

THE OPENING OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD:
ENGLAND'S TRANSATLANTIC INTERESTS DURING THE REIGN OF HENRY VIII

By
LYDIA TOWNS

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Supervising Committee:

Imre Demhardt, Supervising Professor

John Garrigus

Kathryne Beebe

Alan Gallay

ABSTRACT

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Lydia Towns, Ph.D.

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This dissertation explores the birth of the English Atlantic by looking at English activities and discussions of the Atlantic world from roughly 1481-1560. Rather than being disinterested in exploration during the reign of Henry VIII, this dissertation proves that the English were aware of what was happening in the Atlantic world through the transnational flow of information, imagined the potentials of the New World for both trade and colonization, and actively participated in the opening of transatlantic trade through transnational networks. To do this, the entirety of the Atlantic, all four continents, are considered and the English activity there analyzed. This dissertation uses a variety of methods, examining cartographic and literary interpretations and representations of the New World, familial ties, merchant networks, voyages of exploration and political and diplomatic material to explore my subject across the social strata of England, giving equal weight to common merchants' and scholars' perceptions of the Atlantic as I do to Henry VIII's court. Through these varied methods, this dissertation proves that the creation of the British Atlantic was not state sponsored, like the Spanish Atlantic, but a transnational space inhabited and expanded by merchants, adventurers and the scholars who created imagined spaces for the English. Not only does this reveal the consistent and active presence of the English in the Atlantic world throughout the sixteenth century, but it also acts as a case study for the European moment of contact with the Atlantic World.

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List of Abbreviations

BL British Library

BRO Bristol Records Office

LMA London Metropolitan Archives

L&P Brewer, J. S., and R. H. Brodie, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, vol. 1-7, 2nd ed. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office 1920.

NAW Quinn, David B., Alison M. Quinn, Susan Hillier, *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, 5 volumes New York: Arno Press, 1979.

PLRE Fehrenback, R. J., E. S. Leedham-Green, eds. *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists*, vol. II-III, Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992.

SP State Papers

TNA The National Archives, Kew, UK

Introduction

This project originated from an office conversation between my fellow graduate student, Christopher Malmberg, and myself about the competitive nature of Henry VIII. So much of Henry's personality, the pageantry and excess of his court, the jousting and hunting, even the politics, policy, and warfare, stemmed from Henry's consistent need to be the best, to prove his superiority, and to outshine those around him and his peers on the continent. This aspect of Henry's personality led to the defining moments of his monarchy. We wondered if Henry was competitive with both France and Spain, to the point that it impacted even the shoes he wore and the dances he performed, why did he not do anything in the Atlantic world? From this key question, this dissertation emerged. It started by asking, "What was Henry's attitude toward the opening of the Atlantic world?" From this, subsequent questions emerged which focused on the central themes of how the English participated in the opening of the Atlantic world and how they perceived the discoveries of the New World.

The primary argument of this dissertation is that the English were interested in the new discoveries occurring in the Atlantic world during the first half of the sixteenth century; that they discussed these discoveries in educated circles and participated physically in the opening of the Atlantic to European expansion much earlier than the traditional historiographical narrative has acknowledged. This activity demonstrates a continuity of English interest and activity from the Cabot voyages in the late fifteenth century to the Elizabethan voyages of the late sixteenth century, and laid the foundation for the celebrated English voyages which occurred during the

reign of Elizabeth I.¹ This dissertation pushes back against the traditional historiographical narrative that the English were late to the pursuit of Atlantic expansion due to little or no interest in Atlantic discoveries.² While it has long been acknowledged that the English were among the first to look westward for a route to Cathay, primarily seen in the Cabot voyages during the reign of Henry VII, English activity in the Atlantic during the first half of the sixteenth century has generally been either ignored or trivialized. This dissertation argues that not only were Englishmen interested in the new discoveries made during the sixteenth century, they actively discussed them, participated in Spanish voyages to the New World, and embarked on their own voyages to West Africa and Brazil. English merchants, exemplified by William Hawkins, Robert Thorne, Roger Barlow and the London merchants in Seville, eagerly watched the expansion of Atlantic markets and sought to expand their own financial futures through these markets. Through their merchant venturers, these Englishmen engaged in Atlantic trade, opened business with the Spanish colonies, broke through the Portuguese trade monopoly in Africa, and laid the foundation for the opening of English transatlantic trade, thus paving the way for future English expansion. By analyzing the discussions, trade, and exploration in which the English took part, the transnational nature of the early Atlantic world is revealed.

¹ As will be demonstrated later in this dissertation, the vast majority of the historiography of exploration and discovery, and of the British Atlantic, argues that there was a sharp falling off of English interest in the Atlantic during the first half of the sixteenth century and little to no English activity in the Atlantic.

² This seems to be a common interpretation of English activity in the Atlantic and can be seen in a wide range of historiography. K. G. Davies makes this argument when discussing English exploration and colonization, K.G. Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century*. Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion vol. IV. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974) 4-8. James Walvin makes this argument throughout his book on Britain's transatlantic slave trade, James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora*, (Cassell, 2000). Felipe Fernández-Armesto also presents this argument when he discusses why the Spanish and the Portuguese were able to establish lasting New World colonies decades before the English. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*, (Oxford University Press, 2006); Trevor Bernard, "The British Atlantic," Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 111-136.

Throughout the reign of Henry VIII there were several westward voyages, and proposals for voyages, whose express purpose was to explore, seek westward passages to Cathay and establish English settlements in newly discovered lands. Expeditions such as those of John Rastell (1519), John Rut (1527), and Richard Hore (1536) have been acknowledged by historians of English exploration and discovery, but have remained all but forgotten due to the misperception that these voyages are unimportant to the larger narrative because they did not achieve their expressed purpose of permanent settlement, or new cartographic images and geographic discoveries. Likewise, the voyages to West Africa, exemplified by William Hawkins (1530-1541), Thomas Wyndham (1553), John Lok (1554), and William Towerson (1555-56, 1556-57, and 1558-9), remain almost completely unstudied by historians, with the later voyages of Sir John Hawkins receiving historiographical credit for opening West Africa and the Atlantic to English trade. This dissertation brings these early sixteenth century voyages, and others like them, to light and assesses them in their contemporary context. While some of these expeditions ended in colossal failures, many Englishmen, such as William Hawkins, made their fortunes in the Atlantic. Their activities reveal an entangled and transnational Atlantic in which entrepreneurs from across Europe participated in the opening of the Atlantic world. Through these voyages, and the discussions of proposed voyages, it is revealed that there was a continuation of substantial pre-Elizabethan English interest and activity in the Atlantic and that this activity helped shape and determine the much-celebrated activity in the Atlantic in the final decades of the sixteenth century under Elizabeth I.

European activity in the Atlantic during the sixteenth century has long been the subject of historical research and debate, with a rich and varied historiography developing around the many explorers whose expeditions resulted in famous cartographic images or widely read travel

accounts. Christopher Columbus' voyage of 1492 set into motion a series of discoveries that dramatically changed the European worldview. Columbus was quickly followed by the celebrated voyages of such explorers as, John Cabot (1497, 1498), Ferdinand Magellan (1519-1521), Jaques Cartier (1534, 1535-6), and many others. The stories brought back by these explorers had such a profound effect on Western Europe that Richard Popkin stated "during the sixteenth century, the very foundations and structure of the medieval intellectual world of western Europe were shaken and to a large degree destroyed."³ This dramatic shift was due in large part, according to Popkin, to the "radical scientific discoveries, and hitherto unbelievable feats of exploration and expansion."⁴ The realization that Columbus had discovered a "New World," and not the outermost regions of the Orient, changed the way Western Europe saw the world. This phenomenon has been well documented in France, Spain, and Portugal, as well as the German provinces.⁵ However, the impact of the discovery of the New World on England was not well documented by primary source material or scholarship. Rather, many historiographies have assumed that the English were not all that interested in what was

³Richard H. Popkin, ed., *The Philosophy of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1966) 1.

⁴ Popkin, 1. This assertion is also made by Alfred Crosby, who argues that the discovery of the New World dramatically changed the European perspective of the world and challenged the Church's Biblical interpretation of the physical world and mankind. Alfred W. Crosby Jr. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972,) 9-12. Olive Dickason argues that the realization that the Americas were a "new world" and were populated by unreached people groups had a dramatic impact on the church and challenged the core religious beliefs and world views of the Western World. Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 29, 43. Anthony Grafton describes this challenge by stating that the educated world was rocked to its very foundations with the discovery of the New World and the realization that the ancient texts, such as Aristotle, were wrong or could not account for the new facts being discovered. Anthony Grafton, with April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1-4.

⁵ This can clearly be seen in the historiographies of travel literature, cartographic history, exploration and discovery history, as well as in the historiography of early Spanish and Portuguese colonization. For a very short example of this see works such as Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders*; Grafton, et al.; David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620*. (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965).

happening in the larger world. This assumption has been based, in large part, on the lack of material from English printing presses regarding the discovery of the New World.⁶ This assumes much. While there are not many surviving documents from the early sixteenth century, this does not mean the English were apathetic toward the discovery of the Americas, or that they were disengaged with the larger discussions taking place in Europe, as Western society grappled with the discovery of a “New World.” Indeed, key figures in the court of Henry VIII remained actively involved in the conversations regarding the Americas and were very much interested in English participation in the New World, just as they were actively engaged in wider academic discussions occurring throughout Europe.

The dramatic challenge to the intellectual foundations of western philosophy presented by the discovery of a new world did not go unnoticed in the court of Henry VIII. Henry was well known in Europe for his interest in the sciences, and for surrounding himself with some of the brightest minds in Europe, including Sir Thomas More, whose household regularly welcomed such learned men as Erasmus, and which has been described as an “international center for humanist studies.”⁷ Henry was known for his patronage of the sciences and education

⁶Jonathan Hart makes this argument when he points out that travel literature was enjoying a surge in publications in Europe, with Vespucci’s voyages being translated into Italian, Latin and German, but that there is no evidence of such travel literature being published in English. Thus, he states that there was “little market for the printing of travel narratives in English,” that, to him, demonstrates a lack of interest in England regarding the exploration of the Americas. Jonathan Hart, *Representing the New World: The English and French Uses of the Example of Spain*, (New York: Pelgrave, 2001), 34. John Friske points out that there were only twelve books published in England on the Americas and Atlantic exploration before 1576. John Friske, *The Discovery of America: with Some Account of Ancient America and the Spanish Conquest*, vol. II, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892), 17. John Parker also makes a similar argument, Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 43.

⁷ Neville Williams, *Henry VIII and His Court*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), 83. This opinion of both Henry’s court and More’s household is well represented in Erasmus’ letters. See letters 100, 105, 110, 184, 187, 326, in Francis Morgan Nichols’ edited edition of Erasmus’ letters, just to point out a few obvious references to the level of learning in England at the time. In epistle 110 Erasmus writes to Robert Fisher in 1499 stating that he likes England very much as he has encountered “so much learning, not hacknied and trivial, but deep, accurate, ancient, Latin and Greek, that but for the curiosity of seeing it, I do not now so much care for Italy.” Erasmus then goes on to compare the men in More’s circle to the Ancient Greeks. Francis Morgan Nichols, ed. *The epistles of Erasmus, from his earliest letters to his fifty-first year, arranged in order of time: English translations from the early*

throughout his reign.⁸ In addition to Henry's personal patronage, several of his wives were also reputed to have contributed greatly to the atmosphere of education and learning at court.

Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, is said to have shared her husband's desire to sponsor scholastic pursuits, and her advancement of scholars has been described as possibly her most important constructive contribution as Queen.⁹ Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, was also known for being a patron of humanist scholars, returning to England from France with a strong interest in humanist thought.¹⁰

In addition to his personal household, Henry's chief advisors were also known for their interest in academic debates, and each contributed in some way to furthering academic pursuits. Sir Thomas More is known for having created a scholastic environment among his circle of friends, which included many of the leading minds from the continent. Among these were Erasmus, the German mathematician Simon Grynaeus, the Portuguese poet and historian Damião de Goes, the Swiss geographer Glareanus, and many others.¹¹ Erasmus stated that "in More's household you would realize that Plato's academy was revived."¹² The literary works of men such as More (1516) and his brother-in-law John Rastell (1519), and Richard Eden (1555), along with the cartographic imagery produced for Henry's court by such men as Verrazzano (1525)

correspondence, with a commentary confirming the chronological arrangement, and supplying further biographical matter, vol. 1. (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), 226.

⁸ Henry was said to be "learned in all sciences" and he was to have possessed a passion for astronomy. The cupboards in his privy lodgings contained various scientific instruments, including his personal astrolabe. Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 7-9. An interesting illustration of Henry's active role in academia is that when Henry heard that a society of Trojans had formed in Oxford to oppose the introduction of the study of Greek, Henry personally intervened to ensure that Greek would be taught at Oxford. Williams, 87.

⁹ Williams, 29. Antonia McLean, *Humanism and the Rise of Science in Tudor England*, (New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications, Inc., 1974), 44.

¹⁰ McLean, 45.

¹¹ Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 21.

¹² Nichols, Epistle 110. Farrago, 95; Ep. V. 2; C. 12 (14), 226. Keith Watson, "Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)" *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education*, (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIV, no. ½, (1994), 185-202, 8.

and Jean Rotz (c.1535-1542), helped shape the image that educated elites in England had of the newly found lands and, ultimately, helped lay the foundations for the English perception of both the New World and of Native Americans that dominated England by the end of the sixteenth century.

While this academic culture in England has been readily acknowledged by those who study the Reformation, historians of exploration and discovery and of the British Atlantic seem to have missed the culture of learning fostered by Henry's court. Traditionally, the first half of the sixteenth century is simply skipped over by those who are discussing English exploration or colonization. This is due to the general assumption that Henry VIII's reign saw a significant decrease of interest in the New World, if not a complete falling off of such interest. Much of the historiography presents the argument that interest in the New World did not truly begin until the Elizabethan era, when Richard Hakluyt became, according to David Armitage, the "intellectual progenitor of the Empire."¹³ This assumption is demonstrated through a wide range of historiography concerning this time period, spanning the course of the last century and earlier.¹⁴ Much of this historiography is based on imperialistic understandings of the Atlantic world, defining European participation in the Atlantic by the presence of imperial boundaries, and the lack of Atlantic aspirations by the failure to establish imperial footholds.

¹³ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70.

¹⁴ For examples of this see various essays in both Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt, eds. *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, Hakluyt Society Extra Series, 47 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), and D. B. Quinn, ed. *The Hakluyt Handbook*, 2 volumes, (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1974). See also J.A. Froude, *Short Studies in Great Subjects*, 4 volumes, (London: 1894), vol. I, 446; Andrews, Kenneth. *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

Historians are often distracted by the excesses of Henry's court, his love for pageantry, and lavish displays of wealth. Henry's reluctance to devote time to the details of running his kingdom and his apparent abhorrence for paperwork has added to the impression that he was more interested in pageantry and tournaments than politics and studies.¹⁵ This has led some to underestimate Henry's desire to learn, attributing the advances in learning that occurred in his court to the activities of Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas More.¹⁶ However, as a young man Henry attracted the admiration of such scholars as Erasmus, who, despite his abhorrence for those who were involved in court life and governance, is recorded on several occasions admiring the intellect of Henry and his court. He stated that, "Henry was a universal genius. He has never neglected his studies; and whenever he has leisure from his political occupations, he reads or disputes—of which he is very fond—with remarkable courtesy and unruffled temper."¹⁷ Henry was known for his interest in the sciences and took an active and personal interest in his navy, both of which he shared with members of his court.¹⁸ Due to this personal interest and the example of Henry's court, historian David Loades argues that by the end of Henry's reign, "an intelligent interest in navigation and cosmography was now considered a suitable part of gentleman's breeding."¹⁹

In addition to underestimating the academic interests of Henry VIII's court and household, the historiography has often argued that the limited number of books on the Americas

¹⁵ For a discussion of Henry's apparent willingness to allow Wolsey to run his kingdom and his reluctance to take care of paperwork himself see Williams, pp. 58, 82.

¹⁶ McLean makes this argument in several places, see pp. 49, 124. John Friske pointed out the lack of expanding maritime knowledge during the reign of Henry VIII, stating that there were very few books published on such matters during Henry's reign. Friske uses this to argue that there was a lack of interest in scientific learning in Henry's court. Friske, 17.

¹⁷ Williams, 83. See Nichols, letters 100, 105, 110, 184, 187, 326.

¹⁸ For a discussion of this see chapters 2 and 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁹ Loades, David. *The Tudor Navy: An Administrative, Political and Military History*, (Brookfield, Vermont: Scolar Press, 1992), 102.

published in England is indicative of a lack of interest in the New World.²⁰ John Parker argued the English had no real concern for the new geographical information; nor was knowledge based upon the ancient geographers of “sufficient public interest in the 1550s” to warrant publication.²¹ While he did state that the lack of publications in English on the New World “is not to say that overseas interests were non-existent in England during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries,” he stressed that “the impression is unavoidable that between 1520 and 1540 most Englishmen were but little interested in the new discoveries and resulting opportunities for commerce and missionary work. Henry’s earlier interest in America gave way before domestic problems.”²² Jonathan Hart made a similar argument when he pointed out that travel literature enjoyed a surge in publication in Europe, with Vespucci’s voyages being translated into Italian, Latin, and German, while there is no evidence of such travel literature being published in English. Thus, he stated there was “little market for the printing of travel narratives in English,” demonstrating a lack of interest in England regarding the exploration of the Americas.²³ This same argument is also made by Jeffrey Knapp who stated that, “Columbus’s first letter describing his discoveries sold throughout the Continent by 1494, but never found an English publisher; in fact, between the time of Columbus’s original voyage and Richard Eden’s path-breaking *Treatyse of the Newe India* (1553), a span of sixty years, only one English work devoted to America seems to have been printed—in Antwerp.”²⁴ In this manner, the lack of

²⁰ Friske, 17. He points out that there were only twelve books published in England on the Americas and Atlantic exploration before 1576.

²¹ Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 43.

²² Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 31; 28.

²³ Hart, 34.

²⁴ Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest*, (London: University of California Press, 1992), 18. Knapp does not identify the one work he refers to, whether it is More’s *Utopia*, or Jan van Doesborch’s *Of the Newe Lands* is unclear. What is clear is that Knapp does not consider Rastell’s *III Elements*, which contains a description of North America and an argument for colonization, to count as an English printed work on the Americas.

English editions of travel literature has been used to argue that there was little to no interest regarding the New World in England until Hakluyt made it popular.

Basing this assumption on the lack of publications in English makes a false assumption grounded in an incorrect understanding of the history of printing in the sixteenth century. Despite his statement that there was little interest in England regarding the new discoveries, Parker showed that there was a very limited printing business in England across all subjects at this time. In 1500 there were 266 printing presses in continental Europe, while England only had nine.²⁵ This is a similar figure to that offered by Michael Van Cleave Alexander, who stated that in 1500 there were eight print shops, five of which were in London, while at the same time Italy had seventy-three printing presses, Germany had fifty-one, Spain had twenty-four, the Low Countries fifteen, and Switzerland, eight.²⁶ This discrepancy in the size of the printing industry could account for the limited number of publications in English.

Henry VII's suspicions of the printing press might also be a reason for the limited number English printshops. While Henry VII did commission several works and had a refined appetite for books, he was slow to utilize the press for his benefit, yet quickly recognized the potential it held for dissenting voices. This suspicion of the potential for subversion of the crown meant that control of the press would be a major issue for Henry VII, and continued to be a problem until 1557, when the Stationers' Company was established with the right to supervise the distribution of all printed works.²⁷ Henry VII handed control of the press to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1501, giving him complete control over the authorization of the publication of

²⁵ Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 9.

²⁶ Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *The First of the Tudors: A Study of Henry VII and His Reign*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 172, printing press figures are found in chapter 9, footnote 46, 240.

²⁷ Alexander, 170-171.

books and pamphlets, as well as the authority to grant licenses for the importation of printed works from the continent.²⁸ Suspicion and control of the presses limited what could be printed and the extent of the printing industry.

During the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, much of the literature consumed in England, if not most, came from the continent. In fact, the first book on voyages to the New World to be published in English was published not in England, but in Antwerp in 1510-1511 when Jan van Doesborch published *Of the Newe Lands and of ye people found by the messengers of the kynge of portyngale*.²⁹ The fact that this work was written in English in Antwerp shows that a Dutch printer translated into English and printed books specifically for an English market. European printers were cognizant of the English market. Booksellers, specifically booksellers from France and the Low Countries, attended the major fairs on the Continent to buy inventory for shipment to England. These booksellers were well received by English buyers. In 1479-80 three major book importers, one of whom was Peter Actors, imported roughly fourteen hundred books into England, in just one year.³⁰ Actors eventually became chief stationer to the Crown. He was the chief importer of foreign books during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and on December 5, 1485, he received a license from the crown to import any number of Continental books and sell them without paying customs or rendering any account thereof.³¹ Unfortunately, grants such as this one make it

²⁸Despite this ruling Henry often sidestepped his own rules and allowed special privileges to the importers of foreign books. Alexander, 171.

²⁹ Jan van Doesborch, *Of the new Landes and of ye People Founde by the Messengers of the kynge of Portyngale named Emanuel. Of the X Dyvers Nacyons Crystened. Of Pope John and his Landes and of the Costely Keyes and Wonders Molodyes that in that Lande is*, (Antwerp, 1511), As Found in, Richard Eden, *The First Three English Books on America*, Edward Arber, ed., (Birmingham: 1885). Doesborch's book contained three sections with one on America based on Vespucci's accounts. H.C. Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian 1500-1660*. (Dallas: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1979), 18.

³⁰ Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 9; Alexander, footnote 46, 240.

³¹ Alexander, 172.

difficult to track which books entered the country when and at what rate. However, it is known that Actors' business steadily increased during the last decade or so of the fifteenth century, and it can be assumed that as his business increased, so did his imports from Europe.³² As the literacy rate increased among the merchants and well-born in England during the sixteenth century, the number of books imported from European presses continued to increase.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the educated elite were trained in the “learned” languages of scholars. This was done, in large part, to maintain the international community of scholars who shared their knowledge, particularly their knowledge of geography, exploration, and history, with each other.³³ Hart stated that “This was as true of the French and English as it was of the Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, Dutch, and other nationalities...One central aspect was geography.”³⁴ Rather than keeping geographic and exploration knowledge locked away, classifying it as a state secret, as Spain and Portugal began to do during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, knowledge was shared freely.³⁵ Further, McLean argued that Latin remained the language of learning in the early sixteenth century, and when books began to be widely printed in the vernacular, it fractured the international community of scholars.³⁶ Because of this, many, if not all, of the educated elite were able to read Latin.³⁷ When More published *Utopia* in 1516, he published it in Latin, not English, indicating that his targeted audience was well versed in Latin.³⁸ Furthermore, the sixteenth-century international network of scholars, who shared

³² Alexander, 172.

³³ Hart 14-5.

³⁴ Hart, 15.

³⁵ This is most clearly seen in the establishment of La Casa de Contratación in Spain in 1503. Among its many duties the Casa was tasked with gathering all cartographic knowledge of the Atlantic discoveries to create the Padrón Real and with guarding both cartographic and nautical information.

³⁶ McLean, 22-24.

³⁷ McLean, 22.

³⁸ Hart, 35.

information, especially geographical knowledge, would have shared such profound academic discussions as those concerning the discovery of the New World across international and language barriers.

Latin was not the only language the educated elite could read. It is probable that many in these circles would have also possessed the ability to read German, as the German provinces in this period had become a center of learning.³⁹ John Rastell, who was More's brother-in-law, a member of his inner circle, as well as the leader and organizer of an expedition to North America in 1517, had access to the "best Continental knowledge" and drew heavily on the works of Martin Waldsemüller and Gregorius Reisch, both of whom published extensively in German, as well as works written in French, such as Johannes Scrobosco's *Textus de Sphaera*. for his *Interlude of the IIII Elements*, which is the first English call for colonization of North America.⁴⁰ Several of the references Rastell made in his poem also indicate that he was very familiar with the information brought back by Amerigo Vespucci.⁴¹ More indicated that the accounts of Vespucci were well known in England by 1516, despite the fact that they had not yet been translated into English. In the opening scene of *Utopia*, Vespucci's voyages are described as

³⁹ Elizabeth M. Nugent, "Sources of John Rastell's the Nature of the Four Elements" *PMLA*, vol. 57. (March., 1941). 74-88. 75.

⁴⁰ Nugent, 75-9. Nugent goes on to demonstrate that Rastell drew heavily on the work of Johannes Scrobosco, whose *Textus de Sphaera* was published in Paris in 1511 in French. M.E. Borish also argues that Rastell drew heavily on Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica*, arguing that this is the source for much of the material on cosmology, natural history and geography. M.E. Borish, "The Source and Intention of *The Four Elements*" *Studies in Philology*. (Jan, 1938), 35, 149-63, 151. This is also argued by Parker who states that Rastell had "access to the best Continental knowledge, as is evident by the direct relationship that has been found between his play and the major early sixteenth-century works on geography, cosmography and exploration." Parker, 24.

⁴¹ Rastell calls the new world America, stating that it had been first recognized as a New World by Vespucci, and describes it as a continent made up of a northern and southern landmass, indicating his familiarity of Waldsemüller's map of the world which is included in Waldsemüller's *Cosmographiae Introductio*. In addition to this, many of the descriptions he gives of the inhabitants of North America are similar to some of the descriptions found in the accounts of Vespucci's voyages and in Peter Martyr's accounts of Columbus. The fact that he does this in 1517-1519 when he wrote the play indicates that he was up to date on the latest information being published in Europe. John Rastell, *Interlude of the Four Elements*, (London: 1530).

“those foure that be now in print, and abroad in every mans hands.”⁴² By describing Vespucci’s voyages as being “in every mans hands,” More indicated they were well known throughout the educated world, including England, despite the lack of an English translation.⁴³ Thus, the argument that the learned elite in England, specifically those who were part of Henry’s court, were not interested in the discoveries of the New World because of the lack of publications in English, or on English presses, regarding these discoveries is misleading. This dissertation argues that these men were more than willing to read in other languages and did, in fact, read much of the leading literature being published in Europe.

Historiography of Exploration and Discovery

While some historians working in the early twentieth century, such as James Williamson and Irene Wright, both of whom remain leading authorities on English exploration, acknowledged some of the attempts made by the English during the first half of the sixteenth century, they argued that these attempts are of little to no consequence to the study of English interaction with the opening of the Atlantic world. They present the idea that true interest in the New World did not begin until the Elizabethan era, when figures such as Hakluyt, Drake and Raleigh embodied the expansionist movement.⁴⁴ In a similar manner, David Quinn, who wrote

⁴² Thomas More, *The Common Wealth of Utopia: Containing a Learned and pleasant Discourse of the best state of a Publike Weale, as it is found in the Government of the new Ile called Utopia*, (1516), (London: B. Alsop & T. Fawcet, 1639), 7.

⁴³ Amerigo Vespucci’s letters describing his voyages saw sixty editions between 1502 and 1529 throughout Europe, being published in various cities in what is today Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Bohemia. Thirty-seven editions were in the vernacular, half of which were in German. Dickason points out that this reflects the financial as well as the scholarly interests in the discoveries. She goes on to argue that one of the best-known editions appeared in Waldsemüller’s *Cosmographiae Introductio* of 1507. Dickason, 7-8.

⁴⁴ Williamson gives a very brief summary of the English expeditions to the Americas during the reign of Henry VIII; however, he offers no real analysis of how they might have impacted England at the time and points out that they were failures, as they did not result in permanent settlements or significant monetary gain. His treatment of English activities in West Africa is somewhat better, acknowledging the wealth William Hawkins was able to make in the South Atlantic, however, he focuses on the activities of Sir John Hawkins as being the crucial turning point in England’s interest in the Atlantic world. James A. Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots and the English Discovery*

more on the English expeditions of the first half of the century than perhaps any other historian, and remains the foremost authority on the subject, stated that “the reign of Henry VIII from 1509 to 1547 was not distinguished by any remarkable English addition to the process of discovery of the North Atlantic and its western borderlands.”⁴⁵ This argument presents the idea that there is nothing worth studying during the reign of Henry VIII, as there is no “remarkable” addition to cartographic knowledge of the north Atlantic. Similarly, Kenneth Andrews stated that;

the whole record of English North Atlantic enterprise between 1509 and 1550 contrasts strongly with that of the earlier period. Whereas from 1480 to 1509 they had led the way in discovery and reconnaissance of the northwestern shores of North America, rivalled there only by the Portuguese, after 1509 they achieved nothing to compare with the work of Fagundes for Portugal, Verrazzano and Cartier for France, or Gomes for Spain.⁴⁶

This line of reasoning would exclude famous Elizabethan adventurers, like Humphrey Gilbert, from the list of endeavors worth discussion, as he did not produce any surviving evidence of cartographic discoveries or “remarkable” additions to the English process of discovery of the North Atlantic, and because his efforts to explore and colonize ended in failure.

Quinn’s statement regarding the reign of Henry VIII is not due to an ignorance of the voyages that occurred. As will be discussed later, Quinn was well aware of these voyages and

of North America Under Henry VII and Henry VIII, (London: The Argonaut Press, 1929); _____, *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913); _____, *Hawkins of Plymouth: A New History of Sir John Hawkins & of other members of his family prominent in Tudor England*. (1949), (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969). On a similar note, in her discussion of the English voyage of 1527, Wright is quick to point out that there is no visible reaction in England to the English ship in the Caribbean, therefore this voyage is of little consequence. She does not offer any insightful discussion of what motivated the expedition to begin with or what this expedition might reveal about England’s attitude towards the Americas. Wright, Irene A. *Spanish Documents Concerning English Voyages to the Caribbean, 1527-1568*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1929).

⁴⁵ David B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the Bristol Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: the Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error of Colonization in North America by the English*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 160.

⁴⁶ Andrews, 56. Michael Foss makes a similar argument when he states that Henry VIII did not carry on his father’s support of exploration because he “judged the exploration expensive, the trading unprofitable, and the settlements a waste of manpower: glory was to be won in Europe, not on virgin land across an ugly ocean.” Michael Foss, *Undreamed Shores: England’s Wasted Empire in America*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), 33. Antonia McLean also argues that Henry VIII was not interested in the New World and that his court and the leading merchants in England at the time were uninterested in the possibilities of transatlantic trade. McLean, 33.

much of the activity that this dissertation addresses. However, he asked different questions of these voyages and approached them with different assumptions. Quinn argued that the lack of distinguished voyages was due to the fact that, “the voyages of the Cabots and the Company of Adventurers had revealed a land that was unprofitable – either because its inhabitants had nothing worthwhile to trade and showed no great enthusiasm for English goods, or because the seas were cold, their margins frozen, their promise after the rigors of exploration still unrevealed.”⁴⁷ K.G. Davies added to this line of reasoning by arguing that England was late to Atlantic exploration and exploitation, stating that English participation in discussions of Atlantic activity did not begin until the middle of the sixteenth-century, when Spain’s riches became well known. He further stated that England’s first discussion of colonization did not come about until Gilbert’s efforts to colonize Newfoundland.⁴⁸

Mary C. Fuller expanded on the idea that England was late to the Atlantic world due to the perceived lack of rich resources and profit in the north. She stated that “the failure to attach significance and meaning to Newfoundland’s particular history has made for a failure of memory—not, to be sure, in Newfoundland itself, but within the larger communities whose understandings have shaped our sense of North American history after contact.”⁴⁹ Fuller argued that the reason it took England so long to establish a permanent presence in the New World, and thus the reason English activities in Newfoundland have been marginalized, is that Cabot’s initial discovery of the New World revealed a cold, foggy region with no obvious source of wealth, while Columbus discovered a land overflowing with resources.⁵⁰ Thus, Newfoundland was a

⁴⁷ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 160.

