitors, whose very contact with the soil under their feet is at least trespass, if not a continuous indecent assault. The question of Christian usurpation is once again completely bypassed.

Purchas’s symbolic reading of the 1622 ‘massacre’ is instructive in several respects, not least in its attempt to deploy the language of sexuality in a discussion of natural rights over land. Prospero’s tactic in his response to Caliban’s claim to sovereignty. While, though, in that case, Prospero was the father protecting his daughter’s virginity from the native male, here, more strangely, the colonizing power is identified with the ‘female’ land, the passive victim of native violence, just as Smith, the very masculine hero of *A Tree Relation* is, in his later work, presented as the passive victim of Powhatan, dependent for his survival on the intervention of a young girl.

At the heart of European recourse to the Law of Nations was the grandiose concept of *consensus hominum*, an intellectual version of the reciprocity discussed earlier inasmuch as it posited an ideal of exchange of various kinds as the centre of proper human activity. *Consensus* was the seed of many arguments that would be developed at length between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries; and at its core was what Albertus Magnus called *communis*, thereby stressing that it was through language that men came to understand that their common purposes could be achieved only through bonding together in civil society. *Consensus* operates in civil law on two levels: between individuals — where it can be called friendship; and between social units — where it takes the initial form of mutual hospitality, which may develop into stronger links through trading partnership or military alliance. Barbarians, by definition, are incapable of such *communitas*. Their complete lack of language, exemplified in Caliban’s supposed gabbling, is a dramatization of their inability to form a community: they are condemned to a life of ceaseless hostility, Hobbe’s ‘Warre of all against all’. They can therefore be recognized, as in the case of Polyphemus, by their lack of hospitality. Now if it could be argued, Francisco de Vitoria suggested, somewhat circuitously, that the Amsterdams were refusing to ‘receive’ the Spaniards, thereby closing the channels of human intercourse that the jus gentium demanded should be left open, then they would by their actions ‘deﬁne themselves as barbarians and giving the Spaniards just title for conquest’.59 Interestingly, Vitoria’s textual ‘support’ here comes from the opening book of the *Aeneid*, where an unnatural storm, caused by magical powers, shipwrecks a group of travellers on their way to Italy and casts them up on an unknown shore where they are described as ‘driven from Europe and Asia’.60 A familiar story. They are refused even the hospitality of the sands to mend their ships, and ask ‘what manner of men are these? What lust is this that allows them / Such barbarous ways?’61 The text is well chosen because of its irrelevance to the case at hand. The Trojans, unlike the Spaniards, had no choice but to land on the African shore; unlike the Spaniards, the Trojans were treated ‘barbar-
The difficulty with this sort of argument was the number of witnesses attesting to the hospitable and friendly behaviour of the natives, at least in the initial exchanges. What therefore came into focus was their supposed inconstancy, their failure to be either friendly (altruistic) or hostile, but rather both, depending on the circumstances, a pattern of behaviour the English interpreted as treachery. The complex interplay between expectation and experience is nicely caught in Gabriel Archer’s comment: ‘They are naturally given to treachery, howbeit we could not finde it in our travell up the river, but rather a most kind and loving people.’ The attribution was soon a commonplace. Already by 1612 they were ‘a daily daring treacherous people’ in 1616 the Jamestown Assembly pronounced them ‘a most treacherous people.’ An essence was being named that would function to explain the change in native behaviour: if they were initially friendly and later hostile then, so the logic goes, their friendship must have been faked, and therefore their nature, the one underlying constant, must be treacherous. Just why they should have gone to so much trouble to keep the English colonists alive, only later to attack them so murderously, was mysterious but less problematic than the contradictory, unthinkable coupling of genuine friendliness and genuine hostility; and, of course, infinitely preferable to investigating the possible effects of the English colonists themselves upon native behaviour. Alexander Brown’s puzzlement catches the tenor perfectly:

All accounts agree that for some reason the Indians did daily relieve them for some weeks with corn and flesh. The supplies brought from England had been nearly exhausted; the colonists had been too sick to attend to their gardens properly, and this act of the Indians was regarded as a divine providence at that time . . . . What was the real motive for the kindly acts of the Indians may not be certainly known; but it probably boded the little colony a future harm.

Such partial interpretation does not take long to become accepted description. Kerimode’s note to Caliban’s ‘I’ll show thee every fertile inch o’ th’ island’ (II.i.148) remarks in a matter-of-fact way: ‘The colonists were frequently received with this kindness, though treachery might follow’, as if this were simply a ‘fact’
tion, and plantation in sweet and fertile soils. Clearly the benefits to be gained from the revenge of any 'wrong' are so delectable that offence must be counted. What the sentence inscribes (in this it is typical of colonial ideology as a whole) is the impossi-
bility of any transgression on the part of the colonial power: there can be no paragraph considering the possibility of kings ready to trade yet prepared to defend their territory from invasion. Ideology exiles the unthinkable.

