

“The savages of Virginia our project”: The Powhatans in Jacobean Political Thought

When John Pory, widely-traveled author and one-time member of Parliament, arrived in Virginia in 1619, he expressed a deep sense of disorientation by the Chesapeake, and mourned the “solitary uncouthnes of this place, compared with those partes of Christendome, or Turkey where I had bene.”¹ Troubled by the destabilizing effects of the voyage and the unfamiliar environment, Pory focused on the duties of his new role as secretary in Virginia, aware that he was the first to occupy the office.² As speaker at the first General Assembly that met in Jamestown in 1619, Pory assisted other members of the House of Burgesses in drafting a set of laws based on instructions laid out by the council of Virginia in London. Many of these closely mirrored the concerns of statesmen in Jacobean England, addressing the fears of vagrancy, idleness, and nonconformity that characterized so many parliamentary rulings and royal proclamations of post-Reformation English society. Yet the first law, appearing before those against cards, dice, excess in apparel, and on trade regulations, concerned English relations with their Algonquian neighbors.³ “By this present General Assembly be it enacted that noe injury or oppression be wrought by the *English* ag[ain]st the Indians...the *Chicohomini* are not to be except out of this Lawe, until either that such order come out of *Englande*, or that they doe provoke us by some newe injury.”⁴ Amidst the expected language of conformity and duty, “the Indians” played a crucial role in how the English confronted the challenges of expanding the realm, where imperially-minded gentlemen hoped to establish a polity bound by English laws and institutions that might incorporate the Powhatans “together with our English” in “a new BRITTAINE in another world.”⁵

As the 1619 laws suggest, confronting the reality of Native Americans was a fundamental concern to both English policy-makers in London and colonists. “It is euerie mans dutie to trauell both by sea and land, and to venture either with his person or with his purse, to

bring the barbarous and sauage people to a ciuill and Christian kinde of gouernment,” preached the minister Robert Gray in London in 1609.⁶ “The report goeth, that in *Virginia* the people are sauage and incredibly rude, they worship the diuell, offer their young children in sacrifice vnto him, wander vp and down like beasts, and in manners and conditions, differ very litle from beasts.”⁷ Though Gray argued that Algonquians should first be persuaded to godliness by good example, he nonetheless concluded that “we might lawfully make warre vppon the Sauages of Virginia our proiect.”⁸ By calling it “our project,” Gray rendered Native Americans a collective responsibility.

It was one thing for Gray to urge his English audience to venture person or purse, but how did gentlemen in London, beyond joint-stock investment or becoming colonists themselves, incorporate America within their understanding of political order? Historians have produced invaluable work on the life cycles and experiences of servants, slaves, laborers, law-makers, and women who migrated to the seventeenth-century Chesapeake, and on the alternatingly sociable and violent interactions between the English and Algonquians in this period.⁹ This chapter relates the experience of Jamestown to Jacobean politics, demonstrating how Anglo-Algonquian encounters in the Chesapeake contributed to the development of English political culture from the earliest decades of English expansion.¹⁰ In his prefatory verse to John Smith’s *Generall historie of Virginia* (1624), the Lincolnshire gentleman Thomas Macarresse specifically addressed such gentlemen: he “[w]ho loues to liue *at home*, yet looke *abroad*,/And know both passed, and vnpassen road,/and seeks to know] *The prime Plantation of an vnknowne shore*.”¹¹ To neglect the conditions of the plantation, to fail to know “[t]he men, *the manners*,” was to “liu’st *the lesse*.”¹²

Since Jamestown was the first English colony beyond Ireland to survive its first year, the particular concerns over “savage” behavior that emerged in the 1610s and 1620s, and the increasing conviction that assimilation was necessary to achieve political control, marked

English discourse and ideas of sovereignty in specific ways. My intention is not to downplay the richness and complexities of Algonquian societies, but to examine the effect of language and assumptions about Algonquians, however misinformed or distorted, on metropolitan discourse at the time. My focus on the Powhatans is not because other indigenous groups did not play active roles in shaping the Chesapeake, but because of London policy-makers' considerable familiarity with the groups under Wahunsenacah, or "*Powhatan* their greatest King," the "Emperor" who emerged as the leading Algonquian figure in contemporary reports about Virginia.¹³ The contrast between several sources and events from 1619 in particular, with the reflections on failed management following the 1622 Algonquian attack and the dissolution of the Virginia Company in 1624, highlights the distinct role that first-hand experience in Jamestown played in shaping concepts of authority and *imperium* in Jacobean London. Integrating colonial experiences in early Virginia to metropolitan discourse and policy-making demonstrates how mutually-informing colonization and state formation were, while drawing attention to the highly personal, often emotive nature of English colonial support in the early seventeenth century.

The Politics of Virginia in Jacobean London

From their earliest attempts at colonizing America, English gentlemen situated Native Americans within their conceptions of political participation.¹⁴ Colonial promoters like Walter Raleigh or James' secretary of state, Robert Cecil, pitched the colonization of Ireland and America as a political good, with the subordination of indigenous peoples becoming integral to the shared vision of authority articulated by courtiers, members of Parliament, and political theorists alike.¹⁵ While the aggressive expansion, and development, of the Tudor and Stuart state frequently employed the rhetoric of "savage" others dwelling on the fringes of society to