⁴⁸ Davies, 4-8.

⁴⁹ Mary C. Fuller, *Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narratives in the Age of European Expansion*, (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 118.

⁵⁰ Fuller, 121-124.

false start, as “there was little reason to explore this cold, inhospitable, and unattractive land except to search for a passage that could lead to the wealth beyond.”⁵¹ Arguments such as these are based on preconceived notions of what constituted profit for sixteenth century explorers. This perception of profit excludes timber and the fisheries. However, as is discussed in chapter three, in 1519 John Rastell presented the argument that the rich timber land and bountiful fisheries in North America were exactly why England should colonize the Newfoundland region, as the forests would provide pitch, tar, and soap ash, (all items that England had to import), and as the fisheries were so bountiful that the French were already bringing in a hundred ships full of fish each year.⁵²

While the above historiography has acknowledged the presence of some English voyages before the Elizabethans, a strong trend, for more than a century, within the historiography of exploration and discovery argues that English activity in the Atlantic world did not truly begin until the maritime heroes of the Elizabethan era.⁵³ John Friske stated as early as 1892 that;

it was not until the Protestant England of Elizabeth had come to a life and death grapple with Spain, and not until the discovery of America had advanced much nearer to completion, so that its value began to be more correctly understood, that political and commercial motives combined in determining England to attack Spain through America, and to deprive her of supremacy in the colonial and maritime world.⁵⁴

Samuel Eliot Morison stated that “The accession of Henry VIII in 1509 marks a notable falling off of interest by the English government and people in the New World.”⁵⁵ This sentiment

⁵¹ Fuller takes this quote from Franklin McCann, 123.

⁵² John Rastell’s *Interlude of the IIII Elements*, (London: 1530?). The only extant copy is at the British Museum, this copy is tentatively dated as 1530.

⁵³ Abulafia, 220.

⁵⁴ Friske, 17-18.

⁵⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: Northern Voyages A.D. 1500-1600*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 233. Jonathan Hart makes a similar argument when he states that “Even though the English had begun well with the practical knowledge of the voyages of the Cabots, the nation, even more than France, showed apathy toward, and ignorance of cosmography and mathematics.” This apathy resulted in the lack of English activity in the Atlantic. Hart, 34. D.W. Meinig summarizes the entire first half of the sixteenth century in

appears to be the common interpretation of English activity in the Atlantic world during the first half of the sixteenth century. David Abulafia argues that, “as far as England was concerned, the American lands only came into focus in the second half of the sixteenth century, when Spain was a bitter enemy, and serious colonization only began when Jamestown was founded in 1607.”⁵⁶ Only then, according to this line of reasoning, would the voyages of the Cabots become important to the English people and be quoted as the basis to England’s claim to North America.⁵⁷

Arguments such as these work on two assumptions: first, that “interest” in the New World constitutes successful voyages of discovery or colonization, and second, that there was no real discussion of the Americas in England before Elizabeth’s reign. To state that Henry VIII’s reign was a “sharp falling off of interest” implies that Henry VII’s reign saw comparatively greater interest in the New World. Henry VIII played an active role in the organization of at least three separate voyages, those of John Rastell, John Rut, and the planned voyage of 1521, and he worked towards the organization of another voyage in 1541. While Elizabeth would grant colonizing patents to Gilbert and Raleigh, and would invest in some voyages with exploratory aspects, she did not personally organize or instigate any voyages. The only true difference in the voyages of Henry VIII and those of his father’s and daughter’s reigns is the

just a few sentences, stating that it was not until the 1550s and 1560s that England first began to think about the Atlantic. D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Atlantic America 1492-1800. Vol. I, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 28.

⁵⁶ Abulafia, 220. Peter Mancall makes a similar argument, stating that one of the key reasons for England to be interested in the Americas was to stop the spread of Catholicism and that England did not begin to discuss colonization until after 1550. Peter C. Mancall, ed. *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America 1580-1640*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, Macmillan Learning, 2017), 8-13.

⁵⁷ Friske, 18.

level of success. In addition to these royally sponsored voyages, there were numerous merchant expeditions into the Atlantic throughout the first half of the sixteenth century.

Historians often measure the success of a voyage by the geographic discoveries or cartographic imagery produced, the amount of wealth brought back by the expedition, or the establishment of a permanent settlement. While the Cabot voyages at the close of the fifteenth-century produced new cartographic knowledge, and the Elizabethan voyages in the last quarter of the sixteenth-century brought back wealth, the North Atlantic expeditions during Henry VIII's reign did none of this. Patrick McGrath pointed out that the Bristol fishermen who sailed North American waters were not interested in gaining a place in the histories of exploration, and because of this, their voyages during the latter part of the fifteenth century and early part of the sixteenth century have been deemed "a complete loss."⁵⁸ This, he argued, along with the lack of permanent settlements in Newfoundland, led many historians to marginalize the fishing activities during this period, or simply overlook them all together. This may explain why the historiography has overlooked or marginalized the majority of the English activity in the Atlantic world during the first half of the sixteenth century.

The second assumption, as has already been demonstrated, is that there was no real discussion of the Americas in England before Elizabeth's reign, when England began to challenge Spain's claim to the New World. This assumption, however, misses the foundation upon which the arguments of Gilbert and Hakluyt were based, and denies English participation in the academic dialogue taking place throughout Europe regarding the discovery of a "New

⁵⁸ Patrick McGrath, "Bristol and America, 1480-1631," found in K.R. Andres, N.P. Canny, and P.E.H. Hair, eds. *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 90.

World.”⁵⁹ As this dissertation demonstrates, the arguments of Gilbert and Hakluyt are very similar to the arguments made by Richard Eden, Robert Thorne and John Rastell.

Part of the reason that the majority of the historiography of the British Atlantic focused on the Elizabethans and their efforts is that it was these efforts that were widely published and celebrated in the works of Richard Hakluyt, who first made popular in England the celebration of English maritime conquest through the publication of his works *Diverse Voyages* (1582), and *Principle Navigations and Voyages*, (1589 and 1598-1600). Both are collections of travel narratives and accounts of English exploration. Hakluyt played a significant role in promoting English expansion into the Atlantic, and he did so, in large part, by playing off the growing animosity towards Spain. As a result, his narrative became an “us vs. them” scenario in which he played up the competition between England and Spain for both physical and spiritual conquest in the Atlantic. This nationalistic narrative has remained popular both in academic circles and in popular memory into the late twentieth century. A result of this “us vs. them” narrative has been that the instances in which English merchants worked side-by-side with their Spanish colleagues have been relegated to the sidelines, if not forgotten. Due to the popularity of Hakluyt’s works, and his surprising ability to find and utilize primary sources to build his narrative, Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* has remained a key source of information for historians of exploration and discovery, as well as historians of the British Atlantic. Thus, Hakluyt’s patriotic narrative has guided much of the historiography, placing, as Heather Dalton

⁵⁹ This dissertation, unless otherwise noted, only refers to Richard Hakluyt the younger as he was the author of the family. Richard Hakluyt the elder appears to have simply inspired his nephew and aided in researching some of the accounts in *Diverse Voyages*.

argues, “England’s early relationship with the New World firmly in the hands of a few adventurers of the Elizabethan period.”⁶⁰

Complicating Hakluyt’s legacy, is that left behind by the imperialist historians of the turn of the twentieth century. These historians thought in terms of imperial boundaries and often wrote in a manner which promoted the idea of their nation’s “natural” inclination towards overseas expansion. Thus, their focus was on the voyages and expeditions which brought fame and fortune to the homeland and led to the furtherance of empire. Expeditions which failed, or those which were conceived and financially backed by international partnerships did not add to the imperial narrative and were marginalized or ignored. This is a legacy which the field of Atlantic history struggles with still and which hides the true nature of the early Atlantic.

As with the North Atlantic voyages, the English voyages to West Africa have been all but ignored by the historiography of English maritime activity in the Atlantic due to a few key assumptions regarding Atlantic activity. The first assumption made by the historiography is that clear diplomatic rulings had the power and authority to guide and control significant Atlantic commerce. With the signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, Portugal claimed all of Africa as its trading domain and attempted to convince the rest of Europe that it had established a solid monopoly over the West African trade. This is the image that Portugal tried to foster through diplomatic relations throughout the sixteenth century, and this imperialistic image has been passed down throughout the historiography of European involvement along the West African coastline. The historiography painted a picture in which Africa was exploited by the Portuguese trade monopoly while the African kingdoms were unable to resist. In this scenario no other

⁶⁰ Heather Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, and Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

European power had the ability to truly break through Portugal's trade monopoly and thus be impacted by, or have an impact on, Africa in the sixteenth century. Anyone who did manage to break through the trade monopoly did so as a smuggler and had no real impact. This image of West Africa denies the transnational commerce taking place in west Africa, dealing in ivory, gold, pepper, and grain, and the successes of such voyages as those of William Hawkins, Thomas Wyndham, John Lok, and William Towerson. Hawkins personally led at least three voyages to West Africa in 1530, 1531, 1532, continuing his trade by sending ships to West Africa until at least 1540. Wyndham's expedition of 1553, which managed to bring home profit despite devastating loss of life, was quickly followed by Lok's voyage of 1554, which also returned with profits. Lok's voyage was followed by Towerson's three voyages of 1555-56, 1556-57, and 1558-9.⁶¹ However, these voyages are all but ignored by the historiography of the British Atlantic, with historians pointing to John Hawkins' slave trading voyages of the 1560s as being the first English incursions into West African trade.

Kenneth Andrews, one of the foremost historians of English maritime activity in the Atlantic world during the Early Modern era, presented one of the few summaries of English activity in Africa to include all of the known voyages. However, he only offered a brief summary of the events as they unfolded and the impact they had on English diplomatic relations with Portugal and Spain. He concluded his discussion of West Africa by pointing out that the English failed to establish permanent trade in Africa in the sixteenth century, as they did not establish any coastal strongholds or forts along the coast and lacked good harbors from which to

⁶¹ These voyages are recorded in length in Richard Hakluyt *The Principal Navigations Voyaes Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeeres*, (London: 1600), in 12 volumes, (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1903), vol. XI.

trade.⁶² Because of the lack of permanent structures, he argued, the English could not possibly have had any lasting effect on the West African coast, nor could this trade have had any real impact on the progression of English trade and activity in the Atlantic

In a similar manner, James A. Williamson acknowledged that, after the voyages of Towerson, the Africans along the western coast were “inclined to play off one competitor against the other” and that this reveals the weakness of the Portuguese monopoly. However, he argued that the true significance of this activity was that it led others, such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to question Spain’s monopoly over the New World.⁶³ According to Williamson, there did not seem to be any significance for England or Africa in these voyages, and he skipped over the English trade in Africa during the 1560s in order to focus on the English challenge to the Spanish Caribbean.

Part of the reason for the general oversight may be the focus of the transatlantic slave trade that, while not a central part of the commerce during the time of this study, came to dominate West African commerce by the end of the century. As Paul Hair has stated, “the Portuguese role in Guinea, enacted during this period of some two hundred years, has received limited historical attention in world history...the post-1500 Portuguese experience is subsumed in an activity minor for both Africans and Portuguese, the Atlantic slave trade.”⁶⁴ This statement is true of English activity as well, as the majority of historians who mention any English activity in Africa during the sixteenth century focus on the impact John Hawkins had on the slave trade.⁶⁵

⁶² Andrews, 112.

⁶³ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 306.

⁶⁴ H.E.P. Hair, “Discovery and Discoveries: The Portuguese in Guinea 1444-1650” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, (Jan. 1992), 11-28, 11.

⁶⁵ This argument is true of both the historiography of English maritime history and exploration and discovery as well as of the historiography of the transatlantic slave trade. This is illustrated by the fact that all of the following works from the historiography of English maritime activity discuss John Hawkins’ activity in Africa in relation to his

Robin Hallett briefly acknowledged William Hawkins as an early trader to West Africa, however, he then skipped straight to the English involvement in the slave trade during the seventeenth century, completely ignoring the numerous voyages of the mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁶ George Brooks acknowledged John Hawkins' activities in 1567, however he said nothing of Hawkins' earlier voyages, nor did he mention the other English voyages. He made no reference to the early activity of the French and English along the coastline.⁶⁷ James Walvin briefly mentioned William Hawkins, Wyndham, Lock and Towerson by name, however, he quickly moved on to John Hawkins' slaving activities in the 1560s, marginalizing the earlier voyages. While Walvin did mention that the early merchants purchased gold, ivory and pepper, he offered no analysis of how these activities impacted the region, or English markets and attitudes towards Atlantic trade.⁶⁸ John Thornton and Linda Heywood briefly mention these voyages, giving them

activities in the Spanish Main or the fact that he was the first Englishman to personally participate in the transatlantic slave trade, however, none of them offer any discussion of how his activities effected England or Africa or what they reveal about Africa at the time. John C. Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (The History Press: 2009); James Anthony Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century: Lectures Delivered at Oxford Easter Terms 1893-4*, (London: Green and Co., 1928); Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate*, (New Haven: Yale University 2000); _____, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader*, (New Haven: Yale University 2003); Susan Ronald, *The Pirate Queen: Queen Elizabeth I, Her Pirate Adventurers and the Dawn of Empire* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers 2007); Derek Wilson, *The World Encompassed: Francis Drake and His Great Voyage* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers: 1977); Nick Hazlewood in *The Queen's Slave Trader: John Hawkins, Elizabeth I, and the Trafficking in Human Souls*. (New York: William Marrow 2004); Neville Williams, *The Sea Dogs: Privateers, Plunder and Piracy in the Elizabethan Age*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975). A cursory look at the historiography of the transatlantic slave trade reveals the same trend. The focus, (understandably as the studies focus on the slave trade), is on Hawkins' influence in the slave trade. There is no discussion of the impact of earlier voyages on England or on Africa and the Africans he worked with, simply a general acknowledgement that he was the first Englishman to enter the transatlantic slave trade. This can be seen in the studies focusing on the slave trade that are included in the bibliography.

⁶⁶ Robin Hallett, *The Penetration of Africa: European Exploration in North and West Africa to 1815*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

⁶⁷ George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 70-72.

⁶⁸ Walvin, 14.

a short summary, however, like Walvin, they quickly move on to England's slave trading voyages of the latter part of the century.⁶⁹

Even a cursory look at the English and Portuguese primary records reveals the assertion of an unchallenged Portuguese monopoly over trade is simply not true. The English and the French were able to break through Portugal's supposed trade monopoly, and they did so numerous times during the mid-sixteenth century with the intent of trading for gold, grain, ivory and pepper, not slaves. When they arrived in Africa they were welcomed by several African kingdoms and invited to participate in the local trade systems, often alongside the French who had a growing presence in West Africa throughout the sixteenth century. This dissertation argues that through this participation, English merchants of the sixteenth century actively engaged in Atlantic trade, broke through the Portuguese trade monopoly, operating in transnational space, revealing the entangled nature of the early Atlantic world. Through the south Atlantic trade these English merchants laid the foundation for the opening of English transatlantic trade, particularly the slave trade. John Hawkins subsequently built off of this trade network when he allegedly established the English practice of triangular trade in the Atlantic and "began" active English interest in the Atlantic world.

My present study retrieves from the forgotten recesses of the archives the activities and discussions of the English during the first half of the sixteenth century, a time period which Hakluyt and many others have left blank. It is an attempt to recreate the English knowledge of, discussions of, and activities within the Atlantic during the first half of the sixteenth century without nationalistic/imperialistic prejudice, willingly embracing the entangled nature of the

⁶⁹ Linda M. Heywood, John K. Thornton. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Most of chapter 1 of their book is dedicated to the early attempts of the English and Dutch to open trade in Africa.

Atlantic and recognizing that much of this activity happened with the help of the Spanish, Portuguese, and French. In doing so, this dissertation uses the English as a case study in which Europe's early encounter with the Atlantic world is revealed. In addition, it is an attempt to reclaim from the shelves of "unimportance" those ventures that failed in their stated purpose, to examine them, and see what they reveal about the men who planned them and the world they lived in. In doing so, this dissertation demonstrates that the English actively participated in the Atlantic from the dawn of transatlantic trade, and they continued to consider the implications of the Atlantic throughout the sixteenth century. While this activity might have fluctuated in volume, it never ceased. Furthermore, it was not the state which created an English Atlantic, nor was it the Protestant fervor against the spread of Catholicism. Rather, it was merchants, who, with their transnational connections and mindset, infiltrated transatlantic trade and opened the door for the Elizabethans. This argument builds on the limited but insightful historiography on the activities of English merchants in the sixteenth century Atlantic world.

The first, careful study of sixteenth-century English merchants in the Atlantic world was Gordon Connell-Smith's groundbreaking work, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English trade with Spain in the early Tudor Period*, which argued that Sir Francis Drake and John Hawkins were not the first Englishmen to see potential profits in the Atlantic world.⁷⁰ Using the Spanish archives, he revealed that English merchants established trade networks in the Atlantic through their Spanish business partners and that the English were not purposefully kept out of the transatlantic trade. Connell-Smith's research is referenced by specialists in the field of English exploration and discovery in the Atlantic world, however, it has remained underutilized in the

⁷⁰ Gordon Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English trade with Spain in the early Tudor period*, published for the Royal Empire Society (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954).

broader field of exploration and discovery and in the field of the British Atlantic. His research into English merchants did not see a serious revisit in an English-language publication until Gustav Unger's book, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, received an English translation in 2008.⁷¹ Unfortunately, this book offered limited insight into the Atlantic. Heather Dalton is the first to revive Connell-Smith's investigation into English merchants interested in the Atlantic world. Dalton's book, *Merchants and Explorers*, argues that the merchant networks formed by English merchants in Spain reveals the entangled nature of the Atlantic world in its infancy.⁷² The research conducted by Connell-Smith and Dalton is in-depth and carefully thought-out, however, they stop short of arguing that there was consistent English activity in the Atlantic world. This dissertation carries their arguments one step further, arguing that these English merchants laid the foundation for the British Atlantic by establishing a precedent for English merchants in the Atlantic, and by disseminating their vast experience and knowledge in England.

Key Arguments

This study has three overarching arguments. The first demonstrates that the English were knowledgeable about the New World and the information being brought back from the Americas. The educated elites in England were engaged in the transnational discussions of the New World and the general discussions of geography and cosmography at the time. Through this intellectual engagement, the activities of Bristol fishermen, and the early voyages under

⁷¹ Gustav Unger, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2008). The subject of English merchants in Spain is touched on by several historians who look at Anglo-Spanish commerce during this period, unfortunately, they do not give serious attention to the significance of the English participating in the transatlantic trade. See for example, Clarence Henry Haring, *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the time of the Hapsburgs*, (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964).

⁷² Heather Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, and Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Henry VII and then Henry VIII, and through the activities and connections of English merchants, the English kept apprised of the changing understanding of the world, and specifically the expansion of the Atlantic world. The educated elite actively discussed and imagined the possibilities of the Atlantic world. Through these discussions, they formed the foundation for later discussions of the Americas. The image of the New World and Native Americans formed in England during the first half of the century created the basis of the English perceptions of the New World and its inhabitants during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first part of the seventeenth century, which is often credited to Richard Hakluyt.

The second main argument is that the English participated physically in the Atlantic world. Through the discussion of English voyages to the Americas and Africa, and the impact these voyages had not only on England at the time, but on Spain and Portugal, it is shown that the English actively influenced the opening of the Atlantic world and subsequent policy on transatlantic trade. This laid the foundation for the activity of the Elizabethans and attitudes towards English participation in the Atlantic during the Elizabethan era. For example, John Rastell's son joined the expedition of Richard Hore in 1536, and other members of this voyage became prominent figures in Elizabeth's inner circle and among the London merchants. William Hawkins' trade between Africa and Brazil directly inspired his son John to venture into Africa and the Caribbean. This physical participation of the English in the Atlantic world took place in a transnational Atlantic. The English worked with French, Spanish, and Portuguese sailors, navigators, and merchants. Their voyages often involved the financial backing of Italians as well. Thus, the English activities offer a case study of Europe's early encounter with the Atlantic world, when Europeans of various national and provincial backgrounds worked together in an attempt to broaden their economic horizons and open new trade routes.

Finally, while the London merchants were simply not ready to commit fully to westward investments during the first few decades of the sixteenth century, as they saw such enterprises as representing too great a financial risk, the activities of the first half of the sixteenth century laid the groundwork for the expansion of England's markets into the Atlantic during the second half of the century. The profits that came out of the south Atlantic during the second half of Henry's reign, 1530-1541, inspired new merchant investment in Atlantic ventures during the reign of Edward VI. These voyages proved the profits which could be had in the Atlantic, and by the end of the reign of Mary I, London merchants were actively participating in the Guinea trade and looked to the Atlantic for a new source of revenue.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter sets the stage for the activities of the sixteenth century. It establishes the background of English participation, and knowledge of, the North Atlantic leading up to the reign of Henry VIII, as well as the changes taking place within England's academic circles which closely tied England to Continental networks of knowledge. England's participation in the North Atlantic is revealed through the voyages of the Bristol fishermen, their knowledge of the Newfoundland fisheries, and the voyages of exploration which occurred with English support during Henry VII's reign. These voyages include the Cabot voyages, William Weston's voyage and the activities of Robert Thorne and his fellow merchants. This chapter relies heavily on the work being done by the Cabot Project, an international project based at the University of Bristol working to discover and digitize any and all material related to the Cabots and early English voyages to the Americas. Through an analysis of these voyages, and the merchants who financially backed and orchestrated them, it is seen that the English were at the forefront of Atlantic exploration from as early as 1481. This was possible, in large part, because Bristol

merchants operated in a transnational space, working and communicating with merchants, sailors and navigators from Iceland, Spain, Portugal, France and Italy. Through these transnational connections, information flowed and inspired new ventures and investments. In addition to the discussion of Bristol's merchants and the English activity in the Atlantic world during the reign of Henry VII, this chapter also looks at the changing nature of the university system, showing that the turn of the century saw a pivotal change in the university systems. The flow of information from continental universities and centers of learning into England's universities paved the way for the intellectuals of the sixteenth century and established networks of knowledge that not only allowed England to become a center for early humanist thought, but also kept England apprised of current academic debates and understandings of the world on the continent.

Chapter two continues the discussion of England's academic culture. It argues the English had access to information published in the learned languages of the Continent regarding the New World. Focusing on Sir Thomas More's circle and Henry's household, this chapter teases out their participation in the European discussions of geography, cosmography, and the discoveries of the New World. It pushes back against the idea that just because there was very little published in English, or on English presses, regarding the New World, the English were not interested in the opening of the Atlantic world. By analyzing book purchases and looking at the reading habits of key figures in More's circle and in Henry's family, this chapter proves that Henry surrounded himself with intellectuals, many of whom have been described as "bookish," who purchased their books from the Continent in the learned languages. They wrote and read fluently in the learned languages and stayed apprised of current academic debates happening on the continent. It demonstrates that in the sixteenth century England was not seen as an academic

outlier, but rather as a leader in learning and home to some of the world's brightest minds. Not only did the academic elite of Henry's court purchase the majority of their books from the continent, but the common reader did as well, proving that the English had access to information published in the learned languages.

Chapter three builds on this discussion to tease out the imaginings men like Rastell and More had of the New World's possibilities for England. By looking at well published and widely circulated travel documents, such as Columbus' letters and Vespucci's narratives, as well as cartographic material, such as Verrezzano's world map and Jean Rotz' *Bok of Idrography*, this chapter works to recreate the perception of the New World that would have been prevalent among England's learned elite and informed their decision making in regard to Atlantic activity. It draws extensively from John Rastell's *IIII Elements*, More's *Utopia*, Richard Eden's *Decades* and compares them to cartographic imagery seen by Henry's Court. By recreating the imaginings of the Henricians and the perceptions and images available to them, it demonstrates that Richard Hakluyt did not create a new perception of England's possible future in the New World, nor did he originate many of the arguments for colonization for which he is famous. Rather, these arguments were already present in the preceding generation.

Chapter four focuses on John Rastell as a case study for Henrician interest in colonization. Rastell not only represents the first known English attempt at colonization, but he also offers the first treatise to try to gain public support for English colonization of North America. His play, *A Merry Interlude of the Four Elements*, not only adds to our understanding of the geographical information available to the English, but it also represents the first known English discussion of North America. This is the first time the term America is known to be applied in English to both the north and the south continent. Rastell made an argument for

colonization of North America that is very similar to the arguments later made by Richard Hakluyt, who many credit as the instigator of English colonizing attempts. In addition to this, Rastell embarked on a failed voyage to North America that was intended to be a colonizing voyage. The accusations of a conspiracy against Rastell and the voyage that are made in the court case against John Ravyn, who appears to be responsible for the failure of the voyage, lead to some intriguing accusations pointed at the Lord High Admiral, Lord Surrey.

While Rastell never ventured into the Atlantic again, he received increasingly important assignments from Henry, serving Henry both artistically, for the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the pageantry surrounding the arrival of French diplomats during the negotiation of Princess Mary's betrothal to the Dauphine, and as a diplomat to France during Henry's divorce of Catharine of Aragon. These positions gave him the opportunity to continue to promote colonizing ventures to North America and to encourage his audience to develop an interest in geography and become familiar with cartography. As has been stated, his son later joined the Hore expedition in what was, in all likelihood, a voyage meant to investigate North America for colonizing and investment purposes, demonstrating that John Rastell did indeed continue to encourage discussions of colonization among the younger generation.

Finally, Rastell reveals the disruptive power of the Reformation. Rastell's conversion to the Protestant movement not only destroyed his very close relationship with his brother-in-law, Sir Thomas More, it also tore apart his family, distracted him from his academic pursuits, brought ruin to his publishing ventures and led to his death in prison. Rastell is, thus, a key example of how the turmoil of the Reformation, Henry's divorce, and the rise of Cromwell took precedence over plans for colonization, even for those passionately interested.

Henry's personal interest in the Atlantic is addressed in chapter five. Looking at the details of the planned expeditions which failed to move beyond the planning stages, the voyage which did succeed in 1527, and Henry's patronage of cartographers, shows his interest in the Atlantic. While the majority of this chapter deals with planned voyages which never came to fruition, by placing these planned expeditions within the context of Henry's personal and political life, a distinct pattern emerges. Each time Henry turned to the Atlantic, it was during a momentary period of stability within his family and political life. Unfortunately, these moments of tranquility were short lived, and Henry's attention was quickly diverted to war, as is seen in 1521, 1527, and 1541, or more famously, to romance and divorce. These distractions were pressing, paramount to national security, and much more seductive than exploration into the unknown. However, each and every time life calmed down, Henry renewed discussions of Atlantic discovery, demonstrating that this was an interest he carried throughout his life. He simply had much more pressing issues to deal with for the majority of his reign.

Chapter six looks at the English merchant networks operating out of Spain. Focusing on the group of merchants connected to Robert Thorne the younger and Roger Barlow, this chapter shows that Bristol merchants operating out of Andalusia actively participated in the opening of the Atlantic from the dawn of transatlantic trade. Men such as Nicholas Arnold traded with the Spanish colonies in the New World as early as 1508. English merchants served as financial backers and investors in Spain's early Atlantic efforts as early as 1513. Operating in an intrinsically transnational space, influential English merchants like Bridges and Thorne moved in the same circles as Sebastian Cabot, Gonzales Fernandez de Oviedo, and the powerful Italian families who backed many of the Atlantic ventures, such as the Spinolas, Centurians, and the Cattaneos. These Englishmen, through their friendship with Cabot, had access to the most

current knowledge of the Atlantic world and actively sought opportunities to expand the transatlantic market. From Robert Thorne's book and letter to Dr. Lee, to Barlow and Patmer's involvement in Cabot's expedition to the Rio de la Plata, these merchants participated physically, financially and theoretically with the opening of the Atlantic world.

When opportunities for expansion and exploration did not seem as likely in Spain, Thorne and Barlow returned to England, bringing with them all of the cartographic and economic knowledge they had of the Atlantic world. Thorne immediately began working toward an English expedition, but died before it came to fruition. Barlow, left to navigate the dangerous waters of the political turmoil of the 1530's, did not forget his experience in the Atlantic, writing his *Summe of Geographie* for presentation to Henry and his court for the encouragement of exploration. Barlow formed a close friendship with John Rastell the younger, who sailed on Hore's expedition in 1536. This expedition, which ended in colossal failure, exposed many of London's young gentlemen to the trials of the North Atlantic. This chapter concludes with the return of Cabot to England, the subsequent creation of the Muscovy Company, and the organization of the 1551 voyage to the Barbary Coast, a location which Barlow had personal knowledge. This chapter proves that the Bristol and London merchants operating out of Andalusia actively participated in the Atlantic from the start of the sixteenth century while demonstrating the transnational nature of the early Atlantic world. Some, like Barlow, returned to England where they disseminated their knowledge of the Atlantic world and encouraged further English exploration, laying the groundwork for the generation to come.

Chapter seven also focuses on merchants, this time analyzing the activities of English merchants in the south Atlantic. Southampton merchants, exemplified by William Hawkins, who modeled the triangular trade for England, and Robert Reneger, who became the first

celebrated privateer of the sixteenth century, made their fortunes in the south Atlantic, revealing the profits to be had there. William Hawkins made his fortune trading for ivory, gold, pepper, and grain in West Africa and then trading in Brazil for Brazilwood. Following in the footsteps of the French who traded in Guinea and established friendly trade with the Brazilians, Hawkins enjoyed the profitable triangular trade. However, he, and presumably the French, did so without trading in enslaved Africans. The practice of trading first to West African and then to the Americas did not initially include human cargo, nor did it necessarily have to. At the dawn of the Atlantic world the transatlantic slave trade had yet to become the dominating force which overshadowed all other trade in West Africa during the seventeenth century. Sadly, John Hawkins modified his father's business practice, changing the American destination of his trading expeditions from Brazil to the Caribbean and his cargo from ivory, grain, and pepper to enslaved Africans in order to break into the Spanish slave trade. John Hawkins is often pointed to as being the forerunner or the instigator of the British transatlantic slave trade because of this move.

English merchants profited from the Guinea and Brazilian trade throughout the 1530's. However, just as Henry was distracted by warfare, these merchants also turned from their Atlantic enterprises when war broke out with France, becoming privateers for most of the 1540's. Once peace was established, English merchants turned once again to the Guinea trade in the South Atlantic. With each new expedition returning with a profit, more and more London merchants turned their attention to the Atlantic. By the end of Queen Mary's reign, powerful merchant magnates of London realized the opportunities offered by the Atlantic world and invested heavily in the south Atlantic trade. This chapter argues that the celebrated mariners of the Elizabethan era got their start and royal funds returned to the Atlantic through the powerful

merchant syndicates formed around the Guinea trade. It was through the south Atlantic that Martin Frobisher, John Hawkins, Francis Drake, and many of their backers got their start in the Atlantic. Thus, it was through the south Atlantic that the British Atlantic, through traditional interpretation, began.