The strain that Hakluyt's sentence has to go through to reach its desired end is salved by what follows. Violence, however justified, should not after all be necessary since it is 'well known' that they submit themselves and their property to those who have defended them against their enemies. 'Well known' seems to amount to a report given by David Ingram, one of the sailors marooned by John Hawkins on the American mainland after the disaster of San Juan de Ulloa, who claimed to have walked from the Gulf of Mexico to Cape Breton, and who tells of how the savages of the mainland are pursued and devoured by cannibals.76 Our friends the cannibals have been offstage for a while now but reappear, as always, at a critical moment, here, the final word in Hakluyt's paragraph, as a guarantee that aggression is elsewhere, that those who do violence against the savages are not, definitely not, the English themselves, who are on the contrary friends and protectors.78 At their pleasure of course.

Hakluyt was tactician as well as strategist. The early expedi-
tions were advised to disguise their intentions carefully: food must be obtained from the natives, he says, before they realize that permanent settlement is intended.77 Courteous and 'friendly signs' are therefore the first order of the day.78 Once a foothold has been established a different tack is necessary: the immediate neighbours, now suspicious of their 'visitors' and therefore dangerous, must be weakened through alliances between the colonists and distant Indians. The instructions given to Sir Thomas Gates (1609) are in this respect explicit:

If you make friendship with any of these nations, as you must doe, choose to doe it with those that are farthest from you and enemies unto those amonge whom you dwell.79

The pattern that emerges from these various threads is remark-
ably consistent. The colonists made four central claims about the native Americans in justification for their dispossession: that the natives were not properly 'settled'; that the land was not cultivated; that the natives behaved in a duplicitous and treacher-
ous fashion; and that they cruelly broke the universal rules of hospitality. These claims were not only false, they were a systematic reversal of the actual state of affairs, since the native Americans were fully settled, farmed the land intensively, acted hospitably until provoked beyond endurance, and behaved in what, even at this distance and without sympathetic evidence, appears as a relatively consistent and comprehensible manner. But even more to the point is that the claims were a systematic projection of European behaviour on to native Americans.80 In those early years it tended to be the Europeans who were not 'settled', living from plunder and barter; it was the Europeans who proved incapable of feeding themselves from the fertile soil; it was the Europeans whose duplicity and cunning kept their colonies alive by manipulating the trust of their hosts; and eventually by betraying it.

The Tempt is so crucial for this period because it is the only text which deals—in however oblique a manner—with the key relationship between superior technology and the inability to produce food. What in recent years a more attentive (or perhaps differently attentive) reading of the seventeenth-century sources has shown is that the colonists' irrational response to that discrepancy can only be explained in psychological terms: after all to turn cornfields when you are starving, rather than stealing the corn, is to court the charge of psychosis. It is one of the strengths of Edmund Morgan's great book on colonial Virginia that he is prepared to tackle this problem.

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indians. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages. It was evident in your firearms, your clothing, your housing, your government, your religion. The Indians were supposed to be overcome with admiration and to join you in extracting riches from the country. But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract any-
thing. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did. They even furnished you with the
Although the fully-judged Pocahontas myth belongs to the nineteenth century, some of the story's implications were glimpsed by its contemporaries. It is difficult to judge exactly what effects the marriage between Rolfe and Pocahontas had on the relationship between the English and the Algonquins in Virginia; but it certainly symbolized a period of uneasy truce. If Gates's instructions marked the beginning of English consolidation on the Virginia mainland it was only the rapid increase in demand for land to grow tobacco after 1619 that made it clear beyond shadow of doubt that the English intended not just to stay, which might have been tolerable, but actually to expand their foothold on the continent.

So in the winter of 1616-17 that saw Rolfe and Pocahontas in London the decisive move had yet to be made. The colony's
much Combe and Trees in his coming from Plimouth to
London, the Virginians imagining that defect thereof had
brought no thilfe.27

So yet again we find the two figures,—'guatias' and 'casual',
but now walking the streets of London and even visiting its
drawing rooms. And, if the 'guatias' has become almost
indistinguishable from an English lady, the 'casual', in dialectic
consequence, remains threateningly unregenerate in manners,
breaths, dress and, perhaps most important of all, hair style.28

Purdey is threatened enough by this determined 'otherself' to
need to comfort himself with some heavy sarcasm at the
Algonquin's expense; although we can but sympathize with
Tommons's amazement at the sight of 'so much corn': what a
stupid native indeed to believe that English demands for food in
Virginia were something to do with them not having enough of
their own back home.

In the Round of the Capitol in Washington there is a series
of paintings illustrating the pre-history of the United States. Vir-
ginia is represented by Pocahontas, but the picture, by John
Chapman, shows neither the famous 'rescue' nor her marriage
with John Rolfe. Instead it depicts Pocahontas's baptism, shrew-
dly choosing the moment when European ritual symbolized her
rejection of her own culture and her incorporation into the ranks
of the saved (see Figure 12). Looking up at the shadows at the side of
the picture is a hulking figure with shaved head and single lock
clearly visible. The official publication brought out to celebrate
the painting's placement identifies him:

while he smote, the sullen, cunning, yet daring Opech-
kanough, shrunk back, and probably even tho' brooded over
the deep laid plan of massacre which he so fearfully executed
years after.29

This is the final resolution of the colonial tringle, a splitting of
the problematic third term, a severance of niee and unch,
available female and hostile male, 'good' Indian and 'bad'
Indian, which leaves Pocahontas to be mythologised and
Opechcanough to lead a last desperate effort to extinguish the
English from Virginia and, in 1646, a startlingly one hundred years
of age, to be shot in the back by an English soldier.