describe those who resisted English authority, so that Native Americans were “othered” alongside many different faiths and ethnographic groups, this should not be taken to mean that a homogeneity of cultural difference existed. The task of colonizing the Chesapeake, and coming to terms with the reality of Algonquian peoples and their languages and customs, raised distinct and geographically-specific questions about behavior, orthodoxy, and political control. While charters for the Muscovy Company (1555), the Levant Company (1581), and the East India Company (1600) heightened English interest in eastern trade and diplomacy under Elizabeth I, the relationships forged by merchants and ambassadors in the East, men who were bound by the laws and customs of the polities whose hospitality they enjoyed abroad, were fundamentally different than those exchanges in early Virginia. The trading posts and factories that the English established in Mughal India or the South Seas in this period did not depend on seizing large tracts of land from other peoples, nor grappling with how such large-scale territorial possession might be legitimized.¹⁶ Further, by James’ ascension to the English throne in 1603, colonial promoters considered the subjugation of Ireland to be more securely underway, especially after the so-called “flight” of the Gaelic earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell to the Continent in 1607, which left Ulster largely open to English and Scottish intervention. By 1620, the colonist and judge Luke Gernon confidently expressed his belief that the Irish were exhibiting all “the simptoms of a conquered nation.”¹⁷ “I knowe of some and heare of more of our nation who endeavoure the findinge out of Virgenia, Guiana and other remote and vnknown Countries,” complained the lord deputy in Ireland, Arthur Chichester, in 1605, at the expense of committing to the “makinge Cyvell of Ireland.”¹⁸

Though colonists repeatedly protested that “restless discourse” in London damaged their survival, their concerns also indicate how pervasive interest in Virginia was perceived to be.¹⁹ Gentlemen invested money in colonial schemes, but also considerable time and energy. The merchant and member of Parliament John Ferrar’s account of the life of his brother,

Nicholas, is rife with comments on both brothers' involvement with the Virginia Company. When he returned to England after several years of travel through Europe, Nicholas "found his Brother John Ferrar in great employments in the Virginia Plantations & Company", and again with "the Virginia business" in subsequent months.²⁰ Given the devastating death rates in early Jamestown, there were often more members sitting on Virginia councils in London than there were settlers alive in Jamestown.²¹ By the 1620s, the list of "adventurers" who supported the Virginia Company numbered over 600 people.²² Scholars have established at least 49 members of Parliament who were also members of the company, though John Ferrar claimed there were over a hundred.²³ These numbers in and of themselves do not prove that much fervor or concerted colonial interest accompanied financial investment, but elsewhere gentlemen professed a deep conviction that they lived in a particular moment of opportunity. "No nation of Christendom is so fit for this action [of colonization]," celebrated an early traveler to New England, John Brereton, in 1602.²⁴ "S[i]r Dudley Diggs is in consideration [for employment in Brussels], if this new discoverie of the north-west passage (wherein he is a great vndertaker) will geue him leaue to think of any thing else, for yt possesseth him wholly," reported the London gossip John Chamberlain in 1611.²⁵ Tracking the fluxes of colonial interest in North America in the 1610s, Chamberlain reported that "[w]hen the busines of Virginia was at the highest, in that heat, many gentlemen and others were drawn by perswasion and importunity of frends to vnder-write theyre names for aduenturers."²⁶

The English regularly related the allure of the American landscape and its commodities, from tobacco to the hope of mining precious metals, to perceptions of the Algonquians as gentle and hospitable. The polymath Thomas Harriot's widely-read *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588) set the template. Harriot, a protégée of Walter Raleigh's, spent over a year in Roanoke, and provided the first protracted description of Algonquians, adding copperplate engravings as visual accompaniments in his 1590 version. Native

Americans would “feare and loue vs, that shall inhabite with them,” Harriot promised, for they desired “our friendship & loue.”²⁷ By presenting the rich commodities of the soil alongside discussions of the generosity of coastal indigenous groups, Harriot appealed to the colonially-minded gentlemen within his coterie of friends, men like Raleigh or Raleigh’s friend Henry Percy, the “Wizard earl” of Northumberland. At the Inns of Court, gentlemen connected with Raleigh’s circle, and the court of James’ son, the charismatic Prince Henry, wrote erotic verses and epic poetry about North and South America, offered their services as governors and secretaries, and incorporated tobacco smoking into their elaborate social rituals.²⁸ These self-styled wits sought to survey, manage, and run their own estates, while fostering an urbane intellectual culture that encouraged the fantasies of expansion and cultivation in North and South America.

Appealing to friends and aspiring statesmen who had the interest – and the means – to colonize Virginia, Harriot’s *Briefe and true report* articulate the expected connection between civility and legitimate political order, but the tract also encouraged gentlemen to think about their own civility in relation to Algonquian societies. It was “not the nature of men, but the education of men,” Robert Gray had summarized in his 1609 sermon, “which make them barbarous and vnciuill.”²⁹ Harriot had chosen to include images of the ancient Picts in his 1590 edition, in order to “to shoue how that the Inhabitants of the great Bretannie haue bin in times past as sauage as those of Virginia.”³⁰ Such texts framed English civility as the means through which to transform “savagery” to refinement, but they also envisaged long-term intervention in the Atlantic as integral to the future glory of the English as a nation. In *A description of New England* (1616), the colonist John Smith specifically related “the greatest Princes of the earth” to their “planting of countries, and ciuilizing barbarous and inhumane Nations, to ciuilitie and humanitie.”³¹ Understanding themselves as uniquely and providentially placed to participate in “ciuilizing Nations,” and seeking to improve their own polity, gentlemen increasingly

understood the two in relation to each other. Those who scoffed at, or railed against, colonization, wrote John Bonoil, keeper of the king's silkworms, were "next a kinne, indeed, to the hatefull Sauages, enemies herein to God, their King, and Country."³²