Taken together these discussions prove that the English were actively involved in the opening of the Atlantic throughout the sixteenth century. They were forerunners to Columbus, setting out for the west as early as 1481, and likely seeing the coastlines of the new continent before he did. They were investors in Spanish expeditions alongside Italian merchants, and actively traded in the Caribbean as early as 1509. They dreamed of the possibilities of colonization and pushed for voyages of exploration. They traded in the south Atlantic, breaking through Portugal's claimed monopoly alongside their French counterparts, proving the profitability of the Guinea trade, as early as 1530, a trade which would be Elizabeth I's first enticement into Atlantic ventures. Though the reign of Henry VIII cannot lay claim to any remarkable voyages or breakthroughs in Atlantic exploration, this does not mean that he was uninterested, nor does it mean that the English were not participating in the Atlantic world. As Dalton has argued, the Atlantic of the early sixteenth century was an entangled space.⁷³ Rather than operating in a clearly defined nationalistic space, which would have created an English empire in the sixteenth century, the English participated fully in the Atlantic world by operating in a transnational space.

⁷³ Dalton, pp. 4, 108.

Chapter 1

The Dawn of Atlantic Trade

On the 15th of May 1480, a small ship of only 80 tuns began the tedious voyage from Kingroad at the port of Bristol to the Irish Sea, and from there to the Atlantic. Leading the voyage was John Jay “the younger.” His goal was to find the fabled Island of Brazil which was said to lie west of Ireland, somewhere in the North Atlantic. With him was Lloyd, the ship’s master, who, according to William Worcestre, a contemporary chronicler of the event, was “the most knowledgeable mariner in all England.”⁷⁴ Despite Lloyd’s knowledge and the best hopes of Jay and his backers, the voyage turned out to be a failure, producing nothing of worth for the time, effort, and money put into the venture. Worcestre stated that, “the said ship had sailed the sea for about 9 weeks, not finding the island, but was driven back by storms at sea to the port ... Ireland, for refitting the ship and [reorganizing] the crew.”⁷⁵ While Jay’s voyage ended in failure, it earned him the distinction of being the first Englishman to set out in search of land in the West, and in doing so Jay began the English “Age of Exploration.”

The fact that England’s transatlantic ventures began in Bristol and seem to have revolved heavily around Bristolians for several decades deserves some attention. The foundations for England’s transatlantic networks and exploits were laid by Bristolians throughout the reign of

⁷⁴ Frances Neale, ed. *William Worcestre: The Topography of Medieval Bristol*. (Bristol: The Bristol Record Society, 2000), 235.

⁷⁵ Neale, 235. The Worcestre manuscript appears to read nine months, however, historians are in agreement that this is an error, that it should read nine weeks, given that it would be nearly impossible to sail aimlessly, let alone purposefully in the North Atlantic for nine months with a seasoned pilot without finding land, and the fact that Worcestre gives Jay’s landing in Ireland a date of September 18. See James Williamson, ed., *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII*, published for the Hakluyt Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 21; David B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the British Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: the Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 54; Tryggvi J. Oleson, *Early Voyages and Northern Approaches 1000-1631* (originally published 1963), The Canadian Centenary Series, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968), 124.

Henry VII. Therefore, this first chapter will focus on this activity, the men behind these transatlantic exploits, and the significance of what they learned and accomplished. In doing so, it will set the stage for much of what is to come in this dissertation. Through this discussion it will become clear that Bristol's merchants served as a driving force behind England's early Atlantic exploratory expeditions. While the role of Henry VII as a financial backer to these voyages should not be underplayed, for it demonstrates state interest and knowledge of the opening of the Atlantic, it also should not be overplayed. As will be seen, Henry VII was interested in the Atlantic, and he did have direct contact and involvement in the major expeditions. However, he was not the instigator of these voyages. The merchants were.

As discussed in the introduction, the historiography of the British Atlantic tends to argue that Henry VII was very interested in the Atlantic, that there was a sharp falling off of interest after his death, and that it would not be until the reign of Elizabeth I that the English were once again interested in the Atlantic world. This places too much emphasis on state involvement in the English Atlantic world, especially at this early date. This chapter demonstrates that the voyages which occurred prior to the reign of Henry VIII were transnational affairs and instigated by merchants, not individual explorers or the state, as the older historiography suggests. It also investigates the level of knowledge the English had of the Atlantic world prior to Henry VIII's accession to the throne. Finally, this chapter discusses the changes in England's intellectual circles, particularly as represented by the those taking place in the universities, and in the introduction of England's print trade, setting the stage for the networks of knowledge which will be discussed in later chapters. This discussion will focus on Lady Margaret Beaufort as she, in many ways, represents the culture of learning and the value of education which shaped Henry VIII and his court.

The Icelandic Connection

Very little is known of John Jay's venture or the impetus behind it. The English had been trading with Iceland and fishing along its shores for some time.⁷⁶ English cod fishers fished all along the coasts of Iceland in the fifteenth century, focusing mostly on the south-west, near Hafnarfjörður and the Westmann Islands. These regions were known to the Danes as possessing the best fishing of all Iceland. The English became so prevalent in these areas that Danish officials began complaining by 1425 that the English had set up whole settlements, "building houses, putting up tents, digging ditches, working away, and making use of everything as if it was their own."⁷⁷ Maryanne Kowaleski demonstrates that in the last quarter of the fifteenth century merchants from Hull, Bristol, and London dominated the trade in Icelandic fish.⁷⁸ However, much of this was the distribution of Icelandic fish, not necessarily the catching of the fish. It is hard to find documentation on the voyages to Iceland due to the secrecy fostered by the Danish ruler's policy of requiring licenses to fish in Iceland in an attempt to limit English influence, and due to the fact that a fisherman's personal catch was not subject to English customs records.⁷⁹ Despite this, it can be proved that Bristolian ships were physically present in Icelandic waters. For example, the *Christopher* of Bristol was seized in 1436 on its return by

⁷⁶ For the most part British medieval and early modern historians agree that English trade with Iceland was flourishing in the fifteenth century and was one of the main reasons that Cabot chose Bristol to launch his voyage from. See various articles in David Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft eds. *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000); Evan T. Jones, Margaret M. Condon, *Cabot and Bristol's Age of Discovery*, (Bristol: The Cabot Project, University of Bristol, 2016); Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*; Quinn, *England and the Discovery*; Oleson.

⁷⁷ The quote above is from *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. IV, no. 381, 331. As found in Wendy Childs, "The Eastern Fisheries," David Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft eds. *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 19-23, 22.

⁷⁸ Maryanne Kowaleski, "The Western Fisheries," David Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft eds. *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 23-28, 28.

⁷⁹ Kowaleski, 28.

two Newcastle ships and forfeited to the king as it had been in Iceland illegally.⁸⁰ In 1439 the *Katherine* was granted license to go to Iceland and Finmark for fish and other goods.⁸¹ In 1443 John Wythyford, William Pavy, Maurice White, and William Damme of Bristol were granted license to trade to Iceland as often as they wished for a period of four years with the *Christopher*, “or any other Bristol ship of 160 tuns or less,” to export any goods except staple wares, and import stockfish, saltfish, and other goods for provisioning England, “despite any statute to the contrary.”⁸² According to Carus-Wilson, there were no less than nineteen English merchant vessels licensed to trade with Iceland in 1442.⁸³ Documents such as these can be found throughout the rest of the century. Though they are not numerous, the fact that there is a consistent pattern of such licenses surviving suggests that the original volume of licenses was quite significant.

By the 1460s licenses appear to have been granted fairly regularly to Bristol merchants to sail to Iceland for periods of a year to trade in any goods except “staple goods.” There are also a number granted to Bristol merchants to trade in any ports *except* Iceland, issued during the 1460s.⁸⁴ The continuity of licenses explicitly excluding Icelandic trade indicates that the trade to Iceland was large enough that the King felt compelled to heed official complaints from the Danish government and limit it. Wendy Childs argued that by the year 1500 the English fleet

⁸⁰ E. M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *The Overseas Trade of Bristol in the Later Middle Ages*, First Published by Bristol Record Society 1937, (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1967), Doc., 76, p. 65.

⁸¹ Carus-Wilson, Doc., 83, p. 71.

⁸² Carus-Wilson, Doc., 88, p. 79.

⁸³ Carus-Wilson, Doc., 79.

⁸⁴ Merchants seeking trade licenses to Iceland petitioned the King for the license. These licenses are found in the Patent Rolls at the National Archives See for example Carus-Wilson, Documents, 1135, 139, 150, 180; E.M. Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, (first published 1954), (London: University Paperbacks, 1967), 129. Staple goods principally include items such as wool, skins and leather, tin, butter, cheese, lard and grease. “Medieval Customs’ Accounts” The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/medieval-customs-accounts/> accessed, 3/21/2019.

had reached such a size that it threatened the Icelandic fleet's productivity, triggering more frequent and urgent complaints against the English activity in the region.⁸⁵ While few Bristol customs records exist for the ships that received licenses to trade with Iceland, and those who were specifically excluded from the trade, have survived from this period, their existence indicates steady trade between Bristol and Iceland throughout the fifteenth century, diminishing by the end of the century. Some historians have argued that Iceland was a destination for Westcountry fishermen from at least the early fifteenth century because of the fact that Bristol was the leading entrepot for the fish market in the late Middle Ages.⁸⁶

While the English presence in the region is fairly well documented, the extent to which Bristol participated in actual catching of fish, versus simply trading in fish, is questionable. Bristol was located too far up the Avon to be an ideal home to very many fishermen, even though it served as the region's major fish market, especially in regard to the export of fish. Much of this market involved the import of Irish fish that Bristol redistributed into the English market. The Icelandic fisheries appear to have comprised roughly five percent of Bristol's overseas commerce, with the vast majority of Bristol's fish coming from the Irish trade.⁸⁷ However, this does not preclude Bristol's involvement in the Icelandic trade. Rather, it points to a stronger presence of Bristol merchants trading with Iceland than simply fishermen, as it is a well-established fact that Bristol traded regularly with Iceland.⁸⁸ The Bristol ships that traded

⁸⁵ Childs, "The Eastern Fisheries," 23.

⁸⁶ Todd Gray, "Fisheries to the East and to the West," David Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft eds. *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 96-100, 97; Kowaleski, 26-28.

⁸⁷ Jones and Condon, 36-7.

⁸⁸ Williamson states that while there was some contact with fishermen, Bristol merchants trading in Icelandic products were the main Bristol actors in the Icelandic trade. Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 13. Jones and Condon argue that Bristol's real interest in Iceland was trade not fish, 37-8. See also Carus-Wilson for the frequency of Bristol voyages to Iceland throughout the fifteenth century.

with Iceland often did so in the summer, and upon their return to England in early autumn, sailed south to Iberian ports for wine, wool, and winter supplies of dried fruit.⁸⁹ Kowalski argued that the high profile of Bristol merchants in the Icelandic fish trade towards the end of the century, along with Bristol's location, made it a logical starting place for the westward voyages of exploration and, for the most part, historians agree that this is why Cabot chose Bristol as his starting point.

The argument that it was the activity of Bristol fishermen along Iceland's coasts that first attracted foreign investors and adventurers such as Cabot to Bristol and led to Bristol becoming the launch site for the early westward voyages of exploration has a few holes in it. As has been mentioned, Bristol was not a logical port for fishermen. Bristol is not a coastal city, lying well inland on the Avon River. Despite the fact that the Avon River has the second largest tidal range in the world, a fact that allowed Bristol to be the commercial center that it was for centuries, the trip down river to the coast could take several days. For example, it is believed that Cabot left the port of Bristol on May 9 and reached the mouth of the Avon on May 20, taking 11 days to travel the nine miles down the river. While this might seem like an exorbitantly long time to travel this distance, John Rich argued that 18 days might not be that odd at all. Any ship going down river would only be able to travel with the tide. Larger ocean going vessels would have to be pulled down the river and then wait for favorable winds before being able to set sail in open water.⁹⁰ Because of this, Bristol was not ideal for fishermen who wanted to be in and out of the harbor quickly, especially for those who had vessels large enough to handle the journey to

⁸⁹ Carus-Wilson, 81. Fishing and trading ventures normally took place in the spring and summer with ships leaving England in April and May and returning in July, August and September, as foreigners were forbidden to overwinter in Iceland. Childs, "The Eastern Fisheries," 22.

⁹⁰ BRO Pamphlet/1620 John Rich, "Bristol Pilots: A list of pilot's names, dates and some of the boats, for almost 500 years," (1996), V.

Iceland. These ships would have been larger than average fishing vessels, ranging from 30-100 tons with crews of twenty to forty men.⁹¹ If it were simply the knowledge of fishermen that attracted Cabot, there were other, more active fishing ports that made more sense.

What set Bristol apart at the time was the activity of its market and the merchants who lived and operated from there. While Bristol might not have had the same level of physical activity in the catching of fish in the fisheries that other ports had, it was one of the largest fish markets in England, and it possessed a significant merchant body with international networks.⁹² By the mid-fifteenth century many of the leading merchants in Bristol had established firm networks in Spain and Portugal, and some had financial ties to Italian cities such as Genoa and Venice. By the end of the fifteenth century, these connections had grown immensely, to the point that Gustav Unger stated that, “There were dozens, if not hundreds, of English merchants operating in lower Andalusia in the last two decades of the 15th century, in those momentous years when Columbus set out on his first voyage of discovery.”⁹³ This trade also connected English merchants, specifically Bristolian merchants, with trade in Portugal as the majority of ships trading with Andalusia also traded in Lisbon.⁹⁴ It appears that the Portuguese trade with England at this time was particularly strong in Bristol, creating a direct link between the city and

⁹¹ Evan Jones, “England’s Icelandic Fishery in the Early Modern Period,” David Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft eds. *England’s Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300*, (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 105-110, 108. Jones goes on to point out that this represents a “considerably higher manning ratio than was normal for merchant ships at the time.” 108.

⁹² Wendy Childs has demonstrated that in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century nearly sixty percent of the merchants in Bristol exported goods to Iberia. For the time period of 1485-7, of the 226 indigenous exporters, 31 percent traded only with British or Irish ports, 63 percent traded with Iberian ports while only 6 percent traded with Europe without ever trading with Iberia. Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the later Middle Ages*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 204-6.

⁹³ Gustav Unger, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2008), 41.

⁹⁴ Gordon Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English trade with Spain in the early Tudor period*, published for the Royal Empire Society, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), xviii.

the leading country of exploration in the southern Atlantic.⁹⁵ It was these networks and connections that likely attracted men like Cabot to Bristol, and it was through these networks, discussed below, that Bristol's knowledge and fame flowed.

As English fishermen cured their fish on Icelandic shores, worked, and lived in the small settlements they had built, and as English merchants traded with Icelandic fishermen and traders, they formed seasonal communities with local Icelandic communities. Through these communities they likely shared stories and wild tales, as is common among seafaring communities.⁹⁶ Through this interaction they also shared information about the North Atlantic and of islands to the west, including Greenland. Valuable trade items came through the trade networks with Greenland, such as ivory and hide rope from the walrus, polar bears, which were valued in mediaeval courts for their rare white fur, the horn of the narwhal, and the coveted white falcon from Baffin Island.⁹⁷ Bristol merchants were entrepreneurs, ever eager to find new opportunities for trade, especially in lucrative items. They would have been curious about the origins of luxury goods coming from the North and sought information regarding the trade networks and origins of these goods. It is quite possible that the English traders heard stories of the Viking legends of Markland, Helluland, and Vinland from their Icelandic counterparts as they sought information.⁹⁸ It is well established that Icelanders and Greenlanders went to the

⁹⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 3.

⁹⁶ This nature of seafaring communities is a fairly well established one, having been studied by a wide range of historians of various nationalities. For the purpose of this dissertation, see discussions such as Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína's study of late-fifteenth and sixteenth century Spanish maritime culture, Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Carla Rahn Phillips, (First published, 1992), (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998). Jones and Condon, 18.

⁹⁷ Oleson, 18, see chapter 13 which argues extensively that cartographic images and references to polar bears and white falcons have to refer to arctic Canada as this is the only habitat for these animals.

⁹⁸ David Quinn hesitates to make this argument, pointing out that there is no hard evidence that suggests that legends, in any form, were in any way a direct cause to the Atlantic voyages. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 24, 48. While there is no concrete evidence to prove that Bristol merchants did indeed hear about Greenland and the Viking sagas of North America it is very likely that they did. Williamson has stated that this is a question of

region of North America that they knew as Markland for timber well into the fourteenth century.⁹⁹ Danish archeologists have demonstrated that the Greenland colony had not been abandoned in the latter half of the fifteenth century, the time when Bristolian merchants were actively trading in Iceland.¹⁰⁰

Even those who did not have direct trading connections with Iceland had some opportunity to learn of the Icelandic knowledge or legends of Greenland and North America. There is evidence of a fairly vibrant trade in Icelandic slaves among the English merchants. This trade was so well established and of such volume that Martin Behaim mentions it on his 1492 globe, stating that the Icelanders sold their children into slavery to the English.¹⁰¹ Although this activity was well recorded among English merchants of the eastern ports, there is little to no evidence of Bristol merchants participating directly in this trade. However, the alien subsidy roll for 1484 in Bristol shows that 48 or 49 Icelanders served in Bristol households. While the roll records the names of the masters, it only contains two of the names of the Icelanders. David B. Quinn showed that the masters represented a wide range of the mercantile community of Bristol, including men trading with France, Spain, Portugal and, in one instance, Madeira.¹⁰² While this list does not appear to connect any of the Icelandic servants or enslaved directly with the

likelihood and opportunity, Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 13. The Bristol merchants trading in Iceland would have had opportunity to seek out information, and it only stands to reason that they did so.

Viking legends place first discovery circa 1000 c.e. Helluland translates into Flagstone land, Markland into woodland and Vinland into wine-land. With this in mind, it has generally been assumed that Helluland is Baffin Island, that Markland is Labrador while Vinland has been posited as being Newfoundland or as far south as Martha's Vineyard. Oleson, 19; David B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), 23-34.

⁹⁹ Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 12. James Enterline spends most of his book proving this continued knowledge. James Robert Enterline, *Erikson, Eskimos & Columbus: Medieval European Knowledge of America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

¹⁰¹ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 50.

¹⁰² Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 50.

merchants who sponsored westward voyages, it offered the opportunity for Icelandic information to spread in Bristol. Bristol merchants were well connected and often operated in the same political and civic circles, even if they did not operate in the same trading circles. For example, Robert Straunge and William Spencer, both of whom were connected with the 1480 and 1481 voyages, both served as mayor of Bristol. Straunge was mayor three times (1474-75, 1482-83, 1489-90) as was Spencer (1465-66, 1473-74, 1478-79).¹⁰³

The wealthiest merchants in Bristol operated in the same political circles, regardless of their trade, and would have known each other. Bristol merchants appear to have been civic minded, often holding political offices. In fact, from 1461-1485, only three mayors and four sheriffs appear to have had no connection with the Spanish trade, and for the rest of the century all the mayors and all but five sheriffs traded with Spain at one point or another in their lives.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Bristol merchants often shipped their goods on ships with other merchants. This not only lowered the risk of ruin should a single ship be lost, but tied the merchants closely together. For example, the *Fraunses* of Bristol carried several different types of fish, mantles, skins, wool, check cloth, and a goshawk, the individual trading property of fifteen different merchants.¹⁰⁵ When dealing with regular trade routes, such as the trade to France and Spain, the ship's master, or other merchants who were aboard the vessel, were charged with supervising an individual merchant's goods until they could be handed off to that merchant's factor in the destination port.¹⁰⁶ As many of the merchants who invested in westward voyages also operated in the

¹⁰³ Carus-Wilson, 157.

¹⁰⁴ Childs, *Anglo-Castilian*, 209. This interconnected network of merchants operating in city polities is demonstrated throughout Wendy R. Childs *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the later Middle Ages*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁵ Susan Flavin and Evan T. Jones eds. *Bristol's Trade with Ireland and The Continent 1503-1601: The Evidence of the Exchequer Customs Accounts*. (Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press LTD for the Bristol Record Society, 2009), 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade*, 187.

Spanish trade, the chance that these merchants knew, and perhaps even dined in the homes of, those listed in the alien roll is high. Whether or not the Bristol traders learned of the old Viking sagas, or heard of distant lands to the west, their trade with Iceland gave them needed practical knowledge of the North Atlantic, and Bristol's placement in southwest England made it an ideal place to launch westward voyages in search of fabled lands and new trade routes of which the Bristol merchants could take advantage. Alwyn A. Ruddock has demonstrated that for much of the mid-fifteenth century Bristol had a "special position in the Icelandic trade." However, this began to weaken in 1475 when English interests there were challenged by the Hanseatic League.¹⁰⁷ This would have not only given Bristol merchants special insight into Icelandic trade networks and knowledge of the Atlantic, but might also have helped motivate them to begin looking west.

The Discovery of the Newfoundland Region

John Jay's voyage of 1480 was rumored to be in search of the fabled Isle of Brasil, said to be west of Ireland, rich with resources. Virtually nothing is known of this voyage other than what is recorded by Worcestre. It was likely partially backed by the collector of customs, Thomas Croft, and the Bristol merchants William Spencer, Robert Straunge, and William de la Fount. These men had been granted a license, dated June 18, 1480, to trade for three years to any regions with two or three ships of sixty tons or less. As the license was granted almost exactly a month before Jay set sail, it is possible that he did so in partnership with the men holding it.¹⁰⁸ Jay was a merchant connected to international markets and likely knew Croft,

¹⁰⁷ Alwyn A. Ruddock, "John Day of Bristol and the English Voyages across the Atlantic before 1497." *The Geographical Journal* 132, no. 2 (1966): 225-33, 230-1.

¹⁰⁸ Carus-Wilson, Doc. 204, p. 157. Oleson believes that this is the most likely scenario for the voyage. 124.

Spencer, Straunge, and de la Fount. John Jay the elder was trading with Portugal and France by 1463, shipping 300 quarters of wheat to Portugal, and receiving license to trade with Aquitaine, exporting all but staple goods and importing all except wines.¹⁰⁹ By 1493, Jay, the younger, appears to have had a well-established trade in Lisbon, as he is recorded as having shipped wine and oil from Lisbon to Bristol on the *Nicholas*, which also carried wine and oil for John Day, oil for Robert Thorne, and wax and wine for William Spencer.¹¹⁰

One year after Jay's 1480 voyage Thomas Croft was charged in the Court of Exchequer with engaging illegally in trade while he held the office of Customer. Croft was accused of shipping forty bushels of salt in the *George* and in the *Trinity*, both of Bristol, both ships of which he owned an eighth part. He was exonerated by a local jury on the grounds that he had done so not for the purpose of trading, but to seek and find the Isle of Brasil.¹¹¹ The ships apparently left the port on July 6, a bit late in the year for a successful transatlantic voyage. No other details of the voyage are given in the court records, nor have any been found through other sources. However, as there were two ships not one, this appears to be a follow up to Jay's voyage of 1480. Since Croft sent forty bushels of salt with the ships, it is likely that he believed the ships would be able to do some fishing as part of the voyage, indicating that he believed the ships would find fisheries with the Isle of Brasil. This could indicate that Croft had heard rumors

¹⁰⁹ Carus-Wilson, Doc. 158, 160, 165, respectively, 130, 131, 133.

¹¹⁰ A list of the wealthiest merchants in Bristol in 1485-7 includes Guillem de la Fount (also known as William de la Fount), Robert Thorne, and John Jay the elder. As the wealthiest merchants often worked together to ship goods and lived and worked in the same circles this list indicates a close proximity of the de la Fount, Thorne and Jay families. It is known that John Jay the elder held political office, as did most of the wealthiest Bristol merchants. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade*, 208-9. John Jay the younger served as Bailiff of Bristol in 1487 and as sheriff in 1499. "Robert Ricart's Chronicle of Bristol, 1480-1508" transcribed by Evan Jones, BRO 04720, Posted through Smugglers' City, Department of History, University of Bristol, <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1480ricart.htm> accessed 6/24/2016. For details of the voyage of the *Nicholas* see Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 56.

¹¹¹ Carus-Wilson, Doc. 209, pp. 161-65.

of rich fisheries to the west. Salt would be a strange thing to send west as a trading item, making it more likely that it was intended as a preservative for fish. This use of salt was a common practice among fishermen to the Icelandic fisheries and became the normal practice of fishermen in the Newfoundland fisheries just a few short decades later. While it is unknown what happened during the voyage, it appears that at least the *Trinity* returned, as it was recorded trading with Portugal in 1483.¹¹²

It is not known how many westward voyages set out from Bristol between 1481 and Cabot's voyage of 1497. As will be discussed later, there is some argument for a voyage in 1494 by Robert Thorne and Hugh Elyot. There are no court records, or port records, to prove that this voyage, or any other, occurred between 1481 and 1497. However, there is evidence of voyages during this period.¹¹³ In a letter to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, dated July 25, 1498, Pedro de Ayala stated that "for the last seven years the people of Bristol have equipped two, three, four caravels to go in search of the island of Brasil and the seven cities."¹¹⁴ John Day, who has been identified by Alwyn Ruddock as Hugh Say of London, wrote to Columbus, stating that the land Cabot had discovered was "found and discovered in the past by the men from Bristol who found Brasil as your Lordship well knows. It was called the Island of Brasil, and it is assumed and believed to be the mainland that the men from Bristol found."¹¹⁵ The

¹¹² Oleson, 124.

¹¹³ There are some customs records for 1483, 1485-8, and a few for 1492-3, however, nothing in these records to prove this voyage. It should be noted though, that if the ships returned carrying nothing customable, they would not be recorded.

¹¹⁴ Luis A. Robles Macías, "Revised transcription of Pedro de Ayala's 1498 report about English voyages of exploration", pp. 11-13. This is a translated and slightly abridged version of the article by the same author entitled 'Transcripción revisada del informe de Pedro de Ayala de 1498 sobre las expediciones inglesas de descubrimiento', *Revista de Indias*, 74, no. 262 (2014). Posted through "The Smugglers' City" Department of History, the University of Bristol, <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1498ayala.htm> accessed 1/20/2018.

¹¹⁵ John Day letter, as found in L.A. Vigneras, "The Cape Breton Landfall: 1494 or 1497 Note on a letter from John Day" *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 38 (Sept., 1957), pp. 219-228. Alwyn Ruddock demonstrated the identity of John Day as the well-educated Londoner, Hugh Say, Ruddock, "John Day of Bristol," 225-229.

original letter reads “en otros tiempos” which can be read as, “in the past,” or, “in other times.”

This phrasing is ambiguous to say the least, and has been debated by historians for decades.

James Williamson pointed out that the meaning was likely translated from English into Spanish and has now been retranslated into English, making the meaning of the phrase something closer to “previously” than “a generation past,” which would place the voyages closer to 1481-1494.¹¹⁶

This interpretation of the phrasing appears to coincide with the known voyages. There is evidence of two voyages, one in 1480 and one in 1481. There is also the controversial date of a voyage in 1494 by Robert Thorne, and the indication given by Ayala that there had been multiple voyages every year from 1491-1498. It would be very odd indeed if Bristolians had discovered “Brasil” in the distant past, sent out two voyages, one right after the other, only to lose interest in the project for a decade, and then began sending out several voyages every year with no apparent success. It seems much more reasonable that at some point between 1481 and the early 1490s a Bristolian discovered the rich fishing grounds off the coast of Newfoundland and that it was to these fisheries and the lands around them that the multiple voyages Ayala mentions traveled.

In a letter written in 1527, Robert Thorne Jr. stated that the new found lands, had been discovered by his father:

So this Inclynation or desire of [disco]vering I inherited of my father which with an[other] Marchant of **Brystow** named Hughe Eliot He discovered of the Newfound lands. Of the wh[ich] there is no dowl, (as now plainly appeareth) yf [the] marinors would then have bene ruled and followed the Pilots mynde, the Land of the Indians from

¹¹⁶ L.A. Vigneras states that “en otros tiempos” usually is taken to mean a generation or more in the past, or a quarter century. Thus, it is a possibility that there was an accidental Bristol discovery of Newfoundland before 1480, perhaps even before 1477, and might have helped inspire Columbus. Vigneras, 224. Alwyn Ruddock argued that the most likely scenario is that Bristolians found “Brasil” at some point before the 1480s but had lost it and the multiple voyages west in the 1490s were an attempt to rediscover it. Ruddock, “John Day of Bristol,” 230-31. Both David Quinn and James Williamson find the idea that seasoned mariners would have found and lost the Isle of Brasil to be a bit farfetched and argue that the term likely refers to some point between 1481-1494. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 11; Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 30-31.

whe[nce] all the Gold cometh had bene owrs: for all is on[e] Coast. As by the Carde appeareth....¹¹⁷

While he clearly laid claim to the discovery of North America for Bristol, and in particular for his father and Hugh Eliot, he did not give a date for the discovery. The original letter, which Thorne wrote to Dr. Lee with the intent that it be shared with the king, has not survived.

However, there are several copies of it that have. One of these was copied by Dr. John Dee's scribe from a copy lent him by Cyprian Lucar, who had inherited Thorne's papers from his father, Emanuel Lucar. Dee's copy was made in 1577 and is now known as BL Cotton MS Vitellius E vii, ff. 329-45. There are two other copies, Hatfield House MS 29 and Lansdowne MS 100, ff. 65-80b. The latter is now at the British Library. The Hatfield House MS is considered the least accurate of the three, with the Lansdowne copy being considered the overall best copy by E.G.R. Taylor.¹¹⁸ None of the copies offer a date for the discovery of Newfoundland. However, Dee offered a date for this discovery on a separate document. This discrepancy leaves the date of Robert Thorne Sr.'s discovery in question.

On the back of a map of the North Atlantic, drawn by Dee in 1580, he included a brief outline of the English history of the discovery of the Americas and argued for England's rightful claim to North America. In this summary, he included the statement that, "Circa An. 1494. 2. Mr. Robert Thorne his father, and Mr. Eliot of Bristow, discovered Newfound Land."¹¹⁹ There is no solid evidence to indicate where Dee received his information regarding the date of Thorne's discovery of Newfoundland. However, as he had access to Cyprian Lucar's copy of Thorne's

¹¹⁷ BL, Cotton MS Vitellius E vii, ff. 329-45. Emphasis as in the original.

¹¹⁸ E.G. R. Taylor, ed. *A Briefe Summe of Geographie*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1931), xxvi-xxvii. Most historians appear to agree with Taylor on this point, especially as the Cotton MS version has some significant burn marks on the first page. However, for the short passage used here, the Cotton MS version is considered the superior copy by J.A. Williamson. Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 26-7. Having compared the two, I find the Cotton MS a bit clearer in this passage and have thus chosen to rely on it for this short passage.

¹¹⁹ BL Cotton MS Aug.i.i.i.

papers, it is quite possible that he was privy to information that has not survived and saw a copy of the date among these papers. It is possible that the Bristol discovery of the new found land that Day referred to was the discovery that Robert Thorne claimed that his father had made with Hugh Eliot, and that this discovery in the early 1490s had helped trigger the apparently sudden swell of westward voyages that Ayala referred to in his letter. Unfortunately, without a new discovery of hard evidence it is impossible to prove this.

The Voyages of John Cabot

Regardless of whether or not Bristol had rediscovered North America, the fact that Bristol was sending out regular westward voyages seems to have been part of what attracted John Cabot to the port city.¹²⁰ It appears that Cabot arrived in Bristol sometime around 1494-95.¹²¹ It has been suggested that Cabot chose to go to Bristol because of the rumors that Bristol merchants were already searching to the west for the Isle of Brasil.¹²² From the outset, Cabot's exploits were an international enterprise. Part of Cabot's funding came from an Italian bank based in London, and one of his chief supporters in England was Brother Giovanni Antonio de Carbonariis, an Augustinian friar from Milan. This is of particular note as Carbonariis was responsible for collecting the Pope's taxes in England and served as a diplomat, acting as Soncino's guide and advisor when he arrived in England as ambassador for the Duke of Milan.¹²³

¹²⁰ I say "rediscovered" here as the Vikings had already discovered America and built settlements. The Viking legends, which I contend the Bristol merchants could have learned about from the Icelanders, are oral histories of this discovery.

¹²¹ Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages*, 19. 1495 seems to be the more likely date of the voyage. Jones and Condon, 24-5.

¹²² Vigneras, 225.

¹²³ Jones and Condon, 33.

Carbonariis' connections likely explain how Cabot managed to obtain an audience with the king. Carbonariis continued to support Cabot and even traveled with him on his 1498 voyage.¹²⁴

Cabot received his first letters patent from Henry VII on March 5, 1496.¹²⁵ The patent was granted to Cabot and his three sons, Lewis, Sebastian, and Sancio, granting them the authority to sail to all parts, east, west, and north, under the King's banner with five ships and as many men as they wish to take to "find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians."¹²⁶ The grant further stated that they and their heirs would then be exempt from all customs on goods brought back from the lands they discovered, and possess the right to control English trade with those regions. While this patent was dated March 5, 1496, a date which certainly gave Cabot plenty of time for a westward voyage, there is very little evidence that Cabot embarked on a voyage in 1496. It is possible that it was a 1496 voyage that John Day referred to when he stated that on his first voyage Cabot took one ship, his crew "confused" him, and running short on supplies he was forced to return to England without discovering anything of note.¹²⁷ It was not until Cabot's 1497 voyage that he first "discovered" North America.

¹²⁴ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 36, p. 227.

¹²⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 18, p. 204.

¹²⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 18, p. 204.

¹²⁷ Day, 226. Williamson argues that this is the only logical explanation for this reference. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 54. I with Williamson. After Day finishes discussing the 1497 voyage and the planned voyage of 1498, he states that "Since your Lordship wants information relating to the first voyage, here is what happened: he went with one ship, his crew confused him, he was short of supplies and ran into bad weather, and he decided to turn back." Day, 228. As this is after the discussion of the 1497 voyage it is clearly a different voyage. Day also states that Cabot returned to England in 15 days in 1497, indicating good sailing conditions, not bad weather. Finally, the Pasqualigo letter does not mention any mishaps on the 1497 voyage, indicating that it is a different voyage from the one Day identifies as Cabot's first. This does suggest that Cabot embarked on a voyage in 1496.

If Cabot did make a small, poorly planned voyage in 1496, he did not repeat the mistake in 1497. It appears that in 1497 Cabot took with him some unnamed Bristol merchants who had either been on voyages to Brasil themselves or had been instructed by those who had. While the identity of these merchants is unknown, it has been speculated that they were most likely Thorne and Eliot.¹²⁸ Cabot is believed to have made landfall on St. John the Baptist's day, June 24, 1497, on the Island of St. John. According to Lorenzo Pasqualigo, a Venetian merchant living in London, in a letter written to his brothers in Venice on 23, August 1497, Cabot discovered land that he believed to be of the same country as the Grand Khan and explored the land for some 300 leagues without seeing any people. He did, however, bring back snares which had been spread to take game and a needle for making nets. He also reported seeing notched, or felled, trees, indicating that there was human habitation close by. On his way back, Cabot saw two other islands, but did not want to take the time to explore them. Pasqualigo records that Henry VII was very pleased with Cabot's reports and promised to give him ten armed ships for the following spring and "has given him all the prisoners to be sent away, that they may go with him, as he has requested," as well as enough money for he and his family to live comfortably in Bristol.¹²⁹ While this letter was dated August 23, 1497, it is known that Cabot had returned to London by August 10, as this is the date recorded in the Household book for the payment of £10 on "hym that found the new isle."¹³⁰ In December of the same year, Henry granted an annual pension of £20 payable by instalments at Michaelmas and Easter out of the Bristol customs.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 62, Doc. 19, p. 206.

¹²⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 22, pp. 207-8.

¹³⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, p. 214.

¹³¹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 27, p. 217.

John Day's letter tells a similar story, stating that Cabot and his men landed on what they believe to be the mainland, where they erected a crucifix with banners bearing the coat of arms of the Holy Father and the King of England. He stated that while they did find signs of habitation and trails leading inland, they did not explore further, as they did not have very many men with them. Cabot and his men spent roughly a month sailing along the coast before returning to England, a trip that took only 15 days. Along the coast Cabot found "tall trees of the kind masts are made" and all along the coast, "they found many fish like those which in Iceland are dried in the open and sold in England and other countries."¹³² Day reported that Cabot planned an expedition for the following year to explore the land more thoroughly with ten or twelve vessels. The finding of rich resources was also recorded by the Milanese Ambassador in England, Raimondo de Raimondi de Soncino, in his letter to the Duke of Milan. Soncino stated that the Bristolians who accompanied Cabot reported that the new land had so many fish that England would have no further need of Iceland, as there are so many that they can be caught simply by lowering a weighted basket.¹³³

Day mentioned in his letter to Columbus that he sent a rough map of the lands Cabot discovered.¹³⁴ This map was likely what Juan de la Cosa used for drawing his depiction of North America in his 1500 map, making the Cosa map the only surviving map that gives definite, contemporary evidence of the 1497 discovery.¹³⁵ As has been well noted by historians, many of

¹³² Day, 227.

¹³³ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, p. 210.

¹³⁴ Vigneras, L.A. "The Cape Breton Landfall: 1494 or 1497 Note on a letter from John Day." Translation of the John Day letter, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 38 (Sept., 1957), pp. 219-228.

¹³⁵ Vigneras, L.A. "New Light on the 1497 Cabot Voyage to America," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 36, (Nov., 1956), pp. 503-6, 504-5; Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 106; Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 72; R.A. Skelton, "The Cartography of the Voyages," Williamson, J.A., ed. *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery Under Henry VII*, The Hakluyt Society, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), Skelton states that "the only map which unambiguously illustrates John Cabot's voyage of 1497—and (with less certainty) his voyage of 1498 also—is that of Juan de la Cosa dated 1500." 298.

the inscriptions scattered along the American coasts are words which seem, at first glance, to be Spanish, but are in fact unrecognizable in any language. This points to the fact that the map, as it is today, was not the original, but a copy made by someone who failed to decipher the place names and merely drew them to the best of their ability.¹³⁶ However, several of the place names along the section of the North American coastline that is clearly marked off as English by five English flags are very clearly of English-origin. These are; “Cavo de ynglaterra” (Cape of England), “Cavo de S. Jorge” (Cape of St. George), and “Cavo de lisarte” (Cape of the Lizard). It is likely that these names were copied from Cabot’s map and that the name “Cape of the Lizard” was due to the location’s similarity to the Lizard Peninsula on the southernmost tip of Cornwall.¹³⁷ The inclusion of these specific English place names reaffirms the idea that Juan de la Cosa took information from an English chart of Cabot’s voyages and used it to draw his representation of North America. Not only does this give some indication of Cabot’s understanding of the geographical lay of the land, but it also demonstrates how quickly news of Cabot’s discoveries spread, and how much of his geographic discoveries spread to the continent.

¹³⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 75.

¹³⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 54; Jones and Condon, 53; William Francis Ganong, *Crucial Maps in the Early Cartography and Place-Nomenclature of the Atlantic Coast of Canada*, Introduction by Theodore E. Lang, University of Toronto Press in Cooperation with the Royal Society of Canada, 1964, 16-18.



Figure 1-1 Juan de la Cosa map, 1500.

In this rotated view, the five English flags along the E-W running coast can be seen. This coastline likely represents a landfall in Nova Scotia to Cape Race. Image taken from found at http://tonova.typepad.com/thesuddencurve/historical_blogs/, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18710119> accessed 3/9/2018.

On December 18, 1497, Soncino wrote to the Duke of Milan that the English king had recently gained a part of Asia without “a stroke of the sword” thanks to one Zoane Caboto who, having observed how first the Portuguese and then the Spanish had occupied unknown islands, decided to make a similar acquisition for the king of England.¹³⁸ Soncino stated that much of Cabot’s success, if not all of it, was due to the Bristol men who sailed with him and who had confirmed his story. He went on to state that Henry VII was so pleased with Cabot’s find, and

¹³⁸ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, p. 209.

his assertions that he would be able to soon find Cipango and all its treasures, that he planned to equip ships and give Cabot all of the malefactors, “and they will go to the country and form a colony.”¹³⁹ The leading men for this expedition were to be great seamen from Bristol. Also accompanying this voyage were a Burgundian, Cabot’s Genoese barber, and “some poor Italian friars ... who have the promise of bishoprics.”¹⁴⁰ One of these Italian friars appears to have been Carbonariis. A letter from Bishop Agostino de Spinola to the Duke of Milan, dated June 20, 1498, stated that Carbonariis had recently departed with the five ships that were sent to “discover new islands.”¹⁴¹ At this time it was still relatively rare for a priest to be aboard a ship embarking on such a voyage, reinforcing the point that these priests or friars were joining the expedition to minister on land, setting up new bishoprics, rather than simply joining to minister to the crew.¹⁴²

This letter offers interesting insight into Cabot’s 1498 voyage. Henry VII, now an active financial partner, supplying and equipping ships, was apparently interested in forming an English colony in the New World by providing forced labor to support its establishment.¹⁴³ This also connects Bristol with the first attempt at colonizing North America, for Soncino clearly stated that Cabot would not have been believed if not for the Bristolians who backed up his story, and that “leading men in this enterprise are from Bristol.”¹⁴⁴ There is little evidence to indicate who these Bristolians were. In 1498 Henry VII advanced a sum of £113 8s. to Lancelot Thirkill, along with Thomas Bradley, between March 7 and April 6, to outfit his ship for a voyage “going

¹³⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, p. 210.

¹⁴⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, p. 211.

¹⁴¹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 36, p. 227. It is interesting to note that Spinola was a member of the same Spinola merchant family which Robert Thorne the younger would have business dealings with. See chapter six.

¹⁴² Vincent V. Patarino, Jr., “The Religious Shipboard Culture of English Seamen,” Fury, Cheryl A., ed. *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 141-192., 153. See also, Cheryl A. Fury, “The Work of C.V. Scammell” Fury, Cheryl A., ed., *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485-1649*, (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2012), 27-64, 38.

¹⁴³ While ships (plural) were promised it appears that only one ship embarked.

¹⁴⁴ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, pp. 210-11.

toward the new Ilande.”¹⁴⁵ Bradley has been identified as a merchant with connections to both London and Bristol, while Thirkill appears to have been based out of London.¹⁴⁶ In April 1498, John Cair was given a free gift of 40 shillings by the king as he was “going to the newe Ile.”¹⁴⁷

Cabot received letters patent enabling him to gather the needed equipment and manpower to launch his colonizing venture on February 3, 1498. Cabot and his deputies received the power to take six English ships of no more than 200 tons burden, paying for them at the King’s rates.¹⁴⁸ Cabot also had the authority to take all subjects of the Crown, including masters and mariners, who would voluntarily accompany him to the “land and isles of late found by the said John in our name and by our commandment.”¹⁴⁹ Through this phrasing it is plain that Henry VII, and therefore likely Cabot and his Bristolian partners, understood they had found a continent, as well as new islands.

When the fleet departed it consisted of one ship equipped by the King and four by the merchants of London and Bristol. There is no available information on the financing of the four smaller Bristol ships, however, it is clear from the London Chronicles that these ships were not intended for fishing, as they were laden with the same sorts of merchandise as the King’s ship.¹⁵⁰ *The Cronicon Regum Anglie* stated that the King’s carried “goodes & sleight merchaundises” while *The Great Chronicle of London* stated that the four ships of Bristol were laden with “sleygth & groos marchandysis as course cloth cappis lasis poyntis & other tryfylys.”¹⁵¹ *The*

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, pp. 214-215.

¹⁴⁶ Jones and Condon, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, p. 215.

¹⁴⁸ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 35, pp. 226-7. Williamson shows that Navy papers of the period reveal that the Crown paid 3d. per ton per week for impressed shipping. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 91.

¹⁴⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 35, p. 227.

¹⁵⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 93.

¹⁵¹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 31, pp. 220-21.

Chronicle of Robert Fabyan stated that the Bristol ships were “fraught with sleight and grosse merchandizes, as course cloth, Caps, Laces, points, and other trifles.”¹⁵² These goods would have taken up room unnecessarily had the ships been intended as a fishing fleet along the coasts of Nova Scotia. These goods would only have been needed if the merchants backing the ships intended to find new sources of trade.

The fleet departed in May, 1498, and according to *The Great Chronicle of London*, in an account written sometime before September 1498, no news of the fleet had been received since it departed.¹⁵³ This should not be all that surprising, as the apparent purpose of the fleet was to establish a colony and find Cipango, which would take time, and as Ayala reported to the Spanish monarchs, the fleet set out with provisions for a year.¹⁵⁴ This reference, however, has been used by some to argue that the fleet was lost at sea. The undated account was written in the year of September 1497-September 1498, which means that the chronicler had to have written it at some point between May and September 1498. This hardly gave Cabot the time needed to explore the coastline of North America, find a suitable location to establish a colony, off load the men and goods, and send a ship back to England with news of the colony’s location. Thus, this statement cannot be used to argue that the fleet was lost at sea as London could not expect to hear anything from the fleet so early. It appears that the ships returned at different times, as there is no evidence of the fleet returning in full, or of the excitement that one would expect to find with the homecoming of a fleet of explorers. Ayala’s letter reveals that one of the ships, carrying Friar Buil, was forced to make landfall in Ireland by a strong storm which separated it from the

¹⁵² Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 31, p. 221.

¹⁵³ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 31, p. 220.

¹⁵⁴ Robles Macías, “Revised Transcript.”

fleet and damaged her.¹⁵⁵ There is little concrete knowledge of what the fleet did or discovered. However, there is enough evidence that some, if not all of the fleet, made it south along the coast and into the Caribbean, that this point must be discussed in some detail in order to understand the extent of English knowledge of the Americas.

Soncino's reports show that Cabot planned to continue to sail south along the coastline until he found the Island of Cipango, which likely would have led him into the Caribbean.¹⁵⁶ Ayala stated that he believed, "they have discovered or are in search of is[land(s)] possessed by your Highnesses because it is at the end [of] what fell to Your Highnesses by the convention with Portugal."¹⁵⁷ He went on to state that he had spoken many times with Henry VII and told him that "I believed they were those [islands?] found by Your Highnesses," however, Henry VII would not "have it."¹⁵⁸ From Ayala's account it seems that Cabot intended to sail along the North American coast into the Caribbean and thus enter Spanish claimed waters. Where else would Cabot threaten to stumble upon islands found by Spain?

On June 8, 1501 the Spanish monarchs issued a patent to Alonso de Ojeda. The patent stipulated that Ojeda go;

and follow that coast which you have discovered, that runs east and west, as it appears, because it goes towards the region where it has been learned that the English made discoveries; and that you go setting up marks with the arms of their Majesties, or with other signs that may be known, such as shall seem good to you, in order that it be known that you have discovered that land, so that you may stop the exploration of the English in that direction.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Robles Macías, "Revised Transcript."

¹⁵⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 24, pp. 209-11.

¹⁵⁷ Robles Macías, "Revised Transcript."

¹⁵⁸ Robles Macías, "Revised Transcript."

¹⁵⁹ M. Fernandez de Navarrete, *Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos, que Hicieron por mar los Españoles Desde fines del siglo XV, con varios Documentos Ineditos Concernientes Á la Historia de la Marina Castellana y de los Establicimientos Españoles en Indias*, vol III (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1829), 86.

In 1499 Ojeda, along with Juan de La Cosa and Amerigo Vespucci, had sailed westward along the coast of South America until they reached Cabo de la Vela in modern Venezuela, at which point they turned north for Hispaniola.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the coast that he had discovered, which runs east and west, was the northern coastline of Venezuela. If this coastline ran toward the lands discovered by the English, or where the English were making discoveries, then it appears that the English were deep in the Gulf of Mexico, for if they were along the eastern seaboard of North America, then an east to west coastline would not run in their direction. Ojeda would have to sail straight north from the coast he had discovered to reach the English in North America. If the English were only marginally in the Gulf Coast, perhaps only as far as what is today Florida or Georgia, then this would still be true. Ojeda would still have had to sail due north to reach the region where the English were supposed to be making their discoveries. It would only make sense for Ojeda to sail along an east-west coast, headed west into the Gulf, if the English were known to have made it deep into the coast, perhaps as far as the Yucatan Peninsula.

There is another written account that indicates that at least one of the Cabots made it as far as Florida. In his *The Discoveries of the World*, published in 1563, the Portuguese writer António Galvão gave a muddled account of Sebastian Cabot's exploration.¹⁶¹ This account possesses details from three different voyages pasted together and credited as one voyage made by Sebastian. Galvão stated that Sebastian Cabot set out in 1496 with the backing of Henry VII to discover the islands rumored to be in the west at the same latitude as England. This was

¹⁶⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 108.

¹⁶¹ António Galvão, *The Discoveries of the World, From their First Originall unto the Yeere of Our Lord 1555: Briefly written in the Portugall tongue, by Antonie Galvano, Governor of Ternate, the chiefe Island of the Malucos. Corrected, quoted, and now published in English by Richard Hakluyt sometime student of Christchurch in Oxford*, (London, 1601), C.R. D. Bethune, ed. Reprinted with the original Portuguese Text, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1862), 87-89.

obviously a reference to John Cabot's first voyage, and lends credence to the idea that Galvão was unaware of Sebastian's father. He then stated that Sebastian was provided with two ships and three hundred men by the king, that he first sighted land at 45°, a latitude associated with John Cabot's first landfall, and that he then sailed north to 60°, a latitude associated with Sebastian Cabot's voyage of 1508, which will be discussed below. Galvão concluded his account by stating that Cabot sailed south to 38°, discovering every cove and inlet along the way, and then returned home. However, "there be others which say that he went as far as the Cape of Florida, which standeth in 25 degrees."¹⁶² This would seem to be a bit far south for Sebastian Cabot's voyage. Thirty-eight degrees south is the furthest southerly location given for his voyage. However, if this southerly reference is confused with John Cabot's voyages, as is much of this passage, then it indicates that rumors were still circulating that John Cabot had made it at least as far as Florida on one of his voyages.

In addition to the written sources that indicate that the Spanish monarchs believed that Cabot's intent had been to sail into the Caribbean, and that he had achieved this purpose, there are also several pieces of cartographic evidence that indicate that this may very well have happened. While there is no surviving copy of Cabot's map, it is well known that Cabot charted his discoveries in 1497, and that at least one copy of this chart made it to the continent. This shows that Cabot charted his discoveries. Thus, if he or any of his ships made it back to England after the 1498 voyage, they would have brought back cartographic knowledge and likely would have brought back charts that could have circulated among cartographic circles. This circulation of cartographic knowledge should not be surprising, as these voyages were truly transnational affairs. While the English are quick to claim Cabot for themselves, it must be remembered that

¹⁶² Galvão, 89.

he was of Italian origin and that some of his greatest financial backers were Italian bankers with London connections.¹⁶³

One key piece of evidence of this flow of cartographic knowledge is the Cosa map of 1500. Juan de la Cosa's map has already been discussed in some detail. While most of his knowledge of North America can confidently be attributed to the 1497 voyage, there is some circumstantial evidence that he might have at least heard rumors of the exploratory activities of the 1498 voyage. The northeast section of North America is clearly labeled with English flags and place names that can be associated with Cabot's 1497 voyage. Cosa continued the coastline south and southwest in a relatively smooth curve, indicating that he was unsure of the exact geographical features of the coast, but had some idea of the general direction in which it headed. Where Mexico should be, Cosa conveniently covered up the land with a rather large image of Saint Christopher. In doing this Cosa left room for a passage through the Americas as well as an enclosed gulf. This indicates that Cosa really had no idea what was in Central America, but he did have some idea of the general shape of the North American coast as it travels southward and southwest toward the Gulf. However, just to the north of this image there is a small peninsula jutting east into the Gulf to the northwest of an insular Cuba. This geographical feature, which is relatively close to the location of the Yucatan Peninsula, could indicate that Cosa's source had made it as far as the Yucatan. It does confirm knowledge of an insular Cuba. There are no recorded Spanish voyages that would account for this knowledge. The only known voyage for this time period that is even rumored to have headed in this direction was Cabot's 1498 voyage. As historians are fairly confident of the 1500 date of the map, it can be assumed that Cosa's

¹⁶³ R.A. Skelton has argued that some of the best evidence for Portuguese and English discoveries is to be found on Italian maps precisely because these voyages were often backed financially by Italian bankers with serious interest in the geographical discoveries. Skelton, "The Cartography of the Voyages," 295-6.

knowledge of any English voyages was limited to the voyages of John Cabot and possibly William Weston's 1499 voyage.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Some, such as David O. True have argued that Cosa's information had to have been limited to the 1497 voyage as there would not have been time for him to receive information from the '98 and '99 voyages before making his map. However, news appears to have been able to travel fairly quickly and as Skelton has pointed out, the Old World portion of the map appears to have been drawn at a different date than the New World portion. If the Old World portion were completed earlier, then Cosa would have still had time to receive some news of the '98 voyage, while the '99 voyage would be pushing the limits a bit, and still completed the New World portion of the map by 1500. David O. True, "Some Early Maps Relating to Florida" *Imago Mundi*, vol. 11 (1954), pp. 73-84. 75. Skelton, "The Cartography of the Voyages," 298. Williamson and Skelton both argue that the geographical features of this section of the map indicate that Cabot likely explored the Caribbean to some extent as his is the only known voyage to the region during this time. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 72-83; Skelton "The Cartography of the Voyages," 298-307.



Figure 1-2 Juan de la Cosa map, 1500.

In this rotated view the south to southwest curve of the southern portion of North America can clearly be seen. The image of Saint Christopher conveniently takes up all of Central America. Image taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18710119> accessed 3/10/2018.

There are three additional maps that indicate that knowledge of the Caribbean exceeded Spanish exploration in the first decade of the sixteenth century. These maps are the Cantino map of 1502, the Caverio map of 1505, and the Waldseemüller map (1507?). All three of these maps predate the first recorded circumnavigation of Cuba by Sebastián de Ocampo in 1509, yet all three show the west side of an island named, respectively, Ilha yssabella, insula issabella, and Isabella Insula. The name seems to be an error, as the island on all three maps appears very similar to Cuba in shape and position.¹⁶⁵ This indicates that knowledge of Cuba as an island was circulating in Europe as early as 1502. The Cantino map of the world was apparently drawn by a Portuguese.¹⁶⁶ This cartographer ignored Cabot's and the English activities in the New World, bringing together Labrador, Newfoundland, and part of Nova Scotia as one land entitled *Terra del Rey de Portuguall*. This is separated from the rest of North America which is clearly within the Spanish sphere. This does not necessarily indicate that he lacked knowledge of the English expeditions, simply that he intended to use this map as a means for establishing Portugal's claim over the northern section of North America.

In the vicinity of the Caribbean, the Cantino map includes a small landmass to the northwest of what is today Cuba.¹⁶⁷ This land mass looks remarkably like the Florida peninsula. By 1502 there were no recorded Spanish voyages that could have made this discovery, nor were

¹⁶⁵ E. Roukema is quite confident in this point, stating that "it is obvious that the name is wrong...the so-called Isabella's shape and position unmistakably stamp the island as Cuba." E. Roukema, "A Discovery of Yucatan Prior to 1503," *Imago Mundi*, vol. 13 (1959), pp. 30-38, 30.

¹⁶⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 122.

¹⁶⁷ While this dissertation explores the possibility that these apparent representations of Florida actually do indicate some knowledge of the Florida peninsula, Donald McGuirk has done noteworthy research and published the hypothesis that these depictions are actually mistaken duplications of the southern tip of Cuba. Donald L. McGuirk, "The Depiction of Cuba on the Ruysch World Map" *Terrae Incognitae: The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, 20:1 (1988), 89-97; Donald L. McGuirk, "The Presumed North America on the Waldseemüller World Map (1507): A Theory of Its Discovery by Christopher Columbus" *Terrae Incognitae: The Journal of the Society for the History of Discoveries*, 46:2, (2014), 86-102.

there any recorded Portuguese voyages. While it might be possible that one of the Corte Real brothers made it this far south, if this knowledge had made it back to Portugal by 1502, then this cartographer would have knowledge of the rest of the eastern seaboard. However, this is unlikely, as the Corte Real brothers were lost at sea, first Gaspar in 1500, and then Miguel in 1502. While it is recorded that Gaspar sailed south, he did not return from this voyage, and Miguel did not return from his southward voyage in search of his brother. Thus, it seems unlikely that any cartographic knowledge of Florida or Yucatan can be attributed to them. It remains a possibility that this knowledge came from Cabot's voyage, as he was believed to be heading in this direction in 1498, and the patent to Ojeda seems to place Cabot at least in the vicinity of the Yucatan.

The same argument can be made for both the Caverio map of 1505 and the Waldseemüller map of 1507. Both maps appear to use a source which had some factual knowledge of a peninsula just west of the main body of Cuba. This could be either Florida or Yucatan. As there is no real evidence of a Portuguese voyage in this region, and only the rumored reports that Cabot headed in this direction, it is impossible to state with certainty who first explored this region. However, given Ojeda's orders to continue westward from the region of Cabo de la Vela in Venezuela and erect markers for the King of Spain in the region the English had been exploring, it is plausible, if not likely, that the English had reached the Yucatan Peninsula by 1501.



Figure 1-3 The Caverio map (1505).
This map shows a peninsula to the west, northwest of what appears to be Cuba. Image taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=61116468> accessed 3/10/2018.



Figure 1-4 Martin Waldseemüller c. 1507.

This map also shows a peninsula to the west, northwest of what appears to be Cuba. enlarged and cropped to show the Americas. Image taken from the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3200.ct000725C/> accessed, 3/22/2019.

Bristol's Post-Cabot Expeditions

John Cabot seems to disappear from the historical record after 1498. However, this did not slow down England's exploratory ventures. The first known "post-Cabot" voyage took place just one year later in 1499, led by William Weston, a Bristol merchant. This expedition most likely took part under Cabot's patent, as Weston seems to have been associated with the explorer from the start of 1497/8 and they appear to have been present at Henry VII's court at the same time to receive payments from the king.¹⁶⁸ Not much is known about Weston or his voyage. The majority of what is known of Weston's voyage comes from a letter sent by Henry VII on March 12, 1499 to his Lord Chancellor ordering the suspension of legal proceedings against Weston as he shall, "shortly with goddess grace passe and saille for to serche and fynde if he can the new founde land."¹⁶⁹ Henry VII requested that the "maiters and Injunccion bee utterly put in suspense and d[e]laye till that the said William shalbe reoured from the said Journey Soo that by reason of the same he susteine noo losse ner damage during his absence."¹⁷⁰

A couple of key facts can be gleaned from this document. First, Henry VII was likely involved in some way with this voyage, since he acted personally to ensure that it took place. Second, the court case was between Weston and John Esterfelde, also a merchant of Bristol. Esterfelde was involved in the Cabot voyages.¹⁷¹ While Esterfelde's legal disputes with Weston seem to focus on Weston upholding the terms of his father-in-law's will, this connection puts

¹⁶⁸ Margaret M. Condon and Evan T. Jones, "William Weston: Early Voyager to the New World" *Historical Research*, vol. 91, (Nov. 2018), 628-646, 630-32; Jones and Condon, 57.

¹⁶⁹ TNA C82/332 f. 61. In fact, nothing was known of this voyage before Margaret Condon recently discovered this court case.

¹⁷⁰ TNA C82/331 f. 61.

¹⁷¹ Annabel Peacock, "The Men of Bristol and the Atlantic Discovery Voyages of the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the degree of MA in Medieval and Early Modern History in the Faculty of Arts, September 2007. She spends a significant portion of chapter 1 connecting Esterfeld to Cabot.

Weston in similar social circles as Cabot.¹⁷² It is not known what Weston's voyage accomplished, although Alwyn Ruddock believed he headed north up the coast of Labrador, perhaps as far as the entrance to Hudson Bay.¹⁷³ Unfortunately, Ruddock never published her research to prove this claim, however, recent research conducted by the Cabot Project, specifically by Margaret Condon and Evan Jones has proved several of Ruddock's statements on Weston.¹⁷⁴ The exact details of his voyage are yet to be discovered. On his return to England Weston received a £30 reward from the King to help cover the expenses accrued in finding "the new land."¹⁷⁵ If Weston sailed under Cabot's patent, this appears to be the last known voyage to do so, for the next several westward voyages out of Bristol all appear to be separate from Cabot's patent.

On March 19, 1501, Richard Warde, Thomas Asshehurst, and John Thomas, merchants of Bristol, along with João Gonsalves, and João and Francisco Fernandes, of the Azores, requested and received letters patent from Henry VII.¹⁷⁶ The letters gave them the authority to use as many ships of any size they deemed necessary to seek out new lands. Specifically, to

discover and search out whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatever part of the world they may lie, which before this time were and at present are unknown to all Christians, and to set up our banners and ensigns in any town, city, castle, island or mainland by them thus newly found,

¹⁷² Peacock, chapter 3. For Weston's father-in-law's will see TNA PROB 11/9, fos. 65-66. Also available through Evan T. Jones ed., "Will of John Foster, merchant of Bristol, 6 August 1492" (University of Bristol, ROSE, 2008).

¹⁷³ Jones and Condon, 58.

¹⁷⁴ Condon and Jones, 628-646. For a discussion of Ruddock's claims and her failure to publish her findings see Evan T. Jones, "Alwyn Ruddock: "John Cabot and the Discovery of America,"" *Historical Research*, 81, Issue 212 (May, 2008), 224-54.

¹⁷⁵ Jones and Condon, 57-8.

¹⁷⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 42, p. 43.

and to, “possess and subdue these.”¹⁷⁷ In wording the patent in this manner, Henry VII granted them the right to find lands not already discovered and claimed under Cabot’s patent. Thus, the two patents could coexist. The true significance of this patent, aside from demonstrating that Bristol continued to explore without Cabot, is that it demonstrates the continued transnational nature of these ventures, as this expedition was made up of both Portuguese and English merchants.

It is easy to think that the English and the Portuguese acted separately from each other, and in competition with each other in the Atlantic. The nationalistic land claims for the Crown, as well as much of the cartographic evidence and diplomatic correspondence easily lead to this conclusion. For example, the Ribeiro map of 1529 seems to divide North America into the land of the English, the land of the Portuguese, and the land of the Spanish by segmenting the continent into different areas claimed by explorers for each of these nations.¹⁷⁸ Another example is the disputes between the Spanish and Portuguese crowns over the exact location of the boundary established by the Treaty of Tordesillas. However, this was not the pattern of relations among the merchants in the Atlantic world, especially in the North Atlantic world, before the competitive race for the new world really got underway. As can be seen in the various internationally backed voyages, and through the exploratory partnerships as represented by the 1501 patent, the early history of the North Atlantic is one of transnational enterprise, internationally backed mercantile projects, and transnational cooperation among merchants. It is not until the solidification and subsequent manipulating of the Treaty of Tordesillas that a line

¹⁷⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 43, pp. 236-237. Williamson modernized the spelling in his translation of this document, quote is as it is found in Williamson.

¹⁷⁸ See image below.

seems to have been drawn in the sand, and less transnational cooperation is seen.¹⁷⁹ Even so, the North Atlantic seems to have been one of the last places to lose the transnational characteristic, and the Newfoundland fisheries remained a haven for transnational existence and cooperation well into the sixteenth century, as will be seen later in this dissertation. Outside of the diplomatic courts, the physical nature of the Atlantic was very much a transnational space during the early sixteenth century.