Discourses of Powhatan Savagery in the Metropolis

Beneath their insistence on their cultural superiority, English concerns over the destabilizing power of savagery remained paramount. The mixture of uncertainty about, and confidence in, their own civil mores underpinned the way gentlemen articulated their political responsibilities. The Roman historian Tacitus, often quoted in Jacobean discourse, had warned of the dangers of degeneration in the context of empire, a belief that seemed especially relevant with the renewed English experience of colonizing Ireland in the second half of the sixteenth century.³³ English reformers considered the "Old English" in Ireland, as Catholic descendants of twelfth-century settlers, to be religiously superstitious and political unreliable, thereby undermining the Protestant cause that the English were pursuing with such difficulty. "The neglect of the Lawe," wrote the solicitor-general in Ireland, John Davies, "made the English degenerate, and become Irish."³⁴ "The very English of birth," the chronicler Raphael Holinshed maintained, "conuersant with the sauage sort....become degenerate...[and] are quite altered."³⁵ Hopes of making "a Virginian...thy Neighbour, as well as a Londoner" thus projected a vision of incorporation and inclusion between the Algonquians and the English, but the transformation must necessarily be one-way.³⁶ Assumptions about Algonquian "savages" became part of how Englishmen debated government and their own behaviour in political discourse, drawing on contemporary experience to endorse the necessity of plantation abroad and conformity at home.

Jacobean churchmen advocated the civilizing potential of English customs in sermons to members of the Virginia Company and their parishioners in London, and were prime

supporters of James' vision of *imperium* as a monarchical project that would advance English ambitions in America through effacing savagery. Robert Gray's sermon, quoted above, advocated the use of force in conversion and settlement, anticipating the more stringent governmental policies of the 1620s. "All Politicians doe with one consent," Gray maintained, "holde and maintaine, that a Christian king may lawfullie make warre vpon barbarous and Sauage people, and such as liue vnder no lawfull or warrantable gouernment, and may make a conquest of them."³⁷ Gray also emphasized the dangers of lax authority in preserving English customs and government, "for by concord small things increase and growe...but by discord great things soone come to nothing."³⁸ Londoners expressed skepticism in their belief that colonists were able to create an ordered society modelled on England. "If he desire to know what Ciuilizers of people Ghospellers are," wrote the Jesuit John Floyd in 1613, in a withering indictment of English Protestantism, "let him goe into *Virginia*, where he may find one of the two or three Ministers that went thither, become sauage, not any Sauages made Christians by their meanes."³⁹ Floyd's attack on the colony went to the heart of English insecurities about their own political nation. The English failure to realize their hopes of converting Native Americans hardly came a surprise, Floyd scoffed, when "the *Virginian* voyagers" were "tossed with a storme of sighes, caused by their owne Church."⁴⁰

It is within this context of confessional dispute, and the fears of savagery as a literal, physical embodiment of degeneration and political failure, that George Yeardley prepared to depart to Jamestown to become its governor in December 1618. On Nov. 29, 1618, the king dined with Yeardley at the royal residence in Newmarket outside Cambridge. In the company of the duke of Buckingham, Prince Charles, and other prominent members of James' court, Yeardley and the king conversed for an hour and a half about Virginia.⁴¹ A large part of the conversation centered on how best to establish stability and social cohesion. James explicitly connected his concern that the Powhatans receive correct indoctrination with his desire to

establish religious orthodoxy in England, with Jamestown reflecting the health, or sickness, of the domestic realm. The king wanted to know “what inclination the savages had to Christian religion,” but also “the quality of our ministers in Virginia,” who must “ever conforme themselves to the church of England,” and “in no sorte (albeit soe farre from home) become authors of Novelty or singularity.”⁴² Inquiring into the physical landscape of the English settlement, James asked for churches to be built like Protestant churches in England.⁴³ Establishing political stability entailed razing what the English deemed to be illegitimate spaces of worship in Powhatan villages, supplanting them with structures that promoted an adherence to English forms. At the same time, English ministers themselves needed to be conforming members of the Church of England. By promising them preferment when they returned to England, James also perpetuated the idea that for gentlemen, colonization in Virginia was a service to the state, rarely intended to be a permanent post.

When Yeardley arrived in Virginia in 1619 to end martial law, his supporters hailed him as a hero who might finally achieve what the Virginia Company charters had promised: English law for English subjects. The London council hoped his arrival would initiate “a Magna Charta,” with laws that would “not be chested or hidden like a candle under a bushell” but available to all English subjects of the colony.⁴⁴ The law was additionally meant to address the litany of other “abuses and oppressions now presently raigninge” by establishing stricter social hierarchies that would serve to settle and stabilize Virginia.⁴⁵ Yet Yeardley’s instigation of the common law, with its yearly general councils and its elected burgesses from the plantations, was as much an opportunity to enhance the civil lives of gentlemen in England as it was an attempt to ensure the rights and privileges of English colonists. It was in 1619 that the gentry faction of the Virginia Company, headed by Edwin Sandys and Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton, wrested control from the merchant faction led by Sir Thomas Smyth and Robert Rich, second earl of Warwick.⁴⁶

The Sandys-Southampton faction pursued a vision of plantation that involved industrious settlement and concerted efforts to establish traditional systems of English landholding. Patrons and supporters of Virginia projected a model of civility that specifically appealed to gentlemen and pandered to their tastes. James “layde a strict com[m]ande upon Sir George...in all p[ar]tes of Virginia to cherish up silkwormes, & to plant and preserve Mulberie trees for the increase of silke,” a project that the earl of Southampton also endorsed.⁴⁷ James’ vision for the transformation of indigenous society was not merely one of industrious Protestant cultivation by laborers and servants tilling the land. Instead, and rather fancifully at this early stage, James and his councilors seemed to view the colony as a pleasure ground for more affluent members of society. The king endorsed planting vines, not merely for economic profit but because “pretious liquor” would spur gentlemen to settle in Virginia.⁴⁸ Following the king’s discussion with Yeardley, members of the nobility began pitching their ideas to the king. The lord chancellor Francis Bacon promised the king he would find a means of granting the Virginia and Somers Island companies a monopoly on tobacco, and the earl of Lincoln promised to send some of his best horses to set up a race track.⁴⁹ Despite jabs at Yeardley’s social status – the letter writer John Chamberlain mocked the pomp of Yeardley’s new knighthood and departure to Virginia – others in the company articulated their belief that Yeardley’s regime would renew the plantation and revive its reputation.⁵⁰