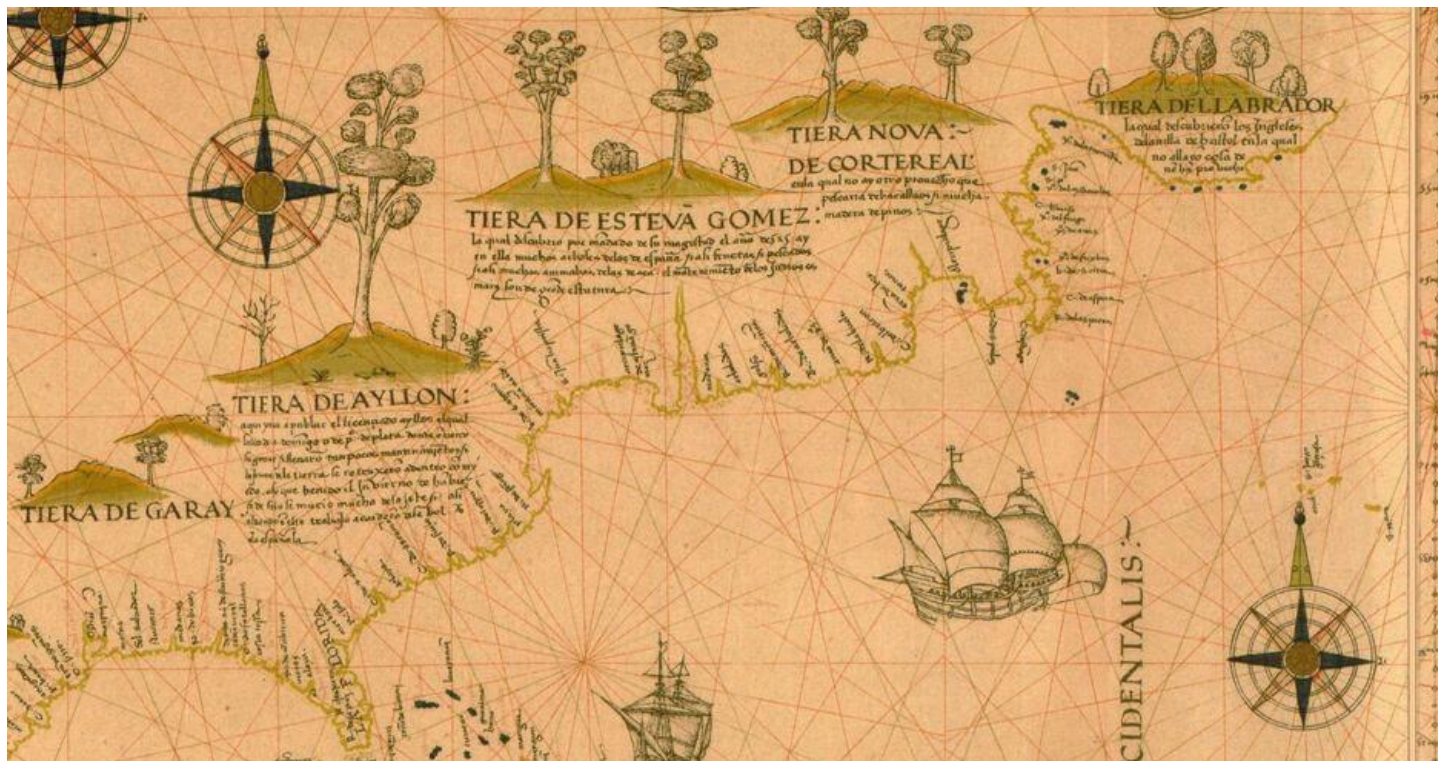


Figure 1-5 Ribeiro map, (1529).

“Tierra de Labrador’ which was discovered by the English from the town of Bristol...”. Image taken from the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/item/85690293/> accessed 3/22/19.

¹⁷⁹ David Quinn stated that “The papal bulls of 1493 and the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 broke that community of interest and began the alignment of Portugal with Spain in Atlantic matters. The cooperation of 1501-5 was a last expression of the old association with the Englishmen of Bristol.” *England and the Discovery*, 127. However, even after this, there is still significant cooperation within individual voyages, as can be seen in Heather Dalton’s study, *Merchants and Explorers*, specifically in Sebastian Cabot’s expedition in the Rio de la Plata. See Heather Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, and Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

The merchants of the 1501 patent achieved the goal of their 1501 voyage, as a reward of £5 pounds was paid by Henry VII's treasurer of the king's Chamber to the merchants that "founde thisle" in January 1502. The success of this voyage led to a second voyage in 1502. In September 1502, 10s. was paid to a mariner who brought hawks, and £20 was paid to "the merchauntes of bristoll that have bene in the new founde launde."¹⁸⁰ At roughly the same time the London chroniclers reported that three men "takyn In the Newe ffound Ile land," were presented before Henry VII's court. These men "were clothid In bestys skynnys and ete Rawe fflesh and spak such speech that noo man cowed undyrstand theym, and In theyr demeanure lyke to bruyt bestis whom the kyng kept a tyme afftyr."¹⁸¹ It is most likely that all three of these entries refer to the return of those holding the 1501 patent. On September 26, 1502 Francisco Fernandes and John Gonzales both received a grant of pensions of £10 each from the Bristol customs, apparently for their service "as Capitaignes into the newe founde lande."¹⁸² This separate grant to each man indicates that they each had command of their own ships, and that at least two ships set sail in 1502 under their patent.

It is possible that Robert Thorne and Hugh Eliot were connected with these voyages. On January 7, 1502 an order was sent to the officer of the King's Exchequer ordering a "tally" be made out in favor of the Bristol merchants, Robert Thorne, William Thorne, Robert's brother, and Hugh Eliot. The tally allowed these men to claim a deduction of £20 pounds from customs duties on goods brought into port on the first inward voyage of the *Gabriel*.¹⁸³ The *Gabriel* sailed at least twice to North America after January 1502. Given that the reward authorizing the

¹⁸⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, p. 216.

¹⁸¹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 31, p. 220.

¹⁸² Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 46, p. 249.

¹⁸³ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 44, pp. 247-48.

customs deduction was made on the same day that the King's warrant authorizing the customs deduction was sealed, Jones and Condon argue that it is highly probable that the Thornes and Eliot were actively involved in the 1501 voyage, acting as deputies for those holding the 1501 patent.¹⁸⁴ This would not be surprising given their seeming long standing association with westward voyages. On May 4 Thomas Thorne was paid £20 by the Bristol customers, likely for the £20 remission from duties on the *Gabriel's* cargo.¹⁸⁵ Since this payment was only made to Thomas, it is likely that Robert Thorne and Hugh Eliot were absent from Bristol for an extended period. This makes it appear likely that Robert Thorne and Eliot were once again crossing the Atlantic with, or as deputies for, the holders of the 1501 patent.¹⁸⁶

The connection between Eliot and the holders of the 1501 patent is strengthened by the new patent granted to João Gonsalves, Francisco Fernandes, and Thomas Asshehurst on December 9, 1502, for this time Hugh Eliot is listed as one of the patent holders.¹⁸⁷ There were a few important distinctions made with this patent. First, instead of prohibiting the patent holders from entering lands first discovered by the King of Portugal, it stated that they were to avoid the lands first discovered by the King of Portugal or other friendly princes that were *now in their possession*.¹⁸⁸ Second, the patent explicitly did not cancel out the patent of 1501. It expressly limited the rights of João Fernandes, Richard Warde and John Thomas, stating that they were not to go into the lands found by the new patent holders.¹⁸⁹ This is an interesting addition. Not only

¹⁸⁴ Jones and Condon, 62.

¹⁸⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 45, p. 248. Williamson states that it is likely that the ship arrived before the authority from the Exchequer permitting the remission had been processed in Bristol, in which case the full duty would have been paid and that this sum is a reimbursement. Williamson, 132.

¹⁸⁶ Williamson also argues that this is the likely reason that Thomas is the only one receiving the payment. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 132.

¹⁸⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 47, pp. 250-261.

¹⁸⁸ Italics added for emphasis.

¹⁸⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 47, pp. 250-61.

does this patent clearly tie Hugh Eliot to the active exploration of the Atlantic but it also shows that competition and friction were developing among the Bristolian Atlantic enterprises. Three different English patents were now in operation in the Atlantic: Cabot's patent, the 1501 patent, and the 1502 patent. It also demonstrates that an individual could hold the rights to overlapping patents, as Francisco Fernandes, João Gonsalves, and Thomas Asshehurst were listed as active patent holders for both the 1501 and the 1502 patents.

It appears that there was another voyage in 1503, likely sailing either under the 1501 or 1502 patent. An entry in the King's household accounts from September 15, 1503 recorded that Sir Walter Herbert's servant was paid 6s. 8d. for bringing a brasell bow and two red arrows. A subsequent entry from November 17, 1503 recorded that 20s. was paid to "one that brought haukes from the Newfound Island."¹⁹⁰ In 1504 a voyage set out made up of at least two ships, the *Gabriel*, which was owned by William and Robert Thorne and Hugh Eliot, and the *Jesus*. It appears that the Thorne brothers and Eliot were the main organizers of the voyages, and that Sebastian Cabot accompanied this voyage as a pilot.¹⁹¹ Also accompanying the voyage was a priest, indicating that the voyage had some purpose for a permanent settlement, as priests rarely accompanied voyages at this time.¹⁹² This voyage appears to have brought together holders of both the Cabot patent and the 1502 patent to work together in a New World enterprise.¹⁹³ Before the ships departed, Eliot, along with a Bartholomew Rede, borrowed £50, a sum which the two

¹⁹⁰ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, p. 216.

¹⁹¹ Jones and Condon, 64.

¹⁹² A priest "that goith to the new llande" is recorded as receiving 40s. from the King's Daybook on April 4, 1504. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc 26, 216. Williamson also asserts that it was highly unusual for priests to sail on mercantile voyages. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 134.

¹⁹³ David Quinn argues that this voyage is the second voyage sponsored by the Company of Adventurers into the Newfound Islands or the Company of Adventurers prepared into the Newfoundlands, which was comprised of Robert and William Thorne, William Clerke of London, Sir Bartholomew Rede, recently a mayor of London and associated with Sir Giles Daubeey, later Lord Daubeny, Constable of Bristol Castle. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 122-3.

were able to pay off the following year.¹⁹⁴ As Eliot spent most of 1504 wrapped up in his transatlantic voyage, it is likely that Rede was also involved in this voyage, and that the two men used their profits to repay the debt. An analysis of the customs books of Bristol, done by James A. Williamson, reveals that four key merchants were not doing normal business from February to roughly August 12, 1504, indicating that they were likely absent from Bristol at this time. These merchants are Hugh Eliot, William Thorne, William Clerke, and Thomas Asshehurst.¹⁹⁵ Three out of the four have already been proven to have been actively involved in transatlantic affairs. The fourth, William Clerke, was a London merchant with ties to Bristol who joined the aforementioned merchants in The Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands.¹⁹⁶ It can be assumed that these four accompanied the voyage in 1504, as they were absent from normal customs records. Robert Thorne, who was certainly involved in the voyage as an investor, appears in the customs records and did not accompany the voyage, because he had been made sheriff of Bristol in early 1504.¹⁹⁷

The exact size of the expedition is unknown. It is only known that the *Gabriel* and the *Jesus* went on the expedition because of Hugh Eliot's customs exemption on 20 lasts of salted fish and seven and a half tons of fish livers brought in by the two ships in 1504. While this is not an insignificant amount, roughly 67 tons, it does not come close to representing a full cargo for the two ships which had a combined cargo capacity of about 250 tons.¹⁹⁸ Fishing was apparently not the motivation or intended outcome of the voyage, serving instead as a lucrative side activity to what can only be assumed to be a trading venture focused on exploration.

¹⁹⁴ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 123.

¹⁹⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 137.

¹⁹⁶ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 49, p. 262.

¹⁹⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 138; Jones and Condon, 65.

¹⁹⁸ Jones and Condon, 65-66.

Another voyage appears to have taken place in 1505, likely by Francisco Fernandes and João Gonsalves, as it was recorded in the King's household accounts that he received "popyngais and Cattes of the mountain with other stuff" from two "Portyngales," (Portuguese).¹⁹⁹ Popyngais can be translated as parakeets, likely Carolina parakeets, while the cats of the mountain likely refers to bobcats. This indicates that Fernandes and Gonsalves sailed at least as far south as the New York region, where they could have traded with Native Americans for the animals, if not further south.²⁰⁰ As a wild cat would have been extremely difficult for them to capture, the most likely scenario is that they traded for these animals somewhere along the eastern seaboard of what is today the United States of America. Unfortunately, this appears to be the last voyage that can be positively connected with the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands, and this group of pioneering Atlantic explorers seems to have had a serious falling out in 1505.

At some point between 1504 and 1506, Francisco Fernandes filed a bill of complaint against Hugh Eliot, stating that he had been arrested in Bristol and charged by Eliot with defaulting on a debt of £100. However, Fernandes argued that it was Eliot who owed Fernandes the money.²⁰¹ At roughly the same time, Eliot and William Clerke entered into two court cases against each other. In one, Clerke stated that he had borrowed £15 from Eliot, and having repaid the debt, could not get Eliot to acknowledge the debt as paid. Meanwhile, Eliot had served as "cap merchant" of Clerke's ship, the *Mighell of Bristowe*, bound for Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Eliot had refused to take financial responsibility for the unused freight space on the ship and pay

¹⁹⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 26, p. 216.

²⁰⁰ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 125-6.

²⁰¹ TNA C1/135/76. Williamson states that the form of the Chancery bill placed against Hugh Eliot by Fernandes dates it in or after 1504. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 139. Jones and Condon state that it was in 1506. As the bill does not contain a specific date it is difficult to pin it down with certainty. However, it seems more likely that this case took place in 1506 than 1504 or 1505 as Fernandes is likely one of the two Portuguese who brought the king popynjays and a wild cat in 1505. This had to have occurred before the court case took place to afford Fernandes the time needed to make the voyage and also to have been arrested as the case states.

the freight charges on the empty freight, which he should have done according to the law of the merchants. However, Eliot had insisted that Clerke was the one bearing the financial burden and Eliot had the ship arrested in the port of Bristol.²⁰² In a second case it appears that Clerke sued Eliot for expenses and losses he had incurred in connection with a voyage to the new found lands. Included in the case was a list of items that William Clerke delivered as merchandise or paid in ready money to Hugh Eliot. This list included several entries that referred to other members of the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands, such as £20 paid to the company, £4 paid to William Thorne, as well as items that appear to have been for the voyage, such as payments to the rope maker of Bristol and to a number mariners.²⁰³ These court cases show a growing animosity and friction within the group, or among the group towards Eliot. It is possible that these cases are all that remain of the financial fallout of the dissolution of the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands. There also is no surviving record of pensions being paid to the Portuguese members after this point.²⁰⁴

While it does not appear that Eliot worked with Fernandes or Clerke again after these court cases, he maintained business relations with the Thornes. A court case from 1518 argues that Robert Thorne's estate bore financial responsibility for a portion of the pay for ships masters and mariners from a trading voyage that was part of a joint trade agreement between Eliot and Thorne. Eliot also referenced the trade he had with Thorne "beyond the sea as withyn tis Realme" through which they had bought and sold "jointly togethers diverse merchandise" including wine, oils and other merchandise.²⁰⁵

²⁰² TNA C1/297/48, C1/297/49, C1/297/50.

²⁰³ TNA C1/297/51. The list closes with the charge for the alleged unused freight space on the *Michael*.

²⁰⁴ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 126.

²⁰⁵ TNA C1/406/5.

There is also the possibility that the Eliot family and the Jay family had some connection beyond simply operating in the same circles. Thomas Eliot's will (1506) indicated that the Eliots knew the Jays, and they remained close over the years. Elyot named his two sons, Thomas and William as the executors of his will; however, he stated that John Jay, John Elyot (Thomas's brother), and one Thomas Hoskyns bore responsibility for overseeing the distribution of his goods among his children. Included in the list of goods to be distributed to his children, Thomas left an inheritance to his nephew Robert Elyot, the son of John Elyot. Should young Robert die without heirs, his inheritance would default to John Jay, "the elder merchant of Bristol."²⁰⁶ The inclusion of John Jay "the elder merchant of Bristol" leaves little room for doubt that Thomas Eliot was referring to the same John Jay who set sail in 1480 to search for the fabled Island of Brasil. The fact that Thomas Eliot had close enough ties to John Jay to include him in his will, in any form, indicates that the Eliots and the Jays maintained a close relationship. While this will did not name Hugh Eliot, it seems highly unlikely that there would be two unrelated Eliot merchants in Bristol at this time. This is especially true considering the fact that from 1485-87 there were only 226 indigenous exporters in Bristol.²⁰⁷ While this is a generation before the Eliot wills, the merchant population would not have grown exponentially by this point.

From the surviving records, it appears that there was only one Eliot family in Bristol during the latter part of the fifteenth century and the early part of the sixteenth century. Surviving wills exist for a Thomas Eliot (February 9, 1530), and a Robert Eliot (August 23, 1532).²⁰⁸ All of the Eliots who appear in the civic and parish records of Bristol in the first few decades of the sixteenth century are connected through these two wills, except for Hugh Eliot.

²⁰⁶ BRO FC/OB/1/10.

²⁰⁷ Childs, *Merchants*, 206.

²⁰⁸ BRO FC/OB/1/10, FC/OB/1/11, respectively.

He is the only one who does not appear in these wills. This could be due to the fact that he was no longer alive. While the date of Hugh Eliot's death is unknown, it would be surprising if he were still alive in the 1530s as he appears to be a fairly well-established merchant by the mid-1490s.²⁰⁹ In a quitclaim document dated March 6, 1543 Robert Eliot was listed as merchant, along with Richard Pryn, merchant.²¹⁰ Richard Pryn, also spelled Pryn and Prynne, appeared as Richard Pryn several times in Robert Eliot's will.²¹¹ An Edward Pryn was associated with the Thorne family, as well as Roger Barlow, Martin Pollard, and Thomas Tison, all of whom were connected with transatlantic voyages throughout Henry VIII's reign.²¹² It would be quite the coincidence if there were two merchants in Bristol by the name of Eliot who were unrelated to each other, when all of the other Eliots in Bristol can be connected.

The Thornes and the Jays operated in close connection to one another. John Jay and Robert Thorne operated in many of the same circles. They both appear to have been men of influence in Bristol and successful merchants. Jay and Thorne were mentioned, along with a John Eliot, in a list of commissioners for the office of Admiral of England in Bristol in May, 1510.²¹³ Robert Thorne served as mayor of Bristol in 1514 and remained an active member of

²⁰⁹ Very little is known of Hugh Eliot outside of his commercial dealings. There is no surviving will for him and the only time his name appears in the Bristol public records is in a charter of feoffment in which he is listed as holding an adjoining garden along with his wife Joan. BRO P.AS/D/HS/C/11 a,b. He also appears in Ricart's Chronicle as sheriff of Bristol in 1501. "Robert Ricart's Chronicle of Bristol, 1480-1508."

²¹⁰ BRO P.St JB/D/2/177.

²¹¹ BRO FC/OB/ 1/11.

²¹² Edward Pryn and Roger Barlow are listed as executors of Nicolas Thorne in his will dated August 4, 1546. BRO, JOR/1/1 (FCo13 1/11); Ledger of John Smyth 1534-1550, BRO AC/B/63. BRO P.AS/D/HS/B/10; Heather Dalton has chosen to go with the spelling of Prynne for the family name and has shown the interconnectedness the Prynne family had with the Barlows, Pollards, Thomas Tison and Nicolas Thorne. Dalton, 152-3,172-6.

²¹³ L&P vol. 1: Part I: 1509-13, Entry Number 485, p. 289. State Papers Online, Grants in May, 1510.

Bristol's political and merchant society for the rest of his life, with strong connections to the Iberian trade.²¹⁴

It appears that after the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands dispersed in 1506, the majority of these merchants began focusing their attention on Iberian trade, though their families, as will be seen later, did not give up on the dreams of trade to the west. Despite this, there was one more voyage before the death of Henry VII that needs to be discussed in some detail. This was the 1508-09 voyage of Sebastian Cabot, the first voyage he attempted on his own right.²¹⁵ Cabot apparently searched for a north-west route to the Indies, not a southerly route like the previous voyages. It cannot be known for certain how far north Cabot went, as the surviving accounts were written much later, and Cabot is known to have exaggerated accounts of his exploits later in life.²¹⁶ It is believed that Henry VII backed this voyage with ships, as Sebastian Cabot later stated in a letter to Giovanni Ramusio, the Venetian collector of voyage narratives.²¹⁷ According to Ramusio's summary of Cabot's voyage, Cabot sailed as far north as 67.5°N where he "found the sea open and without any obstacle" and believed he had found a passage to Cathay but was forced to turn back due to the "ill-will of the master and sailors, who were mutinous."²¹⁸ According to Francisco Lopez de Gomara, Cabot took with him three hundred men and made it as far north as 58°N, where he found that in the month of July there were so many pieces of ice that the waters became dangerous, and the days were very long, "and

²¹⁴ *Adam's Chronicle of Bristol* (dated 1623), (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1910), 85.

²¹⁵ While there has been some controversy in the historiography over the dates of this voyage, or if Sebastian even embarked on a voyage, thanks in large part to the Draper's response to Henry VIII in 1521 that Sebastian Cabot had never been to the New World, the leading authorities on the topic are in agreement that this voyage did take place at this time. The Worshipful Company of Drapers of London, MS Minutes and Records 1515-1529 (Rep 7), f. 167-76; Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 161-179; Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 138-143; Jones and Condon, 68.

²¹⁶ The first account of this voyage is Peter Martyr Anghiera's *Third Decade* which was published in 1516. No date and very few details are given in this account.

²¹⁷ There is no evidence of this in the King's Daybooks for this time.

²¹⁸ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 57, p. 273.

almost without night, and the nights very clear.”²¹⁹ This is a similar narrative to Galvão’s statement that he had made it to 60° where the days were eighteen hours long, and the cold forced them to turn around.²²⁰ According to André Thevet, the majority of the company of three hundred died due to the cold.²²¹

Peter Martyr de Anghiera’s account was the earliest recorded and is found in his *First Decade* published in 1516. It can be assumed that Martyr recorded this account from a personal conversation with Cabot, who was employed in 1514 as a pilot at the Casa de la Contratación, the administrative headquarters of trade to the West and East Indies, as well as the repository for new navigational and cartographic knowledge in Spain.²²² Martyr did not offer many specific details, such as a date or latitude. However, his account did agree with the others that Cabot sailed north with three hundred men until July, at which time he had almost continuous daylight and found “great icebergs floating in the sea.”²²³ He also offered the additional description of bears eating fish, which they caught in the sea. These must have been polar bears, which would have put Cabot at a fairly high latitude.²²⁴ Later, in Martyr’s second account of Cabot’s voyage (1534) he stated that Cabot made it as far as 55°N.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 58, p. 274.

²²⁰ Galvão, 88.

²²¹ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 59, p. 275.

²²² Dalton, 35. For more on the Casa’s significance as a repository for cartographic and navigational knowledge see; Edward L. Stevenson, “The Geographical Activities of the Casa de la Contratación” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 17 No. 2 (June., 1927), pp. 39-59; J. B. Harley “Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe” *Imago Mundi* Vol. 40 (1988), pp. 57-76; Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain*, (University of Chicago Press: 2004), 8; David Buisseret, ed. *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, (University of Chicago Press: 1992); Alison Sandman, “Spanish Nautical Cartography in the Renaissance” *History of Cartography* Vol. 3. David Woodward ed. (University of Chicago Press: 2007), pp. 1095-1142.

²²³ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 52, p. 267.

²²⁴ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 52, p. 267.

²²⁵ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, Doc. 53, p. 268.



Figure 1-6 Sebastian Cabot's possible northern location. This map of possible locations was created specifically for this dissertation.

If Sebastian Cabot reached 55° N, he would have been just north of Hamilton Inlet in Labrador. If he had indeed made it as far as the furthest northerly latitude given, 67°, then he would have been well up the coast of Baffin Island and certainly would have sailed past and noticed Hamilton Inlet. David Quinn argued that the descriptions of icebergs headed south and the frozen lands in July fit a landfall around Cape Chidley at the northeastern tip of the Labrador Peninsula, followed by a westward turn into Hudson Strait.²²⁶ James Williamson agreed with this assessment, stating that Cabot likely passed through Hudson Strait and entered Hudson Bay before being forced to turn around.²²⁷ Both Williamson and Skelton pointed to Gemma Frisius' 1537 globe as incorporating details of and geographical facts that can be connected to Sebastian's reported voyage, such as the strait being two to three degrees wide, opening westward just under the Arctic Circle, and then opening into a wide gulf trending to the west, with a south shore labelled "Terra per britannos inuenta."²²⁸ Frisius credited three brothers with discovering this strait. It is often assumed that the three brothers were the Corte Real brothers, however, there were three Cabot brothers as well, and it is not known what Sebastian's brothers were doing at this time, or if they were even still alive.²²⁹ Sebastian was the only one who appears to have made use of his father's patent, receiving a pension of £10 pounds per year, from the customs revenue collected at Bristol for services related to the finding of new found lands.²³⁰ Sebastian did not collect his pension for 1508, and apparently the last instalment of 1507, until

²²⁶ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 139.

²²⁷ Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 165. Skelton also states that Sebastian likely discovered the entrance of Hudson's Strait in 1509. R. A. Skelton, *Explorers' Maps: Chapters in the Cartographic Record of Geographical Discovery*, (London: Spring Books, 1958), 79.

²²⁸ Skelton, "The Cartography of the Voyages," 321; Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 167-8.

²²⁹ In fact, nothing is known of Sebastian's brothers after John Cabot's initial patent lists them as inheritors. Williamson, *Cabot Voyages*, 114.

²³⁰ David B. Quinn, Alison M. Quinn, Susan Hillier, *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, Vol. I, (New York: Arno Press, 1979), Doc. 86, p. 119. From this point forward this work will be referred to as Quinn, *NAW*.

May of 1509, at which point he received £15.²³¹ This indicates that he was away on a voyage and did not return until 1509. There is no indication that any other members of the Cabot family attempted to make use of the Cabot patent.

When Sebastian returned to England in 1509, Henry VII was dead and his son, Henry VIII had assumed the throne. Cabot returned with tales of waters clogged with floating icebergs and freezing temperatures. If Thevet's accounts are correct, then Cabot also returned with tales of men dying from the cold. While he did return with tales of a possible north-west passage, he does not seem to have been able to arouse much interest in this possibility. While many have pointed to the accession of Henry VIII as the real reason that Cabot did not receive a more favorable welcome to his discoveries, it is quite possible that the lack of merchant interest owed to the heavy death toll of his venture was the true reason. As has already been seen, by 1509 the Company Adventurers to the New Found Lands had dissolved and shifted their interest elsewhere.

Changes in England's Academic World

As Bristol's merchants were investigating the North Atlantic and paving the way for English involvement in the Atlantic world as explorers, colonizers, and entrepreneurs, the academic world within England was beginning to change in ways just as dramatic. The last quarter of the fifteenth century saw the introduction of humanist thought to England, the slow birth of the English printing press, and the academic crisis, so to speak, within Oxford and Cambridge that altered the way academics were trained and read in the sixteenth century.

²³¹ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 89-90, pp. 121-22.

Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother to Henry VII, played an active role in his court and in the academic world of late fifteenth, early sixteenth century England. Beaufort placed great emphasis on learning and invested quite a bit of her time, energy, and money into England's university system, particularly in Cambridge University. While Cambridge University was one of the oldest universities in England and Europe, until Margaret Beaufort began her efforts to expand the university it remained a rather small, almost provincial university, focused nearly exclusively on the education of friars.²³² Beaufort was instrumental in the creation of Jesus College in 1497, became the principle benefactress of Queen's College after the death of Henry VII's wife, Queen Elizabeth, in 1505, and helped establish Christ's College, personally writing its statutes, which stressed the broad aims of the Renaissance and emphasized the study of Greek and Latin. Later she established St. John's College, in large part through provisions made in her will.²³³ Margaret Beaufort also endowed professorships in divinity at both Oxford and Cambridge, to create a better-trained clergy, able to deliver simple but eloquent sermons that

²³² Michael Van Cleave Alexander stated that Beaufort was "one of the greatest of all patrons of Cambridge" and credits her direct involvement with Cambridge as bringing Cambridge up from a provincial university to one on the same footing as Oxford by the end of her life. Michael Van Cleave Alexander, *The First of the Tudors: A Study of Henry VII and His Reign*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 167. Damian Riehl Leader states that "No one has ever done more to help the University of Cambridge into new paths than the Lady Margaret, and it was John Fisher who showed her the way." Damian Riehl Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge: the University to 1546*. Vol. 1, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 275. Jones and Underwood argued that it was Margaret Beaufort's repeated visits to the University and close association with it that helped transform the University and raise its reputation. Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood. *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort Countess of Richmond and Derby*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992)203-4.

²³³ Margaret Beaufort contributed significant land grants and financial gifts to St. John's College, to the extent that from the time it opened its doors in 1516 until 1546 when Henry VIII created Trinity College St. John's College was the leading college at Cambridge. Alexander, 167-89. Leader's discussion of her contributions to the various colleges are scattered throughout the second half of his book. A copy of the Statutes of Christ's College can be found in Elizabeth M. Nugent, ed., *The Thought & Culture of the English Renaissance: An Anthology of Tudor Prose 1481-1555*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 20-24; Nugent pointed out that the emphasis on Greek and Latin studies is indicative of Erasmus' friendship. Nugent, 20. For a discussion of her contributions to Queen's College see Jones and Underwood, 214-15. For a discussion of the provisions made in her will for St. John's College and Christ's College, see Jones and Underwood, 239-49.

even the lowliest churchgoer would be able to understand and appreciate.²³⁴ Erasmus, in the preface of his *De ratione concionandi*, pointed to the reforming zeal of Margaret Beaufort and Bishop John Fisher as supporters of preachers who “brought to the people the gospel philosophy.”²³⁵ Beaufort also established professorships and supported many poor scholars at both universities.²³⁶ The first Lady Margaret Professor at Cambridge was Bishop John Fisher (1502-1504), and the position was later held by Erasmus (1511-1514).²³⁷ Both of these men, especially Erasmus, who is the best known humanist from the time, proved instrumental in bringing humanist thought from the continent to England.

During the last quarter of the fifteenth century and the first part of the sixteenth century, both Oxford and Cambridge were hit particularly hard with repeated bouts of the plague. This forced many of the students and much of the faculty to flee the universities for extended periods of time.²³⁸ Both universities found themselves in decline as the fifteenth century drew to a close, having problems just graduating their students, as so many died or left the universities.²³⁹ When Henry VII visited Cambridge in 1506, Fisher claimed that before the king had shown interest in helping the university in the 1490s, learning had been in decline due to the plague, and disagreements, sometimes violent, between the colleges and the city authorities. With the king’s help, which mostly appears to have come from Margaret Beaufort, the university survived its

²³⁴ Part of her provisions for the professorships included which included land grants not to exceed £20 per annum in value. Leader, 276; Alexander, 168; Jones and Underwood, 205-6; G.C. Brodrick, *A History of the University of Oxford*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), 73.

²³⁵ Leader, 281.

²³⁶ Nugent goes on to state that she also founded homes for the indigent and aged. Nugent, 19.

²³⁷ Leader, 278.