From these early stages, then, English plans to “civilize” the Algonquians and advance their own civil society were interrelated, if somewhat conflicting. To policy-makers in London, the willingness to exchange cultural habits, rather than impose them, seemed to indicate colonists’ readiness to reject English authority, while bringing to question the stability and endurance of Englishness itself. Without obedience enforced by accountability to the law, colonists “would in shorte time growe so insolent as they would shake off all government, and there would be no living among them.”⁵¹ Governors must cultivate “the better disposed of the

Natives...thereby they may growe to a likeinge and love of Civility,” but they must abstain from living among the Powhatans themselves.⁵² The council decided to change the names of indigenous towns to English ones, such as Kiccowtan to Elizabeth City, and to move their plantations closer together.⁵³ The resolve to educate Powhatans in English schools reflected Protestant hopes of achieving conversion and social order through education, but the council’s policies towards indigenous children remained cautious, with a view “neither utterly to reject them nor yet to drawe them to come in.”⁵⁴

Events in 1619 demonstrate that company promoters in London celebrated English law largely for its capacity to bring civility and an enforceable political hierarchy to the colony. Though what happened on the ground was often far different, gentlemen viewed the common law as one means, though not necessarily an exclusive one, of better subordinating Virginia to metropolitan control. During this time, councilors in London devised additional ways to establish hierarchical order in Virginia. The proposal to create a Virginian nobility, drafted in 1619, suggests that gentlemen debates other strategies to successfully settle the colony. The intention was not to compete with English titles but “the mor Earnestly for to Indeavover them sellves for to bring that plantatycon to p[er]fectyon” by better entrenching Virginia within the English governing system, with the Virginia earls, viscounts, barons, and baronets establishing “faythe and fidellyty to the Crowne of England.”⁵⁵ Though it failed to lead to the creation of any new titles, the proposal offers a further glimpse into the efforts undertaken by English gentlemen to participate in the political life of the realm through their involvement with plantation schemes. From London, the failures to instill conformity in the colony did not just reflect poorly on the colonial effort, but on the lives and values of gentlemen who promoted the colony as a point of honor and as a political duty, and who used the notion of a superior English civility to justify their intervention in the first place.

Civil London, Royal Virginia

In the early hours of March 22, 1622, between 500 and 600 Pamunkey, Appomattoc, Chickahominy, and Warrascoyak men launched an attack on the English plantations scattered along the James River. Several settlements were destroyed altogether, while others suffered human losses of up to ninety per cent.⁵⁶ A reported 347 colonists died, amounting to roughly one-third of the colony. Colonists nearest to Jamestown, warned of the attack by a converted Powhatan boy, fled to the fort for protection, preventing a much higher death toll. When news of the event reached London in June 1622, authorities urged the governor Francis Wyatt, who had taken over Yeardley's governorship in 1621, to pursue more violent tactics in subjugating the Algonquians. The colonist Edward Waterhouse, in a widely-disseminated report on the attack, condemned the "base and brutish triumph" by which the Algonquians celebrated the killings, but he found an advantage, too, in the freedom this act now gave the English for retribution.⁵⁷ The English were now able to counter "the treacherous violence of the Sauages" using whatever means necessary, since the "right of Warre, and law of Nations" allowed them to "inuade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy vs."⁵⁸

The attack irrevocably hardened English attitudes towards Algonquians, but it also challenged the colonial identity of the English themselves. In the aftermath, gentlemen in London reserved the harshest critiques for the colonists, using Algonquian violence to ask questions about the authority and preservation of English government in the context of its imperial aims. "Before the last Massacre," commented Sir Nathaniel Rich, "o[u]r Colonyes were almost made subiectes to the Sauages."⁵⁹ In August 1622, the council for Virginia in London wrote a letter to Francis Wyatt and the council of state in Jamestown, criticizing the sorry state of current affairs. "To fall by the handes of men so contemptible" reflected poorly on the English themselves; worse, the English had been "made in parte instrumentes of contriving it."⁶⁰ The colonists now bore the brunt of "Allmightie God for the punishment of

o[u]rs and yo[u]r transgressions.”⁶¹ The council attributed colonial failures to the “neglect of the Devine worshipping” and the “enormous excesses of apparell and drinkeing” that had put Virginia in such “detestac[i]on of all good mindes, and scorne of others,” and thus had “the Indians prevailed.”⁶² By attributing the Algonquian victory to divine retribution for the sins of colonists, policy-makers reprimanded Wyatt and his governing council for failing to establish a civil polity modelled on English hierarchical and spiritual order.

Responses to the attack played a distinct role in how gentlemen in London formed new colonial strategies. Greater measures of security and protection were needed, gentlemen iterated, for nothing less but “o[u]r intentions, and hopes, and the expectation of his Ma[ies]tie and the whole state” hung in the balance.⁶³ In London, councilors promised to send more migrants to populate the devastated English plantations, but they also sought to “secure Virginia by settling private p[er]sons,” an emphasis that, as argued above, was not antithetical to the establishment of common law and the General Assembly in 1619, but rather a crucial component of its success.⁶⁴ The English failures to subdue the Algonquians meant there was “no way left to encrease the Plantation, but by abundance of private vnd[er]takers,” since it was through “better Civill government” that “mutuall societies doth most conduct vnto.”⁶⁵

The outbreaks of violence on both sides also placed Anglo-Algonquian conflict into broader reflections of English statecraft. The council in London responded to the uprising by reflecting on what policies would be “most effectual for the engaging of this State.”⁶⁶ In the months leading to the dissolution of the company, specific reactions against Powhatan actions informed how colonists and councilors articulated political disintegration. In “A Briefe Declaration of the Plantation of *Virginia* during the first Twelve Yeares,” the Sandys-Southampton faction defended Yeardley’s regime as one that had transformed the brutality of colonial life prior to 1619. Yeardley had arrived to find no defenses against “a forreign enemie,” whether Spanish or Algonquian, and “the natives he founde uppon doubtfull

termes.”⁶⁷ The legitimacy of the monarch hinged on the subjugation of the Algonquians: “neither did we ever perceive that at any time [the Powhatans] voluntarilie yealded themselves subjects or servants to our Gracious Sovereigne, neither than ever they tooke any pride in that title.”⁶⁸ Though the Sandys-Southampton faction highlighted that Yeardley’s governorship had successfully brought peace between the English and Powhatans, the planters in Virginia were forced to admit that “beinge too secure in the trustinge of a treacherous enimie, the Salvadges,” had contributed to the political breakdown that ensued.⁶⁹

Eventually, the disagreements and resentments grew so heated amongst factions within the company that its members appealed directly to the king to arbitrate. Events in Jamestown forced the king to bring “the whole case to his own hearing.”⁷⁰ A stronger monarchical involvement in colonization depended on the king’s ability to eradicate savagery:

The wounds w[hi]ch since that great wound of the Massacre, it hath more lately received, from their hands whom it least beseemed, are still so wide & bleedinge, that vnlesse his Ma[iest]ie, and yo[u]r Lo[rds]hipps as deputed from him, shall vouchsafe to apply a Soveraine hande for the healing of them, wee are resolute of opinion, that it is impossible, the Plantation...should either prosper or long subsist.⁷¹

The deaths of hundreds of English men and women had caused nothing less than a crisis of order, and the struggle of James’ subjects on new frontiers became a problem the king himself could no longer ignore. The royal investigation in 1623 brought Virginian affairs to the king’s chambers and the privy council. The king, reported Chamberlain, had forbidden the House of Commons to intervene with “the thornie business touching Virginia.”⁷² “There is a Commission of Privy Counsellors and others appoynded to advise upon a fit Patent to be giuen to the Company of Virginia...[at] last being ouerthrowne,” the diplomat Sir Francis Nethersole reported to the ambassador Dudley Carleton.⁷³ “The Reformation intended as I heare is that

there shall be a Company for trade, but not for Gouernment of the Countrey of w[hi]ch his Ma[jies]ty will take care.”⁷⁴ James took the final measures necessary to assume clearer control of the colony in 1624, after pressuring the Virginia Company to surrender its patent.⁷⁵ Colonization, “this worthie action reserved by the Devine providence,” was to “bee perfected and Consumate, by his Royall hands,” whereby the colony officially became affixed to the English Crown.⁷⁶

James’ closer interest in colonization from 1619, following his dinner with Yeardley prior to the governor’s departure to Virginia, and his decision to dissolve the bankrupt Virginia Company and declare Virginia a royal colony in 1624, suggests that events in Jamestown at this time were not incidental to Jacobean state politics more broadly. It was precisely because of the close political bonds and friendships between colonists like Francis Wyatt and George Sandys, and their ties to Sandys’ older brother in Parliament, Sir Edwin, that letters from Jamestown could be so candid about the difficulties and disappointments in Jamestown. Family ties, and friendships, between gentlemen in London and in the colony shaped how those in London offered political advice. When the colonist and former member of Parliament George Thorpe died in the attack, the lawyer Christopher Brooke wrote a vitriolic poem from London against the Powhatans. The lengthy poem advocated their violent destruction, with Brooke using tropes and figures from classical heroic verse combined with current news from Virginia to expound more widely on state strategies of governance. “Sauage men,” Brooke wrote, “thinke all things gouern’d by chance,” while Thorpe had been a great political actor, “vsed to negotiate/In matters of Religion, as of State.”⁷⁷ How shameful, Brooke urged, that those who were “ignorant” in knowledge of the art of government had bested the English. Following an epitaph to Thorpe in the poem, Brooke called for “[m]ilitary iudgements” and a more aggressive stance against the Powhatans, criticizing the “[c]hildren in Gouernment, and in State-learning” who had “[t]axt [Thomas Dale] for cruell.”⁷⁸ Invoking the contemporary regime under Wyatt and his

advisors, as well as the governorship of Dale some ten years before, Brooke's poem indicates how well informed gentlemen could be on Virginian affairs, and also suggests that personal relationships and losses were important components to hardening attitudes against Algonquians.

Beyond the seventeenth-century enthusiasm for colonization, the letters, reports, and literature penned by affiliates of the company in London suggest that Jamestown shaped metropolitan ideas of government and *imperium* in an active way. Letters from Jamestown to members of Parliament and privy councilors offered advice, but they also called for a specific royal response. "We humbly refer unto your Princely consideration," the assembly wrote to James in 1624, "[i]nvoking that divine and supream hand to p[ro]tect us."⁷⁹ Unlike other trading companies of the time, the trial-and-error nature of early colonization, and the dissolution of the Virginia Company, opened intense debate about territorial expansion and government in London, and not just mercantilism and trade. The "Discourse of the Old Company," written in 1625, is perhaps the most blatant use of colonial experience to advise policy-making and influence decision-making on a state level. The discourse balanced the experience of failure with the importance of preserving English rights and privileges. Its authors maintained that the "third way" of government by "an absolute Comission, disprovided of other means, saue what should be rayseed from the Plantac[i]on[,] experience hath taught, that it cann worke no great effect."⁸⁰ By appealing to kingly oversight but also to the importance of governing councils while drawing on actual colonial experience, the old planters proposed a strategy of state expansion that drew on the resources of the English state – for example, providing military support – while advocating legislation that protected subjects who sought to secure land and engage in trade and industry for their own private gains. The authors suggested that the king directly ordain and appoint a colonial council that was bound by oath to Charles, so that, 'by his Ma[ies]ties Royall authoritie, w[i]th consent of Parliament, bothe