²³⁸ The outbreak of 1513 was so bad that it forced the postponement of Michaelmas term until November 6. Leader, 213.

²³⁹ G. C. Brodrick states that this period of decline lasted for close to sixty years, being a defining feature of the fifteenth century in Oxford. Brodrick, 55-57; Leader, 233. This is despite the fact that the physical space of the universities was growing, with several new colleges established during this time. Leader argues that repeated bouts of the plague and poor funding are likely to blame for the noted decline.

time of depression and began to grow and thrive once more.²⁴⁰ As a result of the plague, many students began to study abroad to meet their requirements, increasing the contact between the universities and the Continent.²⁴¹

The curriculum at both Oxford and Cambridge had remained relatively unchanged for centuries, with Aristotle the chief authority of knowledge. However, with the growing familiarity of the classics and humanist form, content at the university slowly evolved between 1460 and 1488. This caused the universities as a whole to recognize that the curriculum and university system was no longer stressing relevant subjects or using proper methodology. This gradual realization can be attributed to the students who had traveled to the continent, then returned to the universities, such as Colet, Grocyn and Linacre, and to the various visiting professors, such as Erasmus, Lorenzo Traversagni, Stephano Surigone, Caius Auberinus and others who came from the continent to teach for brief periods at the Universities. However, the marked thrust towards a reformed curriculum at the turn of the sixteenth century was largely due to the work and influence of Margaret Beaufort and Bishop John Fisher.²⁴²

This reform modified the manner in which some lectures were taught and assigned, and widened the curriculum to include more of the classics, encourage ancient languages, and to

²⁴⁰ Leader, 233. Leader also pointed out that there appears to have been a complete lack of “creative genius among the Cambridge men” before the Tudor’s active involvement. He pointed to the large portion among the faculty of friars who no longer brought to the university theologians of international reputation and that the curriculum and exams had remained completely unchanged for well over a century, with Aristotle remaining the chief authority studied. 233-5.

²⁴¹ Leader, 214.

²⁴² James McConica, “The Rise of the Undergraduate College,” *The History of the University of Oxford: The Collegiate University*, vol. III, T.H. Aston, general editor, James McConica, volume editor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 7, 18-24; Brodrick, 55-57, 59, 68-72; Leader, 238-243, 247. While the impact of Fisher on the university system in England, especially at Cambridge, should not be understated, I have chosen to highlight the impact of Margaret Beaufort at this point due to her close proximity to Henry VIII when he was a child as she would have helped form the attitude towards education within the royal household.

include more of the sciences. The requirements for undergraduates in arts at Cambridge evolved as well. Undergraduates were required to follow a four-year sequence of lectures; the first two in humane letters, one in logic and the final in philosophy.²⁴³ In addition to modifying the requirements, Cambridge University also revised the system of appointing lectures, requiring undergraduate lectures be given by salaried professors. This decision created the university system of “chairs” which replaced the medieval system of necessary regency in which students seeking a Bachelors or Masters degree were required to teach lower level classes.²⁴⁴ While the system of necessary regency was never truly eliminated from either Oxford or Cambridge, by 1520 this system was rarely practiced. Following this revision, the number of specific subjects to be taught by lecture and the number of required texts began to grow.²⁴⁵

In addition to playing a key role in the modernization of the universities, Margaret Beaufort also contributed to the development of the printing industry in England. Beaufort was well read, and while her dedication to works of theology and devotion is well known, she also appears to have enjoyed secular and political works.²⁴⁶ She was connected to, and patronized, William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde, and Richard Pynson, all pioneering printers in England.²⁴⁷ Caxton, the father of English printing, brought printing to England when he opened his print

²⁴³ Leader, 242-3. Oxford underwent similar changes in requirements, Brodrick, 68-71; McConica, 64-65.

²⁴⁴ Leader 242-3.

²⁴⁵ Leader 243.

²⁴⁶ Anne Clark Bartlett demonstrates the well roundedness of Margaret Beaufort’s library in her article “Translation, Self-Representation, and Statecraft: Lady Margaret Beaufort and Caxton’s *Blanchardyn* and *Eglantine* (1489),” *Essays in Medieval Studies*, Vol. 22, 2005, pp. 53-66. Catherine Nail also discusses Margaret Beaufort’s well-rounded library which included poetry, historical and advisory literature as well as works in the vernacular. Catherine Nail, “Margaret Beaufort’s Books: A New Discovery,” *The Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscripts and Printing History*, vol. 16, 2003, 214. The variety of Margaret Beaufort’s library and its importance to her are also discussed in some detail in Jones and Underwood, 181-86.

²⁴⁷ Jones and Underwood, 181-86; Nail, 214; Bartlette, 57; Alexander, 169-70; Patricia Demers, “‘God may open more than man may understande’: Lady Margaret Beaufort’s Translation of the *De Imitatione Christi*,” *Renaissance and Reformation*, (Fall 2012), 45-61, 45; Colin Clair, *A History of Printing in Britain*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 7, 22, 23, 31.

shop in 1476.²⁴⁸ The demand for printed works quickly outpaced what he could produce. John Parker demonstrated that European printers were very cognizant of the English market, and that many booksellers from France and the Low Countries kept the English markets in mind, attending the major fairs on the Continent to buy stock for export to England. Their success in England can be judged by the fact that in “1479-80 three major book importers brought about fourteen hundred books into England in one year.”²⁴⁹ English demand increased as Beaufort encouraged English printers and the number of literate Englishmen and women increased. In her patronage of English printing, Beaufort pushed to have more works, both religious and secular, printed in the vernacular, translating some texts from French into English herself, encouraging the literate masses to read what had previously been restricted to the educated elite.²⁵⁰ Her work as a translator has earned her the title of “Renaissance England’s first female translator.”²⁵¹

This Renaissance woman, who placed such a high value on education and knowledge, instilled a similar value system in her daughter, Queen Elizabeth of York. Both women worked to ensure that young Henry was not only well equipped intellectually for the life of a prince, but that he had the finest education possible, was well read and exposed to the most current philosophical ideas and knowledge.²⁵² It is well documented that Margaret Beaufort was very much a “hands-on” mother, and she extended this “hands-on” approach to her grandchildren, being active in Elizabeth’s household, where Henry, as the third child, spent much of his

²⁴⁸ Alexander, 169.

²⁴⁹ Parker, 9.

²⁵⁰ Bartlette’s article focuses on a French romance, *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, which Beaufort asked Caxton to translate and print, and the reasons for this request. For a list of her translations see Nugent, 19-20.

²⁵¹ Demers, 47. Demers focuses on Beaufort’s translation of Thomas á Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*, which she translated into the vernacular with the hopes that it would encourage the masses to be more devout.

²⁵² David Starkey has gone as far as to suggest that Elizabeth personally taught Henry and his sisters to read and write before they began their training with formal tutors. David Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince*, (London: Harper Press, 2008), 119-20.

childhood.²⁵³ It is likely that Beaufort first arranged for John Skelton to serve as Henry's tutor in 1498.²⁵⁴ Skelton is said to have passed on his love of "obscure astronomical and mathematical lore" to his young pupil.²⁵⁵ When Henry moved into adolescence and became heir apparent to the throne, Beaufort played a large role in shaping his household and surrounding him with curious minds.²⁵⁶ This influence contributed to observers assessing Henry as well educated, bright, and quick witted.

As a youth, Henry was well educated in the classical and humanist fashion and is said to have been "learned in all sciences." This education seems to have fostered a true interest, if not passion, for science, as Henry's privy lodgings contained cupboards filled with various scientific instruments, including a personal astrolabe bearing his coat of arms.²⁵⁷ Historian James Carley stated that from Henry VIII's first meeting with Erasmus "scholars were uniform in their praise of Henry's learning."²⁵⁸ William Roper later recalled the young King's eagerness for knowledge, how he would walk off with Thomas More into his private apartment, and remain "there some time in matters of astronomy, geometry, divinity and such other faculties, and some time in his worldly affairs, to sit and confer with him. And other whiles, in the night would have

²⁵³ Thomas Penn, *Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 27-30, 98-99.

²⁵⁴ Alexander, 162-3; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, (London: Yale University Press, 1969, reprint 1997), 6.

²⁵⁵ Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince*, 123.

²⁵⁶ Penn, 172. Margaret Beaufort would also move into the Tower to be near Henry VIII after his father died and as he began to establish his rule, despite her failing health. She would remain close to London until her death on June 29, 1509. Jones and Underwood, 236-7.

²⁵⁷ Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and His Court*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001). 7-9.

²⁵⁸ James P. Carley, *The Books of King Henry VIII and His Wives*. preface by David Starkey. (London: The British Library, 2004), 13.

him up into the leads, there to consider with him the diversities, courses, motions and operations of the stars and planets.”²⁵⁹

It is not known to what extent Henry VIII was exposed as a child to Bristol’s activities in westward exploration, for he was sheltered as a young child, mostly raised in his mother’s household away from court. However, it should not be assumed that Henry VIII was unaware of, or unconcerned with, their activities. In 1502, when the three Native Americans were brought to the English court from the Newfoundland region by Bristol merchants, these men created quite a stir, wearing their “beestes skynnes” and with their habits of eating raw flesh.²⁶⁰ These men were kept at the court of Henry VII for some time, with the chronicler Robert Fabyan remarking that he saw two of the men two years later dressed as Englishmen in Westminster Palace.²⁶¹ Such an event would have made an impression on the young prince who became known for his quick mind and love of the theatrical. If he were not present at court at the time of their arrival, he surely would have heard rumors of it.

In 1499 Erasmus wrote to Robert Fisher that he much liked England, encountering “so much learning, not hacknied and trivial, but deep, accurate, ancient, Latin and Greek, that but for the curiosity of seeing it, I do not now so much care for Italy.”²⁶² England entered the sixteenth century on the precipice of a rapidly evolving world. By 1505 England’s explorers had a fairly

²⁵⁹ William Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More, Knt.* (1626), Forward by Sir Joseph Walton, Knt, (London: Burnes & Oates, 1905), 11.

²⁶⁰ H. P. Biggar, *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier, 1497-1534: a collection of documents relating to the early history of the Dominion of Canada*, (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1911), 100.

²⁶¹ Biggar, 100.

²⁶² Francis Morgan Nichols, ed., *The epistles of Erasmus, from his earliest letters to his fifty-first year, arranged in order of time: English translations from the early correspondence, with a commentary confirming the chronological arrangement, and supplying further biographical matter*, vol. 1. (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), Epistle 110, 226.

good idea of the length of North America, having likely explored from the Newfoundland region into the Caribbean. England's merchants had established growing trade networks in the Iberian Peninsula that opened up the Atlantic world. England's university systems were becoming ever more heavily influenced by the Humanist movement and learning on the continent. Thanks in part to the patronage of Margaret Beaufort, England's fledgling printing industry brought printed material to a larger audience in England. As the first decade of the sixteenth century drew to a close, Henry VII died, leaving the throne to his young, curious, and vivacious son, Henry VIII. Henry VIII would steer England through the evolving world as Europe came to accept the fact that there was a "New World" with untapped resources waiting for enterprising investors.

Chapter 2

Networks of Knowledge

The transformations in the educational system taking place in England right before Henry VIII assumed the throne continued throughout his reign, gaining strength not only among those who were well off enough to ensure their children attended a university, but especially among Henry VIII's court and their peers. This flourishing of the academic system in England encouraged the growth of Humanist learning and the Renaissance in England as well as the book industry. This in turn fostered an environment that encouraged the educated elite of England to stay up to date on the "new learning" of the continent, to purchase books from the continent in multiple languages, and fostered an environment of curiosity and rigorous academic debates. Due to the efforts of Lady Beaufort, John Fisher and Erasmus, the humanist circles throughout Europe saw England as leading in the mainstream of humanist thought. England was the land of Sir Thomas More, John Fisher, John Colet, Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn and Henry VIII, who was the friend of polite learning. Abroad, England was represented by Cambridge men such as Richard Croke, Richard Whitford, and many others.²⁶³ The most obvious results of this academic environment that flourished around the Court of Henry VIII are the rise of the English Renaissance and Reformation, as well as the spread of humanist learning, contributions that have been well documented and discussed by other historians. This environment also encouraged the

²⁶³ In a letter to Robert Fisher, the English agent in Italy, Erasmus describes how he finds England by describing the wealth of learning he has encountered and goes on to compare the leading English academics to the Ancient Greek philosophers. Francis Morgan Nichols, ed., *The epistles of Erasmus, from his earliest letters to his fifty-first year, arranged in order of time: English translations from the early correspondence, with a commentary confirming the chronological arrangement, and supplying further biographical matter*, vol. 1. (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), Epistle 110. Farrago, 95; Ep. V. 2; C. 12 (14) Erasmus to Robert Fisher, English Agent in Italy. Written in London December 5, 1499, 226. For further examples of Erasmus praising the English academics, as well as letters discussing Erasmus' views of the English academics see, Epistle 111. Farrago, 247; Ep. VIII. 53: C. 55 (62), 229-30; Epistle 155. Farrago, 269; Ep. IX. 20; C. 51 (59), 331-333.

growth of cartographic knowledge within England and helped keep England informed of the current academic debates on the continent and spark curiosity regarding the New World, which in turn contributed to English exploration of the Atlantic.

This chapter demonstrates that through networks of knowledge, the English intellectual elite not only stayed up to date on continental discussions and learning, but were seen as leaders in many academic fields, such as the ancient languages and the study of the classics. The English became known on the continent as leaders in literature, both as producers and consumers, despite a limited English press. This chapter also demonstrates that, rather than being slow to develop cartographic interest and knowledge, the English intellectual elite valued cartography and had access to the leading publications on the continent. In addition, the English purchased the majority of their books from the continent in the learned languages.

There is a historiographical tradition that spans the last century which has written off English interest in the Atlantic world and in new scientific learning during the first part of the sixteenth century due to the lack of English publications on the subjects.²⁶⁴ John Frisk (1892) pointed to the wealth of European translations of travel narratives and accounts of the Americas, while England could only boast of twelve works published on the Americas and the Atlantic before 1576, to present the argument that there was little to no demand for such works in England before the Elizabethan period.²⁶⁵ E. G. R. Taylor (1930) argued that the lack of English translations of geographies demonstrates a lag in English interest and knowledge of

²⁶⁴ Jeffrey Knapp states that if the European nations were slow to make the mental adjustments required to incorporate America within their field of vision then England was the slowest. Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to the Tempest*, (London: University of California Press, 1992), 18.

²⁶⁵ John Friske, *The Discovery of America: with Some Account of Ancient America and the Spanish Conquest*, vol. II, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892), 17.

geography.²⁶⁶ D.W. Waters (1958) also argued that the English “took no part in and no interest in the great discoveries of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries” and points to the lack of navigational materials printed in English as proof.²⁶⁷ Pearl Hogrefe (1959) also states that “the new geographical knowledge moved slowly into all human minds; and in the reign of Henry VIII it moved more slowly into English minds,” citing the lack of literature on the new discoveries in England until after 1550.²⁶⁸

John Parker (1965) has argued that the English had no real concern for the new geographical information or for that of the ancient geographers. Parker also bases this argument on the lack of English publications on this topic.²⁶⁹ Parker repeated this argument in 1991 when he stated that until Richard Eden’s first attempt at a publication in 1552 there had been no publication of Columbus’ letters, or any publication containing the names Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan, Cortés, Pizarro, Verazzano or Cartier in England.²⁷⁰ The only mention of America to be published on an English press was that made by John Rastell in 1519. Parker states that:

There were no books on oceanic navigation. Neither the Portuguese empire in the East nor the Spanish in the West Indies had been described in any English book. No significant map, no classical geographers, neither of the popular cosmographies of Sacro Bosco or Peter Apianus had been published in England. Only one of the popular medieval travelers, Sir John Mandeville, was available in English. There was no Marco Polo. At the level of public interest, world-awareness in England had not yet begun.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography 1485-1583*, (1930), (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 13-14.

²⁶⁷ D.W. Waters, *The Art of Navigation in England in Elizabethan and early Stuart Times*, (London: Hollis and Carter, 1958), 80.

²⁶⁸ Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and their Impact on Secular Drama*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1959), 29.

²⁶⁹ John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620*. (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965), 28, 31, 43.

²⁷⁰ John Parker, “Richard Eden, Advocate of Empire,” *The James Ford Bell Lectures*, no. 29, (1991), 4. Parker is apparently only counting books published on English presses for this argument, for he ignores Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* which does reference the voyages of Vespucci.

²⁷¹ John Parker, “Richard Eden,” 4-5.

K.G. Davies (1974) takes this line of reasoning a step further and assert that England was late to Atlantic exploration and exploitation because English participation in discussions of Atlantic activity would not even begin until the middle of the sixteenth century when Spain's riches became well known. He further states that England's first discussion of colonization would not come about until Humphrey Gilbert's publication in association with his efforts to colonize Newfoundland.²⁷² Similarly, Jeffrey Knapp (1992) points out that Columbus's first letter describing his discoveries sold throughout Europe by 1494 but was never published by an English publisher. He further states that "between the time of Columbus's original voyage and Richard Eden's path breaking *Treatyse of the Newe India* (1553), a span of sixty years, only one English work devoted to America seems to have been printed—in Antwerp."²⁷³ Johnathan Hart (2001) makes a similar argument when he points out that travel literature was enjoying a surge in publications in Europe, with Vespucci's voyages translated into Italian, Latin and German, but that there is no evidence of travel literature being published in English. He concludes that there was "little market for the printing of travel narratives in English," demonstrating a lack of interest regarding the exploration of the Americas.²⁷⁴ However, arguments such as these underestimate the networks of knowledge between the continent and England. Through these networks English readers not only stayed apprised of the current intellectual debates in Europe, but also rose to the forefront in many of them. These networks, as will be demonstrated,

²⁷² K.G. Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century*. Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion vol. IV. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), pp.4-8; Gilbert argued for colonization of North American, not specifically Newfoundland.

²⁷³ Knapp, 18.

²⁷⁴ Jonathan Hart, *Representing the New World: The English and French Uses of the Example of Spain*, (New York: Pelgrave, 2001), 34.

provided England with the majority of its books, satisfying literate English with works printed on the continent in the learned languages.

Academic Networks: The Universities

The work Lady Beaufort and John Fisher began by encouraging the growth of the universities, especially Cambridge University, continued after her death in 1509. Many who had ties to Henry's court contributed to the movement, making significant donations and establishing new professorships. This included the very powerful, such as Cardinal Wolsey who played a key role in the foundation of Cardinal College (later Christ's Church College) at Oxford, and endowed six professorships in medicine, philosophy, canon law, humanities, theology, and civil law.²⁷⁵ It also included those who did not officially possess political power, but who did have some connection to members of Henry's court. One example of this is Thomas Linacre, the king's physician, a member of Sir Thomas More's circle and a key figure in bringing humanist thought to the Court. Linacre founded three lectureships in medicine, one at Cambridge and two at Oxford, upon his death in 1524.²⁷⁶ Another example is Sir Robert Rede, a London lawyer, an acquaintance of Sir Thomas More, who served as an executor of Henry VII and in the House of Commons in 1514-5. In the 1520s Rede established an annual stipend for three professorships in

²⁷⁵ Antonia McLean, *Humanism and the Rise of Science in Tudor England*, (New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications, Inc., 1972), 49-51, 130; Leader, 324-5.

²⁷⁶ Hogrefe, 26. Antonia McLean has stated that "Next to Mountjoy, the key figure in the first connections between the humanists and the court was Thomas Linacre." McLean, 182. E.M.G. Routh has stated that Linacre was a key figure in Sir Thomas More's life when he was introduced to the "New Learning" and that it was Linacre who taught More Greek. E.M.G. Routh, *Sir Thomas More and his Friends 1477-1535*, with a preface by Elizabeth Wordsworth, (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 10.

Cambridge. In addition to this, he founded a salaried professorship for the quadrivial sciences (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy).²⁷⁷

Astronomy had long been a subject of some interest at the Universities, as it was closely connected to the study of medicine throughout the medieval period and was a required area of study on the bachelor's level.²⁷⁸ Instruments such as astrolabes are recorded as having been used by at least three questionists (examiners) in the Cambridge arts faculty between 1484 and 1514, and there are frequent mentions of astrolabes in the records of Merton College at Oxford. These records also include a quadrant, a planisphere, various spheres and globes of both wood and brass, as well as several tracts in circulation on how to use an astrolabe, indicating not only a strong interest in Astronomy, but also hinting at a broader interest in areas that became known as cartographic science.²⁷⁹ While mathematics had not been a strong focus of study in the university systems, if it was studied at all, the growing interest in astronomy and the presence of these instruments required some knowledge of mathematics. As interest in these instruments grew, so too did interest in mathematics. One of Fisher's lesser known contributions to Cambridge University was his encouragement of mathematical studies. In 1516 he stipulated that there should be lectures on the sphere, cosmography, perspective and arithmetic at St. John's with attendance being compulsory for all B.A.s.²⁸⁰ This is the first time that cosmography was made mandatory for all undergraduate students and might reflect the acknowledgement that the

²⁷⁷ G.C. Brodrick, *A History of the University of Oxford*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), 64-5; Leader, 252-3.

²⁷⁸ Leader, 148-9, 204-5.

²⁷⁹ Leader, 148-9.

²⁸⁰ David Gwyn, "Richard Eden Cosmographer and Alchemist" *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), 13-34, 17; Parker, "Richard Eden," 2-3.

known world was changing with the realization that Columbus had discovered a “New World” rather than the eastern shores of Asia.

During the first part of the sixteenth century both universities would see a growth in the “sciences,” as represented by Rede’s contribution, however, Cambridge took the lead. Cambridge underwent a transformation in the fundamental nature of the University during the 1530s with the dissolution of the monasteries, which had traditionally been made up mostly of friars and those training for the church. The University soon comprised of a student body of second-generation humanists who were fascinated by the sciences. Men such as Thomas Smith, Richard Eden’s life-long friend and tutor, who excelled in mathematics and natural science, and whose library contained a large number of scientific books including Petrus Apianus’ *Cosmographia*, Sebastian Münster’s *Horologographia*, encouraged these students’ curiosity.²⁸¹ Some of the students made their own mark on the universities, encouraging further scientific advancement. Eden was one of the most famous of these students, for the historiography of exploration. John Cheke is another student of note. He took up Fisher’s movement to encourage mathematics and the sciences by revising the Cambridge statutes in 1545 to decree that freshmen should spend their first six months on geometry and arithmetic.²⁸² Cheke also served as a tutor to Edward VI and designed an astronomical quadrant for the king. Cheke had a profound influence on John Dee, the famous Elizabethan polymath.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Smith founded two readerships at Queen’s College in arithmetic and geometry with the instructions that they were to include demonstrations as well as theory. McLean, 130; Tayler, *Tudor Geography*, 193-243; Parker, “Richard Edent,” 4.

²⁸² Gwyn, 17. Parker argues that it was Eden’s interest in the sciences and linguistic skills that first brought him to the attention of Sir William Cecil. Parker, “Richard Eden,” 4.

²⁸³ McLean, 130-31. It is interesting to note that Cheke was close friends with Dr. Butts, the King’s physician whose son joined the Hore expedition in 1536. John Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir John Cheke, Kt. First Instructor, Afterwards Secretary of State to King Edward VI. One of the Great Restorers of Good Learning, and True Religion in this Kingdom . . .* (London: 1705), 7.

Towards the latter part of Henry VIII's reign there is a second sign that the discovery of the New World might be influencing academic discussions at the universities, or at least of the growing realization of the importance of cartography and geography. From 1532 to 1535 Cambridge University required mathematics lecture be given on Pomponius Mela, or on "some other geographical author."²⁸⁴ While much of the information presented by the ancient geographer was outdated or proven inaccurate by the Spanish and Portuguese discoveries, his work continued to remain relevant in society as Arthur Golding's 1585 translation reveals.²⁸⁵ The specific focus on a "geographical author" indicates a growing interest in, and realization of the importance of, geography. This likely stems from the growing awareness of the importance of the New World discoveries. It just so happens that this occurred at the same time that Richard Eden began his studies at Christ's and Queens' College.

David Gwyn has argued that one of the reasons for the shifting focus, at both Cambridge and Oxford, to place greater emphasis on math and the sciences is the acceptance of these studies, and the growing interest in them outside of the Universities among influential groups of the educated elite. Gwyn points to the circles that formed around men such as Sir Thomas More, Cuthbert Tunstall, and Thomas Linacre.²⁸⁶ Many of these men, such as William Grocyn, Thomas

²⁸⁴ Leader, 312. Pomponius Mela was the author of an ancient Latin treatise on geography. In roughly 43 or 44 CE he wrote *De chorographia* in which he introduced the idea of the world being divided into five zones: the northern frigid zone, northern temperate zone, the torrid zone, a southern temperate zone, the southern frigid zone. While these ideas were obviously outdated by the Portuguese and Spanish explorations in the torrid zone, they would continue to influence European thought. Arthur Golding, translator. *The vvorke of Pomponius Mela. the cosmographer, concerninge the situation of the world wherein euery parte, is deuided by it selfe in most perfect manner, as appeareth in the table at the ende of the booke. A booke right plesant and profitable for all sortes of men: but speciallie for gentlemen, marchants, mariners, and trauellers, translated out of Latine by Arthur Golding Gentleman.* (London: Printed [by John Charlewood] for Thomas Hacket, and are to be sold at his shop in Lumbert streete, vn- [sic] the signe of the Popes head, 1585).

²⁸⁵ The fact that Golding saw it necessary and even worthwhile to translate and market this work indicates that there was continued discussion of Mela and demand for his book.

²⁸⁶ Gwyn, 16-17.

Linacre, William Lily, Hugh Latimer, and John Colet had all been educated in Italy in the last two decades of the fifteenth century and had a profound impact on the academic atmosphere of England, particularly on More's philosophy of education.²⁸⁷ Thomas More often discussed mathematics with Henry VIII, possessed a copy of Jacques LeFevre de'Etaple's translation of Euclid and maintained a circle of friends that included the German mathematician Simon Grynaeus and the Swiss geographer Glareanus.²⁸⁸ Cuthbert Tunstall, the bishop of London, wrote the first mathematical textbook to be produced by an Englishman in 1522. Thomas Linacre, tutor to Prince Arthur, had prepared an edition of Proclus's *Sphaera* as early as 1499 and dedicated it to his royal student.²⁸⁹ These men all walked in influential circles and helped encourage the basic acceptance and interest in these subjects, which in turn, as David Gwyn points out, influenced the Universities to place a greater emphasis on them. Therefore, it is the educated elite that made these subjects popular, not the universities. The same can be said of travel narratives and geographical texts.

It has been argued that England showed a lack of interest in New World discoveries, which is seen in the lack of English editions of travel narratives, and that the English were unconcerned with cartography and geography as demonstrated by the scarcity of these works in the universities.²⁹⁰ This argument overestimates the demand for books written in English as well as the representational value of the University libraries. The demand for English translations will be addressed a bit later in this chapter. The value of utilizing the University libraries as a

²⁸⁷ Hogrefe, 142; Frederic Seebom, *The Oxford Reformers: John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More. Being a History of their Fellow Work*, reprinted from the 3rd edition, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), 1, 14. Leader argues that it was through the increased contact with the academic circles in Italy that the fields of math and medicine was revived. 312.

²⁸⁸ John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 21.

²⁸⁹ Gwyn, 16-17; McLean, 130.

²⁹⁰ Knapp, 18.

gauge for popular reading might appear at first glance to be a solid piece of evidence, and well it might be in the high medieval era when private libraries were rare. However, during the reign of Henry VIII private libraries outpaced university libraries in their acquisition of new publications. The college libraries remained fairly conservative in what they had to offer their students, offering mostly just the core curriculum.²⁹¹ This was due in large part to funding issues and traditional methods of acquisition. The vast majority of the printed books that made it onto the university library shelves arrived there through donations. For example the principle part of the manuscripts and rare books in the library of St. John's College Cambridge were donated from the libraries of Thomas and Henry Wriothesley, Earls of South Hampton, who purchased them in the later part of the sixteenth century. Thus, even though most of these works date from roughly 1000-1500 CE, they were not present at the university until the end of the sixteenth century. This illustrates how the libraries often received outdated or antiquarian materials.²⁹² N.R. Ker has stated that "reliance on gifts meant that printed books reached college collections slowly and that those that came were not printed books of the newest sort."²⁹³ Ker points out that All Souls College at Oxford received its first large gift of printed books from James Goldwell in 1499. Most of the books that have survived were printed before 1475 and all of them were printed before 1484, fifteen years before they were donated.²⁹⁴

Items that arrived at the universities relatively close to their publication date were obtained as individual gifts or as bequests when their owners died shortly after purchasing the

²⁹¹ Leader points out that as late as 1544 St. John's library collection was still heavily medieval. Leader, 315.

²⁹² Morgan Cowie, "A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Scarce books in the Library of St. John's College Cambridge" *Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 6, 8 [Quarto series], (Cambridge: Deighton and Stevenson, 1842), vi.

²⁹³ N.R. Ker, *Records of All Souls College Library 1437-1600*. (The Oxford Bibliographical Society (New Series, vol. xvi), 1971), vii.

²⁹⁴ Ker, vii.

book for their own library.²⁹⁵ Printed books, while becoming a consumer item, were still a luxury item, especially the heavily illustrated cosmographies. Richard Eden paid a full six shillings for his 1533 copy of Peter Martyr's *De Orbe Nouo Decades* which was not a small sum at the time.²⁹⁶ It does not appear that very many donors were interested in purchasing these books for the college libraries, being satisfied with the knowledge that they could bequest them to the libraries upon their deaths. This type of acquisition inevitably delayed the growth of the university libraries, keeping them constantly outdated in regards to the newest publications.

Another factor to take into consideration is the instability of the library collections and the lack of accurate inventories for most of the libraries before the seventeenth century. For example, Lionel Jackson, who died in 1514, left a significant portion of his library, including some recent publications, to Balliol College Oxford. None of his books are currently in the university library, nor is there any record of them in the 1709 book list.²⁹⁷ The fact that the earliest book list to be extant for Balliol College, 1709, was made nearly two hundred years after the donation and does not list any of the donated books illustrates another complication with using the university libraries to try and recreate popular knowledge at the time; the fact that there are few reliable library records for the early sixteenth century.²⁹⁸ Thus, the university library collections do not necessarily offer an accurate depiction of what was in demand at the time.

²⁹⁵ Take for example the acquisition of Petrus Martyr's *Judicum*, gifted to Pembroke College Cambridge by Thomas Watts in 1517. George E. Corrie, "A list of Books presented to Pembroke College, Cambridge, by different donors" (1860), Cam.C.860.33.

²⁹⁶ Earle Havens, "Richard Eden's Copy of Peter Martyr's Decades of the New World" *Other People's Books: Association Copies and the Stories they tell*, G. Thomas Tanselle, Hal Kugeler, eds., (Chicago: Caxton Club, 2011), 25.

²⁹⁷ R. J. Fehrenback and E. S. Leedham-Green, eds. *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists*, vol. II, PLRE 5-66, (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies), PLRE 33, 84-90.