Plantac[i]ons might be annexed to the Imperiall Crowne of this Realme, according vnto the comendable pollicie of some other great Kingdoms.”⁸¹ The members of the bankrupt company, aware of their inability to rely solely on private donors, pitched the sovereignty of the king over colonial endeavors as integral to establishing fairer commercial activity and greater territorial control. Affirming that he would maintain the plantation as he did the rest of his dominions, Charles voiced his belief that joint-stock companies might be good for business, but they were unfit branches of state. Virginia would “immediately depend upon Our Selfe, and not be committed to any Company or Corporation,” Charles proclaimed, “to whom it may be proper to trust matters of Trade and Commerce, but cannot bee fit or sage to communicate the ordering of State-affaires.”⁸²

In a 1622 sermon delivered at the popular public arena of Paul’s Cross in London, the clergyman Samuel Purchas had praised the Crown’s attention to Virginia. A legitimate king, proclaimed Purchas, was not a king without a territory, “as the *American Caciques* and *Werowances*” were.⁸³ Rather, the king was a man with the power to subdue those who “bordered on the confines of Humanitie,” for “how great a parte of wide and wilde *America*, is now new-encompassed with *this*, with *His* Crowne?”⁸⁴ The sermon pandered to James’ belief in the monarch as a civilizing force. Kings, James had written in 1599, must always be “rooting out and transporting the barbarous and stubborne sort, and planting ciuilitie in their rooms.”⁸⁵ Although Purchas’ vaulting narrative of a western world subordinating itself to monarchical authority still seemed, in 1622, to be somewhat fanciful. Even in 1622, Purchas’ vaulting narrative of a western world subordinating itself to monarchical authority seemed rather fanciful. By 1625, however, the English celebration of Virginia’s place in the English commonwealth appeared somewhat more believable. “*Virginia* may performe as much with equal manuring as euer *Britannia* and *Ireland* could promise when first they became knowne to the then ciuiller World,” Purchas wrote.⁸⁶ Further, Virginia was important because it offered a

key to English ascendancy over the rest of the Americas. The English were ‘growing and multiplying into kingdoms...so *Virginia, New England, New found land* in the [American] Continent already planted...and other Ilands may be adopted and legall Daughters of England.’⁸⁷ Those years between 1619, when James first met with Yeardley, and his death in 1625, were some of the most troubled in Jamestown’s history; they were also the time when James became more invested in the colony. His eventual decision to involve himself directly in “that worke w[hi]ch wee have begunne” is significant.⁸⁸ This suggests that the king was finally prepared to assume responsibility for matters in Virginia, and that his interference was the direct result of the news and petitions that reached him and his privy council from Jamestown in the 1620s.

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In the contested political climate of the 1620s, gentlemen used colonization in the Chesapeake to express fundamental, if at times competing, ideas about politics and reform.⁸⁹ In their interactions with Powhatans, in struggles to manage the behavior of colonists themselves, and in advancing the establishment of the common law in Virginia, councilors grappled with vital questions over what civil society was, who might successfully enjoy its benefits, and under whose authority and government it lay. “You wilbe contente to observe the very principle and rudiments of our Infant-Commonwealth,” Pory reported to the ambassador Dudley Carleton from Jamestown in 1619, “which though nowe contemptible, your worship may live to see a flourishing Estate.”⁹⁰ Colonization in Virginia offered grounds for formative political experiments, and exposed the promise, and catastrophes, that such models of government engendered.

Gentlemanly hopes for “our Infant-Commonwealth” shaped colonial society, but it also placed Anglo-Algonquian relations in the heart of the political nation. Yeardley’s, and then Wyatt’s, failed attempts to foster peaceful relations with the Powhatans and other regional

groups, and the ambiguity of colonial policies evident in the laws of the first General Assembly, contributed to points of tension and debate from which more aggressive articulations of *imperium* emerged. As a result, the highly geographically-specific language of colonization infused metropolitan discourse. Amidst fears of Catholic unorthodoxy and the Spanish threat, English Protestants began to articulate themselves and their political ambitions through increasing familiarity with a region that had only recently entered the English imagination. Gentlemen learned of “Kiskaick, somewhat short of Powhatan’s chief town, called Worowocomaco ... [where] should my second plantation be, for that would make good the inland and assure us likewise of the Pamunkie River.”⁹¹ The MP and collector Walter Cope, seeking to acquire commodities for his cabinet of curiosities, wrote an enthusiastic letter about the shells and pearls that might be gained in Virginia, from indigenous inhabitants including “Pohatan, another of the kinges.”⁹² From the alluring, if tentative, prospects of colonization in the Elizabethan era, to Jacobean fantasies of visiting the “mighty court of *Powhatan*,” responses by metropolitan gentlemen towards colonization were often directly informed by specific events in the Chesapeake.⁹³ The Jamestown-London connection shaped domestic political discourse, therefore, while helping to engender colonial support at a time when the survival of an English America was by no means secure.

For gentlemen in England, the imperatives of state were not forged merely through theory or abstract discourse, but through real human interaction. “See here behold as in a Glasse,” proclaimed the prefatory verses of John Smith’s *Generall historie* of 1624, “All that is, or is and was.”⁹⁴ This “Glasse” represented the hope of establishing a mirror-realm on the banks of the James River, one that necessitated a knowledge of the indigenous inhabitants of the Chesapeake. The “was” offers a poignant reminder that the very presence of the Powhatans in Jacobean discourse was a result of a rising imperial-mindedness among English policy-makers, one that altered, and ended, as much as it began.

¹ John Pory to Dudley Carleton, Sept. 30, 1619, in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606 – 1625*, ed. Lyon Gardiner Tyler (New York, NY: Charles Scribner, 1907), 286.

² *Ibid.*, 283.

³ “A Reporte of the manner of proceeding in the General Assembly,” in *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, eds. Henry Read McIlwaine and John Pendleton (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1915), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Richard Crakanthorpe, *A sermon at the solemnizing of the happie inauguration* (London, 1609; STC 5979), D2r-D2v, D3v.

⁶ Robert Gray, *A good speed to Virginia* (London, 1609; STC 12204), C2r.

⁷ *Ibid.*, C2v.

⁸ *Ibid.*, C4v.

⁹ James Horn, *A Land As God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005); James Rice, “Escape from Tsenacommacah: Chesapeake Algonquians and the Powhatan Menace, 1300-1624,” in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550 – 1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 97-140; Martin H. Quitt, “Trade and Acculturation at Jamestown, 1607 – 1609: the Limits of Understanding,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), 227-258; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); J. Frederick Fausz, “An ‘Abundance of Blood Shed on Both Sides’: England’s First Indian War, 1609-1614,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (1990), 3-56; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: the Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1975); Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600 – 1675* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2012); Helen C. Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

¹⁰ English scholarship tends to focus on the importance of the colonies only once more coherent visions of empire emerge from the historical record, and it is rare to find Virginia integrated in any sustained discussions of James’ English reign. See, for example, David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Alison Games, “The English Atlantic World: A View from London,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 64 (1997), 46-72.

¹¹ John Smith, *Generall historie of Virginia* (London, 1624; STC 22790), Av.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage* (London, 1613; STC 20505), 635; John Smith, *A true relation* (London, 1608; STC 22795.5), C3v; Robert Johnson, *The new life of Virginea* (London, 1612; STC 14700). On the agency of non-Powhatan groups, see Rice, “Escape from Tsenacommacah,” in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550 – 1624*, 97-140.

¹⁴ The recent shift from Atlantic to global history has impelled historians to situate Jamestown within a much larger framework of European travel and discovery, one that relates English colonization to broader intellectual, political, and socio-economic activity. See *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550 – 1624*; *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Audrey Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea: Colonialism in the British Atlantic* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); L.H. Roper, *The English Empire in America, 1602 – 1658: Beyond Jamestown* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560 – 1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Ethan Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 182, 212; Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*; Nicholas Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 30 (1973), 575-598; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); David B. Quinn, “Renaissance Influences in English Colonization: the Prothero Lecture,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26 (1976), 73-93; Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, 1550 – 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 422.

¹⁶ Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600 – 1830* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 22.

¹⁷ Luke Gernon, “Discourse of Ireland (1620),” *CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, Cork*
<<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E620001/>> [accessed July 21, 2017].

¹⁸ Arthur Chichester to the earl of Salisbury, Oct. 2, 1605, The National Archives (TNA), SP 63/217, f. 165v.

¹⁹ Thomas Dale to the earl of Salisbury, Aug. 17, 1611, in *Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony: the First Decade: 1607 – 1617*, ed. Edward Wright Haile (Champlain, VA: Roundhouse, 1998), 552.

²⁰ John Ferrar, “A Life of Nicholas Ferrar,” in *The Ferrar Papers*, ed. B. Blackstone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 20-21. See also Wesley Frank Craven, *Dissolution of the Virginia Company: The Failure of a Colonial Experiment* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1932), 296.

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- ²¹ Horn, *Land As God Made It*; Carville Earle, "Environment, Disease and Mortality in Early Virginia," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 5 (1979), 365-390.
- ²² Virginia Council, list of lottery participants, 1610, Huntington Library, mssHM 961; Council of Virginia, *A declaration of the state of the colonie and affaires in Virginia with the names of the aduenturors* (London, 1620; STC 24841.4); *The Genesis of the United States: A Narrative of the Movement in England, 1605 – 1616, Volume II*, ed. Alexander Brown (London: Heinemann, 1890), 802.
- ²³ Ferrar, "A Life of Nicholas Ferrar," 22.
- ²⁴ John Brereton, *A briefe and true relation of the discoverie of the north part of Virginia* (London, 1602; STC 3611), C2r.
- ²⁵ John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, Dec. 4, 1611, TNA, SP 14/67, f. 107v.
- ²⁶ John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, Aug. 1, 1613, TNA, SP 14/74, f. 101r.
- ²⁷ Thomas Harriot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (London, 1588; STC 12785), Ev.
- ²⁸ John Donne, "To His Mistress Going to Bed," in *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (Oxford: Penguin, 1996); Josuah Sylvester, "The Colonies," in *Du Bartas his deuine weekes and workes* (London, 1611; STC 21651); William Strachey, "The historie of travaile into Virginia," [c. early seventeenth century], British Library, Sloane MS 1622; Richard Brathwaite, *A solemne iouiall disputation* (London, 1617; STC 3585); Thomas Dekker, *The guls horne-booke* (London, 1609; STC 6500).
- ²⁹ Gray, *A good speed to Virginia*, C2r.
- ³⁰ Thomas Harriot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (London, 1590; STC 12786), Er.
- ³¹ John Smith, *A description of New England* (London, 1616; STC 22788), I2v.
- ³² John Bonoecil, *His Maiesties gracious letter to the Earle of South-Hampton* (London, 1622; STC 14378), M3v.
- ³³ J. H. M. Salmon, "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 169-190; Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 359; Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of Colonization, 1500 – 1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 159-161.
- ³⁴ John Davies, *A discourse of the true causes why Ireland was neuer entirely subdued* (London, 1612; STC 6348), Mm2v.
- ³⁵ Raphael Holinshed, *The firste volume of the chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577; STC 13568b), D4v.