²⁹⁸ See the series edited by Montague Rhodes James for Cambridge University Press in which each volume focuses on recreating the manuscripts and some of the incunabula in each of the college libraries at Cambridge. James

The changing nature of the Universities illustrates the changing nature of the elite in England as it was likely inspired by the changing academic interests of the elite. During the early sixteenth century England embraced humanist learning and the Renaissance, including the new fashions, culture and knowledge produced by these movements across Europe. England became so well versed in the “New Learning” that Erasmus could write after having spent some time in England, “I have met with so much kindness, and so much learning, not hacknied and trivial, but deep, accurate, ancient, Latin and Greek, that but for the curiosity of seeing it, I do not now so much care for Italy.”²⁹⁹ The educated elite in London embraced this movement so fully that in 1505 Erasmus stated that London had eclipsed both Oxford and Cambridge in becoming the country’s most important educational center.³⁰⁰ This led Erasmus to spend as much time as possible in London during his tenure at Cambridge.³⁰¹

Intellectual Elites: Thomas More’s Circle

No one embodies this academic culture more so than Sir Thomas More. More was known for fostering education within his circle of influence. It is said that he established a school in his household “which became one of the centers of learning in Tudor England” and was famed for the breadth of its curriculum across international and language barriers.³⁰² Erasmus carried great weight in the creation of the curriculum More used, and it is well documented that Erasmus emphasized the importance of learning Latin and Greek as a mental

repeatedly points out in the various volumes the difficulties of tracking down the original library lists as many of the libraries do not appear to have an accurate inventory list before the late seventeenth century.

²⁹⁹ Nicholas, Epistle 110. Farrago, 95; Ep. V. 2; C. 12 (14), 226.

³⁰⁰ Alexander, 165.

³⁰¹ Leader, 297.

³⁰² McLean, 56. Hogrefe dedicates an entire chapter of her book to More’s household school and a second chapter to the significance it had in fostering new ideas of education among both humanist philosophers and the nobility in England. Hogrefe, 140-252.

discipline and as a means of international communication.³⁰³ An example of the international nature of the education and teaching in More's school is that More brought in Nicolas Kratzer, the German astronomer and mathematician, as tutor for his children. Kratzer was introduced to Hans Holbein and King Henry through his association with More, and became Henry's personal astronomer in 1519.³⁰⁴

More's circle included many of the leading minds from the continent, including the German mathematician Simon Grynaeus, the Portuguese poet and historian Damião de Goes, the Swiss geographer Glareanus, the Spanish scholar and humanist Juan Luis Vives, the leading humanist of Europe Desiderius Erasmus, and many others.³⁰⁵ In addition to these European members of More's inner circle he also counted among his close friends and associates the leading humanist minds of England, including John Colet, Cuthbert Tunstall, Sir Thomas Elyot, Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn, Richard Croke, John Heywood, Thomas Palsgrave, John Rastell, John Holt and John Clement, to name but a few of the more well-known of his friends. Many of these men received part of their university education on the continent in centers of learning such as Paris and Florence.³⁰⁶ Rastell, Elyot, Lily and Kratzer have all been identified by Peter Barber as possessing a strong interest in cartography.³⁰⁷ Holt served as Henry VIII's teacher when Henry became the heir apparent to the throne. Holt was a close friend of More's

³⁰³ McLean, 53.

³⁰⁴ Hogrefe, 28, 144; McLean, 56.

³⁰⁵ Parker, 21. See also Routh, *Sir Thomas More and his Friends 1477-1535*; Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and their Impact on Secular Drama*.

³⁰⁶ Hogrefe, 142; Seebohm, pp. 1, 14-15, 17, 23.

³⁰⁷ Peter Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government: Maps at Court to 1550," David Buisseret, ed. *Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26-56, 29.

and a well-respected professional teacher with close ties to William Blount, Lord Mountjoy who had introduced Erasmus to Henry.³⁰⁸

Erasmus described this group of men by stating that at a dinner party with some of these men “the good cheer would have satisfied Epicurus; the table-talk would have pleased Pythagoras. The guests might have peopled an Academy, and not merely made up a dinner party.”³⁰⁹ In a similar vein Erasmus writes that “when I hear my Colet, I seem to be listening to Plato himself. In Grocin who does not marvel at such a perfect round of learning? What can be more acute, profound, and delicate than the judgment of Linacre? What has Nature ever created more gentle, more sweet, more happy than the genius of Thomas More?”³¹⁰ Each of these men are well known and have been studied by historians of various fields. It is not pertinent to the argument at hand to go into the details of their lives at this point. Several will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. For now, it suffices to say that each of these men left their mark on England, becoming leaders in their respective fields and often holding positions within Henry’s court. Each were proficient in the learned languages, with many translating several works both from Latin and Greek into other languages and from other languages into Latin and Greek. Several have been identified as interested in, and valuing the study of cartography. Finally, each traveled to Europe and were connected to academic discussions on the continent.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ David Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince*, (London: HarperPress, 2008), 173-78.

³⁰⁹ Nicholas, Epistle 105 Farrago, 92; Ep. V. I; C. 42 (44), 215.

³¹⁰ Nicholas, Epistle 110. Farrago, 95; Ep. V. 2; C. 12 (14), 226. In a letter dated May 7, 1515 Erasmus would state that the two most learned men in all of England are Cuthbert Tunstall, the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Chancellor and Thomas More. Nicholas, Epistle 326. Farrago, 196; Ep. Vii. 40; C. 135 (155), 206.

³¹¹ For a good discussion of the continental connections of these men see works in the bibliography by, Fox; Hogrefe; Leader; McLean; Routh; Seebohm. As well as, Stanford E. Lehmborg, *Sir Thomas Elyot: Tudor Humanist*, (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1960); Richard Marius, *Thomas More: a Biography*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); E. E. Reynolds, *Thomas More and Erasmus*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965).

More's circle, which represents the leading minds of the humanist movement in England, believed that education, learning and reason were the means through which mankind could draw closer to the divine. Juan Luis Vives stated that "the cultivation of the mind through what we call branches of learning, by means of which we separate ourselves from the way of life and customs of animals and are restored to humanity, and raised towards God Himself."³¹² With this philosophy as a guiding force, More's circle of friends valued learning in all of its forms. In his treatise on the education of noble women, Vives placed just as much emphasis on the value of learning languages and music as he did on genealogy, needle work and the basic chores of maintaining a house such as cooking and spinning. Science, defined as medicine, mathematics, astronomy and geography, was one of the areas which appears to have been of particular interest to the key members of More's circle. More and his circle often attacked superstition and magic, placing value instead on reason and what could be demonstrated through reasoned learning, such as the sciences.³¹³

Vives had very strong opinions on this, arguing that students should not be limited to reading the ancients on issues of science and nature but should also incorporate knowledge derived from observation. He argued that promising students should be allowed to progress beyond simple descriptive cosmography and geography, which was necessary even for the dull-witted student, to study astronomy, ancient and modern geography, animals, plants, herbs, and the agricultural sciences.³¹⁴ In his *De Disciplinis*, Vives challenges the authority of the ancients

³¹² Juan Luis Vives, *De Tradendis Disciplinis*, as found in *Vives: On Education, A Translation of the De Tradendis Disciplinis of Juan Luis Vives*, translated with an introduction by Foster Watson, (Cambridge: University Press, 1913), 6.

³¹³ Hogrefe, 32-35. McLean argues that it is thanks to this attitude among the leading humanists and their more flexible approach to education that allowed science as it is known in the modern era to develop. McLean, 130.

³¹⁴ Vives, 163-179.

on the sciences, stating that he has attempted to “free the sciences from impious doubts and to bring them out from their heathen darkness,” stating that the “old writers were mistaken, not through the limitations of the human intellect, as some have thought, but by their own fault.” Vives, on the other hand, asserts he has a more correct view, for his reason has been produced from Nature and observation, “not out of divine oracles.”³¹⁵ Vives states that the more promising students should read Raphael of Volterra’s introduction to geography, which could be found in Raphael’s *Commentariorum rerum urbanarum libri*.³¹⁶ Vives also argued for the value of astronomy and geometry stating that it is useful to cosmography and “absolutely necessary to the general theory of navigation.”³¹⁷ Thus, Vives argued that promising students should not be limited to the old theories that had passed for science, but should be encouraged to read the newer general continental publications, such as Raphael Maffei, and to learn specific sciences such as navigation.

On a similar note, Sir Thomas Elyot argued that the study of cosmography is one of the most important and valuable aspects of a gentleman’s education. In his work, *The Boke Named the Governour*, first published in 1531, Elyot argues that any young gentleman or nobleman should be trained in cosmography, both in its historical and anthropological aspects as well as its mathematical and scientific aspects. Elyot states that “Experience we have therof in lernynge of geometry, astronomie, and cosmographie, called in englisshe the description of the world. In which studies I dare affirme a man shal more profite, in one wike, by figures and chartis, well

³¹⁵ Vives, 7.

³¹⁶ Vives, 207. Raphael Maffei of Volterra wrote *Commentariorum rerum urbanarum libri*, which was published in Rome in 1506 and in Paris in 1516. The first part of this work consists of a geography, the second part is an anthropology and the third encompasses all of science and natural history. The presence of this work in Vives’s treatise indicates that he valued continental publications and likely disseminated this work to More’s circle or household school, especially as his concepts of education were valued by both More and Catherine of Aragon.

³¹⁷ Vives, 205. Vives goes on to discuss the use of an astrolabe for navigation and the critical value of mathematics for determining one’s position.

and perfectly made, than he shall by the only reding or heryng the rules of that science by the space of halfe a yere at the lest.”³¹⁸ Here he argues that learning the technical side of cartography, the math behind it, and through charts, the student will gain more in a week than in half a year of simply reading or hearing the basic principles of the sciences. In other words, the student must have a deeper understanding of cartography and a practical knowledge of the mathematics behind it.

By utilizing maps and charts, Elyot explains, students will gain a better understanding of history which, being, “replenished with the names of countrayes and townes unknowen to the reder, do make the historie tedious or els the lasse pleasant,” however, the use of maps in the lesson “encreaseth in inexplicable delection. It shall be therefore, and also for refreshing the witte, a convenient lesson to beholde the olde tables of Ptholomee, where in all the worlde is paynted.”³¹⁹ The student should learn “firste some introduction in to the sphere, wherof nowe of late be made very good treatises and more playne and easie to lerne than was wonte to be.”³²⁰ This last part reveals two things. First, it demonstrates Elyot’s firm belief that students should be instructed in all aspects of cosmography or of “the sphere.” Second, it demonstrates that Elyot was aware of the new cosmographical publications printed on the continent. He did not reference the medieval cosmographies, for those older texts he thought difficult for students to understand, but “good treatiese” that are “more playne and easie to lerne than was wonte” and that are “nowe of late be made.” The fact that he has mentioned the old tables of Ptolemy

³¹⁸ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, edited from the first edition of 1531 by Henry Herbert Stephen Croft, in two volumes, vol. I, (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880), 45.

³¹⁹ Elyot, 76.

³²⁰ Elyot, 77.

suggests that he was familiar with some of the new editions of Ptolemy printed on the continent.³²¹

If the student showed talent in these areas, or in the art of “portraiture and payntyng” he should be encouraged so that

by the feate of portraiture or payntyng, a capitaine may discribe the countray of his adversary, wherby he shall eschue the daungerous passages with his hoste or navie: also perceive the placis of advauntage, the forme of embataylynge of his enemies: the situation of his cape, for his mooste suertie: the strength or weakenes of the towne or fortresse whiche he intendeth to assault. And that which is moost specially to be considered, in visiting his owne dominions, he shal sette them out in figure, in suche wise that at his eie shal appere to hym where he shall employ his study and treasure, as well for the saulfgarde of his countray, as for the commodite and honour therof, having at al tymes in his sight the suertie and feblenes, advauncement and hindrance, of the same.³²²

Thus, the student would be able to put his education to good use as an adult, possessing the ability to map out the country during times of war and in doing so perceive places of advantage as well as dangerous passes. He would also possess skills which would make him a better administrator of his lands, giving him a greater understanding of his dominions, their value and needs as well as their weaknesses which require better defenses.

Elyot argues that this skill and knowledge is what made Alexander the Great such a successful general. “The commoditie therof knewe the great kynge Alexander...for he caused the countrayes whereunto he purposed any enterprise, diligently and cunningly to be described and paynted, that, beholdynge the picture, he mought perceive whiche places were most daungerous: and where he and his host mought have most easy and covenable passage.”³²³

³²¹ Peter Barber argues that this generation of statesmen would have been familiar with Ptolemy’s *Geographia* which was “coming off the presses of Europe.” He also points out that in the 1520s “illustrated printed books were appearing in greater numbers, and knowledge of the discoveries in America, Africa, and India was spreading throughout Europe.” Barber, “England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government” 28.

³²² Elyot, 44-45.

³²³ Elyot, 78.

Similarly the Romans would utilize maps during military campaigns so that they could “reason and consulte in whiche places hit were best to resiste or invade their enemies.”³²⁴ Elyot is quick to remind his reader that not all past kings have been so wise as to learn how to consult maps. He lists several, such as Cirus of Persia, Crassus of Rome, and “dyvers other valiant and expert captains” who lost “them selves and all their army by ignorance of this doctrine.”³²⁵ To Elyot, great leaders value maps and know how to read and utilize them. Those who lack this knowledge run the risk of losing their armies, and themselves, in war regardless of whether or not they are “expert captains” or valiant leaders.

George Lily did not leave us any written remarks on the value of teaching geometry, astrology or cartography, however, since he was a cartographer it can be stated with certainty that he valued cartography. He was the son of William Lily, the grammarian who had been trained on the continent and became the headmaster of John Colet’s school at St. Paul’s.³²⁶ Christopher Hollis identified William Lily as “the first of the great formative influences” upon Thomas More.³²⁷ Among his students can be counted William Paget, John Clement, Thomas Lupset, John Leland, Antony Denny, Thomas Wriothesley and Edward North, the first Baron North. It is notable that both Clement and Lupset became lecturers in Greek at Wolsey’s Corpus Christi college at Oxford.³²⁸ It is through his father that George Lily entered into More’s circle. George Lily authored several biographies and was a major contributor to Paolo Giovio’s chorography of the British Isles, *Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hyberniae et Orchadum*, for which, it is believed, Lily created one of his most famous cartographic pieces, his map of the

³²⁴ Elyot, 78.

³²⁵ Elyot, 79.

³²⁶ Marius, pp. 72,75-6.

³²⁷ Christopher Hollis, *Thomas More*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1934), 14.

³²⁸ Reynolds, 77.

British Isles.³²⁹ This is one of the earliest printed maps of the British Isles, and the first by an English cartographer. It was engraved on two plates and published in Rome in 1546.³³⁰

As noted above, Linacre became the leader of the group on the topic of medicine, playing an active role in the establishment of the Royal School of Physicians and endowing several lectureships on medicine at the universities.³³¹ Linacre also had been educated on the continent, spending at least six years in Italy, a longer period than anyone else in the More circle.³³² Linacre also encouraged the study of astronomy and geography among the group, translating *Proclus de sphaera* from Greek into Latin, which he allowed Petrus Aldus to publish in 1499, and helping More in his reading of the *Meteorologica* of Aristotle.³³³ The teaching of math was emphasized in More's household school and, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, both More and Rastell had a strong interest in geography.

Men such as these, who valued learning, especially learning based on observation, would not have remained unaware or apathetic of the discovery of the New World. The discovery had a profound effect on Western Europe over the course of the sixteenth century. Richard Popkin has stated that “during the sixteenth century, the very foundations and structure of the medieval intellectual world of western Europe were shaken and to a large degree destroyed.”³³⁴ This

³²⁹ Thomas Cooper, “Lily, George” *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, vol. 33 (1893); Daniel Birkholz, “The Gough Map Revisited: Thomas Butler’s the Mape of Ynglonnd, c. 1547-1554” *Imago Mundi*, vol. 58, (2006), 23-47, 29; Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger J. P. Kain, *English Maps: a history*, (London: British Library, 1999), 52-3, 61-3.

³³⁰ J.A.J. de Villiers, “Famous Maps in the British Museum” *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 44, (Aug. 1914), 168-184, 179.

³³¹ Hogrefe states that Linacre has been praised as “the most important man in either the fifteenth or the first half of the sixteenth century” in terms of medicine. Hogrefe, 26; McLean, 44.

³³² Marius, 75.

³³³ Hogrefe, 29.

³³⁴ Richard H. Popkin, ed., *The Philosophy of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1966), 1.

dramatic shift owed partly to the “radical scientific discoveries, and hitherto unbelievable feats of exploration and expansion.”³³⁵ While most historians now argue that this shift was a bit slower than these statements imply, taking a generation or two to really change the European academic attitudes, it remains true that these discoveries challenged much of the medieval worldview. They disproved much of the ancient cosmographical knowledge, such as the inhospitable nature of the Torrid Zone. Members of More’s circle would have discussed these revelations. They would not have remained ignorant of these discoveries simply because they did not have access to them in English books.

During the early sixteenth century England was not seen as an outlier in the academic world, but as a leader in languages and the study of the classics. The English academic elite were well known and respected throughout the continent for their ability to read and translate both the ancient languages and the modern learned languages.³³⁶ The English were recognized during this time as leaders in literature, both as producers and consumers. This is true of the intellectual elites such as Sir Thomas More and his peers, as well as of the Royal household and Henry VIII’s court. At the center of much of these academic discussions, more so due to personality and influence, was Henry VIII who encouraged both pageantry and pomp and circumstance, as well as reading and the sciences.

Henry VIII: His Household and his Court

As an adult, Henry VIII was praised in Europe for his interest in the sciences, and for surrounding himself with some of the brightest minds in Europe, including Sir Thomas More,

³³⁵ Popkin, 1. For further examples of this see footnote 1.

³³⁶ Nicholas, Epistle 105 Farrago, 92; Ep. V. I; C. 42 (44), 215; Epistle 110. Farrago, 95; Ep. V. 2; C. 12 (14), 226; Epistle 111, Farrago, 247; Ep. VIII. 53: C. 55 (62), 229; Epistle 326. Farrago, 196; Ep. VII. 40; C. 135 (155), 206.

whose household regularly welcomed such learned men as Erasmus and has been described as an “international center for humanist studies.”³³⁷ Many of those who frequented More’s household found employment in Henry’s court where they were welcomed by both Henry and his Queen, Catherine of Aragon. During the decade of Henry’s reign, Colet became the royal couple’s chosen preacher, Linacre served as the royal physician, Tunstall as Master of the Rolls, Mountjoy as head of the Queen’s Household, and Richard Pace, who seems to have been loosely connected to the More circle, served as one of the King’s secretaries.³³⁸ Being fond of intelligent debates, Henry surrounded himself with well-educated men. He spent significant time with More discussing matters of science and philosophy.³³⁹ Henry was known for his patronage of the sciences and education throughout his reign, taking after his grandmother Lady Beaufort, to an extent. He established Trinity College in Cambridge in 1546, which quickly became the leading college at the University.³⁴⁰ While royal patronage of English universities was not new, Henry took a more direct and active role in the universities.³⁴¹ An interesting illustration of Henry’s active role in academia is that when he heard that a society of Trojans had formed in

³³⁷ Neville Williams, *Henry VIII and His Court*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), 83. Routh states that More joined the King’s service during a period of Henry’s reign when he especially “delighted to surround himself with men of note and learning” Routh, 89. David Starkey describes Henry as having a love for “obscure astronomical and mathematical lore,” Starkey, *Henry*, 123.

³³⁸ Routh, 89; Hogrefe, 32; Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon*, (1941), (New York: Quality Paperback books, 1990), 183, Mattingly argues that this had more to do with Linacre’s influence than More’s introduction.

³³⁹ In fact, Henry had known More since his early childhood and it was More who first introduced Erasmus to the young prince in 1499. Francis Morgan, *Catalogue of Lucubrations* (1523). C.i. Praet. Fortin, ii. 419, 201-2. Marius, 44-45.

³⁴⁰ Henry was said to be “learned in all sciences” and he was said to have possessed a passion for astronomy. The cupboards in his privy lodgings contained various scientific instruments, including his personal astrolabe. Weir, 7-9; Leader, 324-45. Alexander demonstrates that St. John’s College was the leading college at Cambridge due to Lady Beaufort’s substantial financial and land provisions and the work of Bishop Fisher until Henry VIII created Trinity College in 1546. Alexander, 169.

³⁴¹ Leader states that “there had always been royal aid and interference in the English universities, but they increased in pace under the Tudors and took on a more direct form under Henry VIII.” 324. He goes on to demonstrate this, 324-45; Alexander, 169.

Oxford to oppose the introduction of the study of Greek, Henry personally intervened to ensure that Greek would be taught.³⁴²

Henry's interest in the sciences and in the wider world is reflected in his patronage of cartographic projects and exploration. Peter Barber has called the reign of Henry VIII a "watershed in the history of map consciousness and map use by king and government in England."³⁴³ Henry had a true interest in cartography, and collected maps for his court and his own private use. He "owned many maps" and stored them in his private chambers for his personal use, and placed some in his libraries and on the walls of the palaces for use in intellectual discussions and politics.³⁴⁴ Henry's study at Whitehall Palace housed numerous maps that were seen and copied by distinguished envoys and foreign mapmakers at the English court.³⁴⁵ In Whitehall Henry had twenty-nine maps, of which at least three are recorded as having been maps of the world, including one with a wooden frame bearing the king's arms. Henry also had at least four globes at Whitehall, a globe in the long gallery at Hampton Court and two globes in the gallery at Greenwich Palace.³⁴⁶ In 1530 a transcription of the 1510 manuscript *Cosmographia*, written by a monk in residence in London, was commissioned for the Royal Library.³⁴⁷ In 1514 Henry created Trinity House at Deptford on the Thames to regulate

³⁴² Williams, 87.

³⁴³ Peter Barber, "England I: Pageantry," 27.

³⁴⁴ Weir, 9; James P. Carley, in his study of Henry VIII's libraries also states that "maps and exploration fascinated Henry." to James P. Carley *The Books of King Henry VIII and His Wives*, preface by David Starkey, (London: The British Library, 2004), 56.

³⁴⁵ Peter Barber, from his introduction to Diogo Homem, *The Queen Mary Atlas*, (1558) facsimile copy edited and introduced by Peter Barber, (London: The Folio Society, 2005), 35.

³⁴⁶ Maria Hayward, ed., *The 1542 Inventory of Whitehall: The Palace and its keeper*, Society of Antiquaries of London, (London: Illuminata Publishers, 2004), 24-25. For a brief description of the maps see items 839, 842, 851, 852, 860, 2358, 2359.

³⁴⁷ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 13-14. It is not known who commissioned the work, it is simply known that this copy was specifically made for the Royal Library in 1530. While Taylor uses this work to demonstrate the "lag" in English geographical works, it is interesting that this work was created specifically for the Royal Library.

and advance navigation and commerce.³⁴⁸ While it is not known what effect this might have had on chart making at the time, as few charts survive from this period, the most skillful pilots of the time were members of Trinity House, including John Rut whose 1527 voyage to the Americas will be discussed later in this dissertation.³⁴⁹

While it does not appear that Henry sought out cartographers at the beginning of his reign, he patronized them when they came to him and from the late 1520s he became a considerable patron of mapmaking.³⁵⁰ As will be discussed in the next chapter and in greater detail in chapter 5, Henry is said to have received a map of the New World from Girolamo de Verrazzano, who sought patronage from Henry. Henry is also said to have given lavish encouragement to Jean de Rotz for the completion of his atlas.³⁵¹ By 1540 Henry was actively seeking out leading cartographers and pilots to help build up his fleet. Between the years 1539 and 1546, with the help of John Dudley, the Lord Lisle, Henry's court welcomed such notables as Ribault, Sécalart and Nicholas de Nicolay, along with approximately sixty other pilots and noted mariners. He also welcomed into his employ Diego Homen, in 1545, whose family were leaders in Portuguese cartography.³⁵² It is of note that during this time Sir William Paget was appointed secretary of state to Henry VIII. Peter Barber identifies Paget as "being the most enthusiastic supporter of maps of Henry's ministers."³⁵³ These men all served Henry until his death as he worked to build up his naval fleet and navigational knowledge.³⁵⁴ It is known that

³⁴⁸ Pepys Library, *Missilariam of Matters Historical and Naval* Vol 1, (2869), ff. 2-7.

³⁴⁹ Sarah Tyacke, "Chartmaking in England and Its Context, 1500-1660" David Woodward, ed., *The History of Cartography*, vol. 3, part 2, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 1722-53, 1725-6.

³⁵⁰ Barber, *The Queen Mary Atlas*, 32.

³⁵¹ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 161.

³⁵² Barber, *The Queen Mary Atlas*, 34.

³⁵³ Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government," 39.

³⁵⁴ Helen Wallis, ed., *The Maps and Text of the Boke of Idrography Presented by Jean Rotz to Henry VIII: Now in the British Library*, (Oxford: Printed for Presentation to the Members of the Roxburghe Club, 1981), 15-16.

Henry received from Jean Mallard *Le premier liure de la Cosmographie* which included a map of the world.³⁵⁵ This interest in cartography added to an interest in exploration that most likely had been growing since his childhood. Henry was financially involved in at least three voyages of discovery and encouraged others that never came to fruition. Even towards the end of his reign, when his obsession for additional heirs and the restructuring of the church in England preoccupied him, Henry still maintained interest in exploration and cartography as he gratefully accepted a world geography with valuable notes on the New World from Roger Barlow in 1541.³⁵⁶ This gift inspired discussions of a voyage in 1541.

Erasmus observed that “there are more men of learning to be found in Henry’s court than in any university.”³⁵⁷ From the first year of his reign, humanists compared his court to the great Academy of Plato and sang praises of Henry as having a “godlike guise” in his virtues as king and scholar. Henry did not consider philosophy and kingship incompatible and made time each day for reading.³⁵⁸ The fostering of learning seen in his patronage of cartographers and pilots, and the employment of the leading scholars of his day clearly demonstrates Henry’s interest in the sciences and other forms of knowledge, and that he purposefully devoted time to these activities. Several of Henry’s wives also were reputed to have greatly contributed to the atmosphere of education and learning at court.

³⁵⁵ Wallis, 38.

³⁵⁶ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 161. Henry also seems to have had a specific interest in being kept apprised of news coming into the continent from the Spanish west Indies. For examples of this see TNA SP, 1/75 f. 90, 1/180 f. 233. Both of these are letters written to Henry from Englishmen in Spain detailing news regarding the Indies and the treasure fleet.

³⁵⁷Williams, 83; See letters 100, 105, 110, 184, 187, 326, in Nichols’ edited edition of Erasmus’ letters, just to point out a few obvious references to the level of learning in England at the time. James P. Carley also asserts that from his first meeting with Erasmus, “scholars were uniform in their praise of Henry’s learning.” He goes on to state that “Given the intellectual tenor of Henry’s court, indeed, it is inevitable that scholars flocked to it.” Carley, 13, 14.

³⁵⁸ Maria Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 15.

Henry shared his passion for learning with his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and together they created a court that fostered the art of learning and drew the attention of some of England's greatest minds. Both were highly educated and received numerous dedications, acquiring books for the simple reason, as David Starkey puts it, that they "were bookish."³⁵⁹ James P. Carley agrees with Starkey, stating that Henry was "a bookish king from beginning to end; so too were fifty percent of his wives."³⁶⁰ Catherine embraced the "new learning" of humanism. In 1512 she made Lord Mountjoy her chamberlain. He later married one of her Spanish maids of honor, Inez de Venegas, and remained one of Catherine's closest friends and maintained a strong link between Catherine and the leading humanist circles.³⁶¹ Catherine read and treasured Erasmus' books and actively worked to keep him in England and later to bring him back. Erasmus often acknowledged his indebtedness to her and commented on her exceptional learning.³⁶² Catherine also read More's *Utopia* and, finding it intriguing, discussed it with Juan Luis Vives, who later included it in his list of books that Princess Mary, and any good noble woman for that matter, should read during her education.³⁶³ Her influence is said to have drawn just as many humanists to England and the court as Henry did.³⁶⁴ McLean has argued that Catherine's single most important contribution to English scholarship was her employment of

³⁵⁹ David Starkey from his preface to James P. Carley. *The Books of King Henry VIII and His Wives*, preface by David Starkey, London: The British Library, 2004, 8; Dowling argues that Henry was "personally and actively interested in learning" throughout his life and that Catherine shared his deep fascination for books and learning. Dowling, 15-31.

³⁶⁰ Carley, 13

³⁶¹ Mattingly, 182; David Loades, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing Plc, 2009), 31.

³⁶² Mattingly, 183-4.

³⁶³ Mattingly, 179-80, 188; McLean, 44.

³⁶⁴ Mattingly states that during her seclusion at Durham House one of her few extravagances had been the purchase of books. Mattingly, 135. Of her influence on the humanists in England he has stated that, "The lines are sometimes almost obliterated, but there was hardly an Englishman of learning or promise in the two decades after 1509 but had some special connections with the Queen." Mattingly, 183.

Juan Luis Vives, bringing him from Spain to England as he broadened and enriched the English renaissance and contributed to the growth of humanist discussions.³⁶⁵

Catherine had been educated as a child under the supervision of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, who became famous for his history of the discovery of the Americas, a copy of which made its way into Henry VIII's collection.³⁶⁶ Martyr was fond of his pupil and kept a close eye on her activities in England, often commenting on her successes and sorrows in his letters.³⁶⁷ Martyr is not the only connection. Catherine also obtained knowledge of the New World through her regular contact with Passamente, who was made Treasurer General of the Indies in 1517 and received letters from him while he was in Santo Domingo.³⁶⁸ As Catherine was an active participant in Henry's court and made her influence known in policy and diplomatic decisions it stands to reason that she would share any New World information she received with her husband. Erasmus described Catherine as loving good literature, which she had studied with success since her childhood.³⁶⁹ Catherine had been educated by her mother, Queen Isabella, in all of the arts required of a princess. This included household duties such as spinning, baking, and weaving as well as the skills of a great lady, such as genealogy, heraldry, horsemanship, and falconry. She was also well learned in the classics and conversed with ambassadors in Latin in a manner that was not only correct, but fluent and classical.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ McLean, 45.

³⁶⁶ Carley, 109.

³⁶⁷ David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 16, 145, 154; Carley, 109.

³⁶⁸ TNA SP 1/16 f.105, Passamente wrote to Queen Catherine on January 6, 1518 from Santo Domingo to inform her of his new position. He also includes other general news regarding the Indies.

³⁶⁹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 16.

³⁷⁰ Hogrefe, 208; Mattingly states that Catherine was so proficient in the classics and in Latin that she appeared to Erasmus and Luis Vives "a miracle of feminine learning." 9.

Like her husband, Catherine took an interest in England's academic world. She believed that scholarship should be diffused, not hoarded, and that a reform of teaching in academic fields would be essential to reform the church. This is a core aspect of humanist thought, that education could bring one closer to God's plan, or Nature's Law, and thus lead to better, more correct living.³⁷¹ Catherine contributed to lectureships at both Cambridge and Oxford and supported scholarships, including some designated for poor students to attend universities, often taking a personal interest in the careers of these young scholars. She seems to have taken a personal interest in Thomas Linacre and had a role in his appointment as Royal Physician and contributed indirectly to the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians.³⁷² Catherine desired that a handbook for educating noble women be created, likely to help guide Princess Mary's education, and commissioned Luis Vives to produce both, *De institutione Christianae foeminae* (1523) and *De ratione studii puerilis* (1523), which was written while he served as a member of the Queen's counsel.³⁷³ These works became guidelines for the education of noble women in England, and through her instigation and insistence on the expansion of the ideas through the publication of the second work, Catherine's interest and influence helped shape the education of the women of the upper ranks of English society throughout the sixteenth century.³⁷⁴ It is quite possible that Catherine helped More formulate his ideas regarding the education of women, as he would have first come into close contact with her before his daughters were old enough to begin their education. More remained consistent in both his praise for Catherine's abilities and grace,

³⁷¹ For a discussion of this aspect of humanist thought see Hogrefe, 11-23.