³⁶ John Donne, quoted in Thomas Festa, “The Metaphysics of Labour in John Donne’s Sermon to the Virginia Company,” *Studies in Philology*, 106 (2009), 76-99, at 92.

³⁷ Gray, *A good speed to Virginia*, C4r.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, D4r.

³⁹ John Floyd, *Purgatories triumph ouer hell* (St-Omer, 1613; STC 11114), Bb3r.

⁴⁰ John Floyd, *The ouerthrow of the Protestants pulpit-Babels* (St-Omer, 1612; STC 11111), M4v.

⁴¹ “A report of S[i]r Yeardlyes going Governor to Virginia,” Dec. 5, 1618, Ferrar Papers (FP) 93, *Virginia Company Archives* <<http://www.virginiacompanyarchives.amdigital.co.uk>> [accessed Sept. 9, 2017].

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America*, 61; see also Andrew Fitzmaurice’s essay in this volume.

⁴⁷ “A report of S[i]r Yeardlyes going Governor to Virginia”; Bonoel, *His Maiesties gracious letter to the Earle of South-Hampton*.

⁴⁸ “A report of S[i]r Yeardlyes going Governor to Virginia.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, Nov. 28, 1618, TNA, SP 14/103, f. 170v.

⁵¹ “A Reporte of the manner of proceeding in the General Assembly,” in *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, 16.

⁵² “Instructions to the Gouvernors for the tyme beinge & Counsell of state in Virginia, 1621,” FP 285, *Virginia Company Archives* <<http://www.virgionacompanyarchives.amdigital.co.uk>> [accessed Sept. 22, 2015].

⁵³ “To the Right Hono[ura]ble our very good Lordes,” in *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, 35.

⁵⁴ “A Reporte of the manner of proceeding in the General Assembly,” *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, 10.

⁵⁵ “A Project from M[aste]r Caswell for creating Noblemen in Virginia,” July 3, 1619, FP 121, *Virginia Company Archives* <<http://www.virgionacompanyarchives.amdigital.co.uk>> [accessed Sept. 22, 2017]. This may be the Richard Caswell listed in the Virginia Company investors in *A declaration of the colonie* (1620), who adventured a substantial 125*l*.

⁵⁶ Horn, *Land as God Made It*, 255-258.

⁵⁷ Edward Waterhouse, *A declaration of the state of colony and affaires in Virginia* (London, 1622; STC 25104), C3v.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, D3v-D4r.

⁵⁹ “Draft of Instructions to the Commissioners to Investigate Virginia Affairs,” Apr. 14, 1623, in *Records of the Virginia Company, Volume IV*, ed. Susan Myra Kingsbury (Washington, DC: Government Print Office, 1935), 118.

⁶⁰ “Treasurer and Council for Virginia. Letter to Governor and Council in Virginia,” Aug. 1, 1622, in *Records of the Virginia Company, Volume III*, ed. Susan Myra Kingsbury (Washington, DC: Government Print Office, 1933), 666.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 667.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 669.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ “A Briefe Declaration of the Plantation of *Virginia* during the first Twelve Yeares, when Sir *Thomas Smith* was Governor...By the Ancient Planters nowe remaining alive in *Virginia*,” c. 1623, in *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, 37.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁰ The King to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Apr. 28, 1624, TNA, SP 14/163, f. 106r; John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, Apr. 30, 1624, TNA, SP 14/163, f. 110r.

⁷¹ “Discourse of the Old Company,” in *Records of the Virginia Company, Volume IV*, 530.

⁷² John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, Apr. 30, 1624, London, TNA, SP 14/163, f. 110r.

⁷³ Sir Francis Nethersole to Dudley Carleton, July 3, 1624, TNA, SP 14/169, f. 19r.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Lord President Mandeville to Secretary Conway, Oct. 17, 1623, TNA, SP 14/153, f. 87.

⁷⁶ Governor Wyatt and Council of Virginia to the Privy Council, May 17, 1626, in “Documents of Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 8 (1928), 157-67, at 166.

⁷⁷ Christopher Brooke, *A poem on the late massacre in Virginia* (1622; STC 3830.5), A4v, B4r.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Cr, C2r.

⁷⁹ “The answere of the general assemblie in Virginia to King James,” Feb. 16, 1624, FP 527, *Virginia Company Archives* <<http://www.virginiacompanyarchives.amdigital.co.uk>> [accessed Sept. 9, 2017].

⁸⁰ “Discourse of the Old Company,” in *Records of the Virginia Company, Volume IV*, 546.

⁸¹ Ibid., 547.

⁸² Quoted in Horn, *Land as God Made It*, 279.

⁸³ Samuel Purchas, *The kings towre* (London, 1623; STC 20502), D4v.

⁸⁴ Ibid., D4v-D5r.

⁸⁵ “Basilikon Doron,” in James I, *Workes* (London, 1616; STC 14344), O2r.

⁸⁶ Samuel Purchas, “Virginia’s Verger,” in *Purchas his pilgrimes* (London, 1625; STC 20509), Mmmmmmm3v.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Commission to Sir Francis Wyatt,” Aug. 26, 1624, in “Documents of Sir Francis Wyatt, Governor,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 8 (1928), 160.

⁸⁹ Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 54.

⁹⁰ John Pory to Dudley Carleton, Sept. 30, 1619, in *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606 – 1625*, 282.

⁹¹ John Hagthorpe, *Englands-exchequer* (London, 1625; STC 12603), E3v.

⁹² Sir Walter Cope to the earl of Salisbury, August 1607, Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 124/18r.

⁹³ John Taylor, *All the workes of Iohn Taylor the water-poet* (London, 1630; STC 23725), Gg6r.

⁹⁴ Verses by T. T., in Smith, *Generall historie of Virginia*, “A Preface of four Poynts.”