³⁷² McLean, 44-45; Mattingly, 185.

³⁷³ McLean, 45; Hogrefe, 155, 208; Mattingly, 184; Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 25-6.

³⁷⁴ Catherine used the works as motivation to persuade a number of the older women of the court to resume their study of Latin and to take up serious reading and to form a small school around Mary for the daughters of noblemen. She would also put pressure on Thomas More to translate, or have translated Vives' treatise so that they would be readily available to English populace. Mattingly, 188-89.

and in his loyalty to her for the rest of his life.³⁷⁵ Erasmus is also reported to have been impressed by Catherine and Catherine's advancement of scholars has been described as possibly being her most important constructive contribution as Queen.³⁷⁶

Catherine oversaw her daughter Mary's education and is said to have followed Vives' curriculum in *De ratione studii puerilis*, which had a heavy emphasis upon Latin and Greek and was heavily influenced by Vives' friendship with More.³⁷⁷ In addition to Latin and Greek, Mary was trained in the courtly languages and at age eleven, conversed with French commissioners in Italian, French and Latin.³⁷⁸ Catherine also made sure that Mary studied the sciences such as astronomy, geography, and mathematics.³⁷⁹

Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, also patronized humanist scholars, returning to England from France with a strong interest in humanist thought.³⁸⁰ Fluent in French, Anne had a fondness for French books, particularly on the Reformation Movement.³⁸¹ In January 1530 Louis de Brun, a French teacher resident in England, gave her a French treatise on letter writing as a New Year's gift. In his address to her he wrote:

One never finds you without some French book in your hand ... such as Translations of the Holy Scriptures ... And principally, last Lent and the one before last ... I always saw

³⁷⁵ Hogrefe, 208-9.

³⁷⁶ Williams, 29; McLean, 44; Mattingly states that Catherine's most important service during her tenure as Queen was "her encouragement of the new learning, and fostering care for the classical Renaissance in England." Mattingly, 181.

³⁷⁷ Hogrefe, 209. For more on Vives' friendship with More and More's influence on Vives' ideas of education see Hogrefe, 140-170, 173-179, 201-253; Loads, 31-2.

³⁷⁸ Hogrefe, 209. Henry was also very interested in Mary's education and wrote specifically that she be fluent in multiple languages, including both the academic ancient languages and the courtly languages. BL Cotton Vitellius C I, f. 8v. Mary would be taught French by the same instructor who had taught Henry French, Giles Duwes. Starkey, *Henry*, 180.

³⁷⁹ Hogrefe, 209.

³⁸⁰ McLean, 45; Dowling, 232.

³⁸¹ Most of Anne Boleyn's books appear to have been religious in nature, this is the focus of chapter 7 of Carley's, *The Books of King Henry VIII and His Wives*.

you reading the salutary Epistles of St. Paul that contain the complete teaching and rule of good living according to the best moral principles.³⁸²

Her chaplain, William Latymer, also commented on Anne's habit of continually reading French books and charging him to do the same.³⁸³ Anne encouraged her ladies to read and develop an interest in books. She gave them a small book of devotion bound in gold with a ring from which to hang the book on their girdles so that they could have ready access to it.³⁸⁴ Boleyn also had strong ties to the Barlow family, the same Barlow family as Roger Barlow, the explorer and promoter of westward exploration.

Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr was, like her husband, an author. Unlike Henry's academic, anti-Lutheran tract, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, Katherine Parr's publications, *Prayers and Meditations* and *The Lamantations of a Sinner*, were written in English and aimed at the common reader. In describing Henry's and Parr's works, Starkey noted that both works are "products of learning and bookish arguments."³⁸⁵ Katherine had been raised in a household that put great emphasis on education. Her mother, Matilda or Maud Green Parr's household quickly became known as a finishing school for both male and female students, where they learned French and Latin as well as "other languages."³⁸⁶ Maud's emphasis on a strong education for both female as well as male students might have stemmed from her time at court as a lady-in-waiting for Queen Catherine of Aragon, with whom she became close friends.³⁸⁷ It is known that Maud was advised on the curriculum and education for both Katherine and her son William by

³⁸² Quote as found in Starkey, *Six Wives*, 369.

³⁸³ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 370.

³⁸⁴ McLean, 46.

³⁸⁵ Starkey, preface to Carley, 7.

³⁸⁶ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 694-5.

³⁸⁷ Janel Muller, ed., *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5.

Cuthbert Tunstall, who was a cousin to Sir Thomas Parr, Maud's late husband.³⁸⁸ Later in life Katherine stated that her mother had modeled her schooling after the household school established by Thomas More and that her tutors had placed emphasis on Latin, Italian, French, mathematics, and medicine.³⁸⁹

As an adult Katherine is known to have prided herself on her mastery of Italian and to have been familiar with Greek.³⁹⁰ As Queen, she surrounded herself with a literary circle of women and like-minded men in which she circulated improving religious works. Once her book, *Prayers and Meditations*, was published it appears that she gave copies away as presents to friends and courtiers, commissioning several ornately bound copies of the book.³⁹¹ She oversaw the translation of Erasmus's work, *Paraphrases of the Gospels* into English. She proved so adept at translating and overseeing the publication of works that historian David Starkey has stated that "Not until Victoria would there be another royal author who was as successful and as at home in the world of books and publishing."³⁹² Parr was the only English queen to have her writings published during her lifetime.³⁹³ Perhaps more noteworthy, Parr was the first woman to publish a work of her own under her own name in England and in English.³⁹⁴ While most of this work involved religious publications, and indeed Katherine's passion was the encouragement of reformation teaching, it does reveal a household and court that valued reading and knowledge. Katherine ensured Princess Elizabeth's education in French, Italian, and Latin and urged Princess Mary to publish under her own name her translation of Erasmus' *Paraphrase of the Gospels*,

³⁸⁸ Muller, 5.

³⁸⁹ Muller, 5-6.

³⁹⁰ Carley, 138; Hogrefe, 209.

³⁹¹ Starkey, *Six Wives*, 753.

³⁹² Starkey, *Six Wives*, 755.

³⁹³ Carley, 138.

³⁹⁴ Though it should be noted that she was not the first woman to translate a work that was then published, she was the first to be published under her name as the only author. Muller, 1-2.

indicating that Mary was also well versed in Latin.³⁹⁵ Katherine brought the royal children together under one roof so that she could oversee their education. She set up a small household school similar to the one More had established, and which was open to a small number of noble children.³⁹⁶ The school promoted humanist thought and reading in many languages. When reading and the pursuit of knowledge is encouraged in any subject it helps foster a broader atmosphere of academic interest that spills over into other fields. Katherine is credited with proposing the appointment of John Cheke and Richard Cox as tutors to Prince Edward in his newly instituted household in 1544.³⁹⁷ It has been said that Katherine succeeded Cromwell as the main avenue for the promotion of humanist scholars, and she maintained close ties to Cambridge, which was the “center of the humanist moment in England,” proving instrumental in Henry’s decision to found Trinity College at a time when dissolution of colleges for the collection of their wealth was more common.³⁹⁸

In addition to his personal household, Henry’s chief advisors were also known for their interest in academic debates and each contributed in some way to furthering academic pursuits. Thomas More created a scholastic environment among his circle of friends. Erasmus stated that “in More’s household you would realize that Plato’s academy was revived.”³⁹⁹ Cardinal Wolsey’s household was also described as a miniature university and became a training ground for most of the leading administrators of the next generation.⁴⁰⁰ Wolsey also demonstrated a

³⁹⁵ Hogrefe, 210; Muller, 15-19.

³⁹⁶ McLean, 46-7.

³⁹⁷ Muller, 14.

³⁹⁸ Mclean, 47. When an Act of Parliament in the fall of 1545 threatened some of the funding at some of the religious colleges at Cambridge University both Roger Ascham and Thomas Smith appealed personally to Katherine, asking her to use her influence on behalf of Cambridge. Apparently, Smith did this in person while Ascham did so through letters. Muller, 20-21.

³⁹⁹ Williams, 84.

⁴⁰⁰ McLean, 49-51.

keen interest in academics and in the university systems in England. He had taught at Magdalen College Grammar School, and promoted humanist learning most of his life. He played a key role in the foundation of Cardinal College, later Christ Church College, at Oxford, and endowed six professorships in medicine, philosophy, canon law, humanity, theology and civil law. The Chair for civil law was the first established in England.⁴⁰¹ Wolsey also showed an interest in mathematics, and founded a lectureship in mathematics at Cardinal College in addition to the six professorships.⁴⁰² Wolsey took direct interest in the studies at Ipswich, founding a Cardinal College there, and personally compiled a grammar for use at the school.⁴⁰³ He also actively participated in the planning of the voyage of 1521, and was kept informed of Spain's New World treasures through his contacts in Europe.⁴⁰⁴

Antonia McLean has argued that patronage and employment of humanist intellectuals continued throughout, and probably increased, during the latter years of Henry VIII's reign, particularly in the Protestant group around the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and Queen Katherine Parr.⁴⁰⁵ Cranmer had been educated at Cambridge, and there he fully embraced the humanist movement as represented by Erasmus.⁴⁰⁶ Cranmer developed ideas of democratic principles of equal or universal education for males and discussed these during his time at

⁴⁰¹ James McConica "The Rise of the Undergraduate College" T. H. Aston, general editor, *The History of The University of Oxford*, vol. III, *The Collegiate University*, James McConica, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.1-69, 29-32; McLean 49-51; Leader, 324-5.

⁴⁰² McLean, 125, 130.

⁴⁰³ Dowling, 119-22.

⁴⁰⁴ A prime example of this is the letter from Richard Sampson, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield of June 10, 1523. In this letter, Sampson informs Wolsey of both the treasure expected to arrive in Spain as well as the news that the French had recently taken a ship coming from the Indies with 160,000 ducats for the Emperor, along with other treasure belonging to the Emperor. He writes that the Emperor has offered half of the treasure for its recovery. This not only demonstrates that Wolsey was kept informed of what was happening, but it also demonstrates the flow of information regarding the Indies treasure. For the Emperor to have offered a general reward for the ship's recovery he would have had to have spread the word of such a reward. BL, Cotton Vespasian C/II f. 140.

⁴⁰⁵ McLean, 43.

⁴⁰⁶ Cranmer had at least seventeen volumes of Erasmus in his library. Selwyn, lxxiv.

Cambridge. Later, as a school founder, he insisted that poor boys had just as much right to a humanist education as the sons of gentlemen.⁴⁰⁷ As Archbishop of Canterbury he declared that “Poor men’s children, are many times endued with more singular gifts of nature, which are also the gifts of God, as with eloquence, memory, apt pronounciation, sobriety, with suchlike, and also commonly more given to apply their study, than is the gentleman’s son delicately educated.”⁴⁰⁸ Cranmer obtained provision for 50 poor scholars at the Canterbury school.⁴⁰⁹ In 1546, Cranmer’s former chaplain, Thomas Langley, published a translation of part of an earlier work of Polidore Vergil, *De Inventoribus Rerum*, under the title, *An abridgement of the notable woorke of P. Vergil*, for the profit of “artificers and other persons not expert in Latin.”⁴¹⁰ The translation of works deemed to be important into English for the use of the common reader was a trend started by Lady Beaufort. It appears to be consistent among those connected to Henry’s court with a passion for learning and fostering education. Helen Wallis has pointed out that most of the manuscripts made for English patrons at this time were created either by Flemish illuminators or by English artists who had been trained in the Flemish manner, demonstrating yet another continental tie between the English educated elite and continental knowledge and sources.⁴¹¹ As discussed in the next chapter, John Rastell would translate into English several works of law, history and literature for the betterment of the common Englishman.

Thomas Cranmer’s library became famous during his lifetime for its size and the breadth of topics. By 1553, the library had grown to an estimated 500 printed books and 100 manuscript

⁴⁰⁷ McLean, 62; Dowling, 125.

⁴⁰⁸ Quote as found in Dowling, 125.

⁴⁰⁹ Dowling, 125.

⁴¹⁰ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 16.

⁴¹¹ Wallis, 10.

books.⁴¹² Unfortunately the library fell prey to the purge of Protestant literature during the reign of Mary I, being forfeit to the crown upon Cranmer's arrest and subsequently divided and sold off. The vast majority of the collection appears to have joined the library of John Lumley, First Baron Lumley, with roughly 575 books coming down through this library through multiple acquisitions. However, as the Lumleys were strong Catholics, the books that survived in the Lumley library include very few Protestant works, indicating that a fairly significant portion of the library has likely been lost.⁴¹³ David Selwyn, who has tracked Cranmer's books across the globe, states that it is quite possible that the total number of printed books in Cranmer's library may have been in excess of 700 with a wide range of topics.⁴¹⁴ Of the nearly 600 books that have been positively identified as belonging to Cranmer, only two are in English. The rest are in the learned languages. He also had a fair number of geographical works, including seven different cosmographies and geographies.⁴¹⁵

This was a court that valued learning and had strong ties with the leading networks of knowledge that spanned the continent. Through these networks the court stayed updated on the latest thoughts, new information, new translations of important works, the academic debates taking place, and new publications. These networks were intimately linked to key members of Henry's close circle and his household. Henry and several of his wives valued learning and knowledge and enjoyed reading and academic debates. This is not a court that would have blatantly ignored the discoveries taking place on the other side of the Atlantic. Rather, they

⁴¹² David G. Selwyn, *The Library of Thomas Cranmer*, 3rd series, vol. I (Oxford: The Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1996), xxi.

⁴¹³ Selwyn traces the different acquisitions that brought Cranmer's books into the Lumley library and then traces these books to their deposit in the Old Royal Library in the 17th century. From here duplicates were routinely sold off and a significant portion of Cranmer's library has been scattered across the globe. Selwyn, xxi-xli.

⁴¹⁴ Selwyn, lix.

⁴¹⁵ Selwyn, lxxvii-lxix.

would have incorporated these discussions into ones already taking place, as More did in *Utopia*. As it became unquestionably clear that the Americas represented a new land previously unknown, with great expanses of land and people not yet claimed by any Christian prince, these discussions would have impacted concepts of trading rights and the duties of a Christian prince. These discussions and debates were not reliant upon English translations of accounts of the New World. Despite the limited market for English books, Henry's reign saw a rapid growth of the book market in England.

England's Book Culture

Henry VIII's reign marked a turning point for English book culture, one in which reading changed from a public to a private activity. Whereas the libraries of Henry VII contained books which were large and ostentatious, designed to impress viewers with the wealth of their owner and to be read aloud, the books of Henry VIII and his wives were often small and designed to be read privately.⁴¹⁶ The portrait of Henry VIII in his Psalter depicts Henry as an arm-chair reader, sitting in a chair in his bed chamber reading the psalter with two additional books haphazardly stacked at his feet.⁴¹⁷ In this depiction Henry is reading alone, without attendants and for no apparent reason other than for pleasure or devotion. The inclusion of the two additional books on the floor gives the impression that Henry enjoyed having books around him, or that he read multiple books at a time. This image illustrates Henry VIII's bookishness, especially as he aged, becoming an armchair reader in later life. This is also illustrative of the cultural change occurring as reading shifted from a public to a private experience. This is also illustrated by the

⁴¹⁶ For descriptions of the books belonging to Henry VII, Henry VIII and his wives see Carley, *The Books of King Henry VIII and his Wives*. For a discussion of Henry VII's books see Alexander, 171-2.

⁴¹⁷ BL Royal 2 A xvi. Henry VIII's Psalter was written and illuminated in 1540 by Jean Mallard, a Frenchman who had left the court of Francis I for Henry's court. Henry VIII's Psalter has been labeled by the British Library as Mallard's "most lavish production." See figure 1.

Duke of Norfolk who is recorded as having stated that he could not fall asleep without having a book to read in bed.⁴¹⁸ This change in book culture, during the first part of the sixteenth century in England, is illustrated and even encouraged by the Royal house and the nobility of the time, being furthered not just by the example they set, but by the value they placed on their books. David Starkey argues that the king, along with his first wife Catherine of Aragon, and his last wife, Katherine Parr, played a key role in the social change from public reading to private consumption as readers, writers, and collectors.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Starkey, Preface to Carley, 8.

⁴¹⁹ David Starkey from his preface to Carley, 8. Carley also makes this argument, see footnote 360.



Figure 2-1 Portrait of Henry VIII in his Psalter, depicting him reading his psalter as an armchair reader, 1540.

BL Royal 2 A xvi. Image copied from the British Library online gallery <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/henryviii/musspowor/henryspalter/largeimage93133.html> accessed 12/22/2017.

During the second half of his reign, Henry's favorite palace became Westminster, later known as Whitehall. An inventory of the upper library at Westminster Palace lists 910 books.⁴²⁰ In addition to these, a post-mortem inventory states that there were additional books at Westminster Palace in the wardrobe, the secret study and the little study next to the King's old bed chamber.⁴²¹ Included in the list of named books is a copy of *Sphera mundi*, Pomponius Mela, Euclid's *Geometria* and Pliny's *naturali historia*. Henry made sure that no matter where he was there were books to be read to satisfy every curiosity. Each of his palaces had extensive libraries, though not all have surviving inventories to allow a glimpse into what Henry and his court read. There is a surviving inventory of the library at Windsor, one of Henry's favorite hunting lodges. This library contained forty-three boarded books, seven pasted books and three paper books.⁴²² The boarded books would have been older manuscript books, however, pasted books was a newer binding technique. These, along with the three paper books, indicate that Henry kept this library up to date. If he kept the library at his hunting lodge up to date, then it can be assumed that he also maintained the libraries at his main palaces. Henry had a library at each of his residences; with sizable collections at Westminster, Greenwich, Hampton Court and Woodstock. While there is no surviving inventory for Greenwich, Henry had a library built onto the palace that contained seven desks or combined lecterns and bookshelves with 329 books arranged by color.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Carley, 31.

⁴²¹ Hayward's transcription of the inventory of Westminster Palace (Whitehall Palace) puts the total books at 915, Carley puts the total at 910. Hayward, 23; Carley, 34.

⁴²² Carley, 24-5.

⁴²³ Carley, 24-6.

Henry VIII was well educated in languages and could read French, Latin, Italian and English, being fluent in the first two.⁴²⁴ His libraries contain books in all of these languages, with the addition of some Greek texts, though it does not appear that Henry could read Greek at the time, and a few texts in Spanish which might be attributed to his first wife Catherine. The library at Richmond Palace is recorded as having roughly 125 books on a partial list that has been found at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Almost all of these titles are in French. There is also evidence to suggest that Henry had a “standing order” with the prominent Parisian publisher and book-seller Antoine Vérard, who published religious, chivalric, classical, and historical texts at the request of the French Royale family and nobility.⁴²⁵

Despite this social change in English book culture, England was slow to develop its own printing industry, looking instead to the continent to satisfy the growing demand for books. By 1557 there were not more than a dozen master printers working in England outside of London.⁴²⁶ These printers were subjected to the control and censorship of the ecclesiastical authorities, as all printing and importing of books had to receive a license from either the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London. S. A. Syme has stated that there was a growth in governmental control of the English printed trade under Henry VIII to the point that the printing industry turned into “a closely regulated monopoly subject to the wishes of the Crown.”⁴²⁷ Printers who faced too much censorship, or were exiled for defying censorship, often turned to

⁴²⁴ Carley, 21-22.

⁴²⁵ Carley, 26, 44-5.

⁴²⁶ Parker, 9.

⁴²⁷ S. A. Syme, “The Regulation of the English Book Trade 1484 to 1547” *The Journal of Library History* (1966-1972), vol. 3, (Jan., 1968), pp. 32-38, 32. This regulation of the book trade was developed through a series of Acts, the strongest of which were in 1528 and 1534. C. Paul Christianson argues that these Acts were likely a product of the religious controversies in the late 1520s and 1530s. C. Paul Christianson, “The rise of London’s book-trade” Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol III, 1400-1557, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 128-147, 146.

European presses to print their books or moved their own business to Europe.⁴²⁸ To get around this censorship of the English presses many turned to the continent.

Anne Boleyn was known to read books in French and frequently requested books be shipped to her from France. These books were often religious contraband, that had been banned in England as well as France.⁴²⁹ The fact that Anne had to request her books from continental shops represents the limited availability of printed works in the learned languages, published by English presses, and is illustrative of the fact that many were forced to turn to Europe for their books. As mentioned in chapter one, in 1479-80 three major book importers brought about fourteen hundred books into England in one year.⁴³⁰ As the literacy rate increased among the merchants and well-born in England during the sixteenth century, it can safely be assumed that the number of books imported from European presses continued to increase in number. The English book market in the sixteenth century was unique in that it was dependent on imports. Only somewhere around 14,500 books were physically printed in England before 1600. Of those a significant portion were printed for official purposes, such as proclamations and edicts. There was virtually no printing of Latin works on English presses.⁴³¹ Paul Needham argues that the importation of early printed books into England was “not an interesting sideline, but a primary factor in the history of the English book-trade.”⁴³² Thus, for the majority of genres English

⁴²⁸ McLean, 25-7; Syme, 32.

⁴²⁹ Starkey demonstrates that Boleyn was not alone in this, that there was a profitable smuggling operation happening between England and France, particularly with Oxford and Cambridge Universities as religious material was smuggled into the country and sold to interested fellows and students at the Universities. Starkey states that for every book that was found and burned another dozen or so entered the country. Anne personally intervened in at least one instance to protect Thomas Forman, a Fellow of Queen’s College, Cambridge, from Wolsey’s prosecution for the purchase of contraband books. Starkey, *Six Wives*, 370-75.

⁴³⁰ Parker, 9.

⁴³¹ Jennifer Winters, “the English Provincial Book Trade: Bookseller Stock-Lists, C. 1520-1640,” vol. 1, Diss. Submitted to the University of St. Andrews, 2012, 25.

⁴³² Paul Needham, “The customs rolls as documents for the printed-book trade in England” Lotte Hellinga

readers had to look to Europe for their books. Margaret Lane Ford's quantitative studies have shown that at the beginning of the sixteenth century Germany, the Netherlands and Italy dominated the trade in books to England; however, France quickly rose in prominence as the century progressed.⁴³³ These imported books were in the learned languages, such as German, Italian, French, and Latin, the very languages in which travel narratives and geographies were being published.

While the figures cited above do not represent new information, this reliance on the continental book trade for the acquisition of books in England appears to be under-evaluated by some historians who have discussed England's interest in the New World discoveries and travel narratives at the time. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, some historians have argued that there was little to no interest in England at this time in New World discoveries and that this can be seen through the lack of English translations or publications on the topic. In this manner, the lack of English editions of travel literature has been used to argue that there was little to no interest regarding the New World in England until Hakluyt made it popular with his publications. However, as has been demonstrated, there was limited printing in England during this time and book sellers were reliant upon continental presses to obtain the majority of their stock. This did not present a problem for the educated elite in England, as the majority of the literate would likely have been able to read in at least one of the learned languages.

During the sixteenth century the educated elite, such as the successful merchants and scholars, as well as noblemen, were, in general, able to read multiple languages, with Latin, the

and J.B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. III, 1400-1557, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 148-163, 148.

⁴³³ Margaret Lane Ford, "Importation of printed books into England and Scotland" Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. III, 1400-1557, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 179-201, 182-3.

language of learning, the most commonly known language.⁴³⁴ John Day was multilingual, having extensive dealings on the continent which required him to read and write in Spanish, as demonstrated by his letter to Columbus written in Spanish. In his letter he states that he had hoped to share with the Admiral the book *Invetio Fortunata*, but could not find it so he is only sending the “other book of Marco Polo.”⁴³⁵ As Polo’s *Travels* had not yet been translated into English, Day would have had to have been able to read it in another language, likely Italian or Latin. *Invetio Fortunata* was written by an English friar in the fourteenth century in Latin and contained geographical information on the North Atlantic.⁴³⁶ His familiarity with this work indicates that Day could read Latin.

Robert Thorne and his fellow merchants were almost all certainly bilingual if not multilingual. Thorne’s business activities in Spain required fluency in the language, which he was as he lived in Spain for many years and had a family there. Thorne was well versed enough in Spanish that he offered to help Dr. Edward Lee on his diplomatic mission in April 1526.⁴³⁷ It appears that Thorne was familiar with Enciso’s *Sum of Geography*, basing some of his arguments and his map of 1527 off of the work, demonstrating that he could read Spanish texts.⁴³⁸ He also had dealings in Portugal and was likely at least passable, if not proficient in Portuguese. Roger Barlow was also proficient in the learned languages as well as Castilian Spanish, as seen by his personal translation of Enciso’s *Sum of Geography*.⁴³⁹ An Elizabeth

⁴³⁴ McLean, 22.

⁴³⁵ Day’s letter, 226-7.

⁴³⁶ Ruddock demonstrates that Day was well educated and appears to have traveled in the Mediterranean and in Italy. Ruddock, “John Day of Bristol,” 229.

⁴³⁷ BL Cotton MS. Vespasian C. III, f. 232.

⁴³⁸ For a discussion of Thorne’s similarities to Enciso, especially Enciso’s map see Taylor’s introduction to Roger Barlow, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, introduced and edited by E.G.R. Taylor, (1931), (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), xv.

⁴³⁹ Roger Barlow, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, (1535-43), BL Royal MS. 18 B XXVIII.

Withypoll, the daughter of a merchant and the sister of Edmund Withypoll, whom Lupset is said to have considered as much his son by education as he would a biological son, married an Emanuel Lucar, possibly the same Lucar who worked for Robert Thorne. Upon Elizabeth's untimely death in 1537 her husband erected a memorial to her on which he praised not only her piety and skills with needlework and music, but also her skills with algorism for accounts, her ability to write "three manner hands," and her ability to read, write and speak in Spanish, Italian, English and Latin.⁴⁴⁰

Upon his death, John Rastell owned books in French, Latin, Greek and English, indicating that he could read all of these languages.⁴⁴¹ The fact that he translated several items from French and Latin into English demonstrates his proficiency with the languages. The inventory of Rastell's goods, taken in 1536, appears to mostly reflect items that were related to his printing business and not necessarily his personal library, as several of the items listed are in sheets or unbound.⁴⁴² Rastell likely kept stock in these languages for sale, indicating that his customer base could read these languages. Rastell's inventory included some scientific books, including works by the astrologer Johann Engel and a copy of Euclid's geometry.⁴⁴³ Thomas Cranmer's library, which was famed at its time for its breadth of subject material and size

⁴⁴⁰ Hogrefe, 213-14.

⁴⁴¹ TNA Prob. 2/692, The Inventory of John Rastell.

⁴⁴² R.J. Roberts points out that there are surprisingly few works of the Protestant faith reflected on the inventory and suggests that William Rastell might have thinned out his father's collection before the inventory could be taken. This suggests that the inventory does not reflect the full scope of Rastell's library and indeed might only reflect what was in his shop at the time. R.J. Roberts, "John Rastell's Inventory of 1538" *The Library*, vol. s6-1, 1979, pp. 34-42, 40. Printers often maintained stock that was not bound until purchased, this enabled them to do custom work on the binding and to "exploit the retail sale of books in their own shops." Christianson, 143.

⁴⁴³ TNA Prob. 2/692.

appears to have only contained two books printed in English, the rest were all in the learned languages.⁴⁴⁴

The inventory of John White, gentleman and merchant of Bristol, dated April 29, 1559 reveals White was in possession of several books in both English and Latin, as well as several large books of scripture and the law and more than twenty small books in English and Latin of diverse sorts that he kept at his counting house.⁴⁴⁵ The stock list for Neville Mores, a bookseller in York, dated late spring of 1538 contains 126 books with seventy-one different titles.⁴⁴⁶ Of the seventy-one different titles only sixty-two can be positively identified. Of these sixty-two titles for which the language has been identified, fifty-eight were in Latin, two were in Dutch and two in French. None are in English.⁴⁴⁷ This list is significant in two ways. First, it is one of the earliest known surviving stock lists for a deceased English bookseller to include books, not just tools.⁴⁴⁸ This offers a rare glimpse into the items that an English bookseller considered worthwhile to purchase and maintain in his shop. According to Jennifer Winter's research, Mores is known to have imported a much larger shipment of books in 1520 than what is represented by this list, and he lived in a large, well-furnished house with at least ten rooms, a chimney, which was still rare in York at the time, and a stable, indicating that Mores was a fairly successful bookseller, able to sell a sizeable quantity of books in a relatively short time.⁴⁴⁹ Secondly, this list reveals that even outside of the major metropolises, such as London, continental

⁴⁴⁴ Selwyn, lviii.

⁴⁴⁵ BRO AC/36074/61 "Inventory of John White of Bristol, in possession of Roger Jones, executor as well as inventory of goods in possession of Giles White executor April 29, 1559." John White is described as a gentleman in a bond for £40 in 1556. BRO AC/WH/2/7a. He is also described as such in BRO AC/WH/2/8.

⁴⁴⁶ D.M. Palliser, and D.G. Selwyn, 'The Stock of a York Stationer, 1538', *The Library* 27 (1972), pp. 207-219; Winters, 29-32.

⁴⁴⁷ Winters, 34.

⁴⁴⁸ Palliser and Selwyn, 207.

⁴⁴⁹ Winters, 31-33.

books printed in the learned languages were in demand. York had a population of roughly 8,000 people in 1548, making it the seventh largest city in England at the time.⁴⁵⁰ While this is by no means a small village, it is a provincial location and reveals that the literate in provincial areas consumed books in the learned languages, not in English. Winters demonstrates the relative value of each of the texts, showing that books printed in Germany and Switzerland were the most affordable, while books printed in London were by far the most expensive, being worth more than double that of the average price of books printed in France and at least five times that of the average price of books printed in Italy.⁴⁵¹

An analysis of the book lists contained in wills and probate records from Oxford further demonstrates that the English purchased their books from the continent and mostly in the learned languages. An analysis conducted of the book lists numbered 5-82 in the *Private Libraries in Renaissance England* (PLRE) reveals that the majority of the books listed were printed in Latin on the continent, only a small portion of the books listed could have been printed in England and an even smaller number of the books were in English. While the PLRE lists analyzed are limited to the city of Oxford from 1507-1569, they are comprehensive for the area and offer a unique and valuable glimpse into what the book owners in Oxford purchased and valued enough to list in their wills and inventories.⁴⁵² Admittedly the demographics represented in these lists are different from the subject of this dissertation, as the majority of the lists belong to scholars, however, given the breadth of time covered by the PLRE collection and the comprehensive

⁴⁵⁰ Winters, 29; Palliser and Selwyn, 210.

⁴⁵¹ Winters, 36.

⁴⁵² PLRE vol. II-III.

nature of this collection, it does offer valuable insight into the purchasing trends in England over the course of the first seventy years of the sixteenth century.

The contents of the lists were divided into subcategories as follows. The first made up of books that could have been printed in either England or on the continent, but there is not enough information to determine where the book was printed. These were then divided by those printed in English and in Latin. The next category consists of books printed in England, then divided into those printed in English and in Latin. The rest of the books were printed on the continent and are divided into categories based on language; falling into the categories of Greek, Hebrew, French, Aramaic or other languages. All of the remaining books fall into the category of books printed on the continent in Latin, which is labeled “Latin publications.” The results of my analysis are illustrated by the following chart and graph.

Table 2-1 Break down of books by languages. This chart illustrates the ratio of books printed in different languages, as well as printed on the continent or in England. From this chart it is clear that the majority of the books recorded were printed on the continent in Latin. The information needed for this chart was gathered from PLRE vol. II-III.

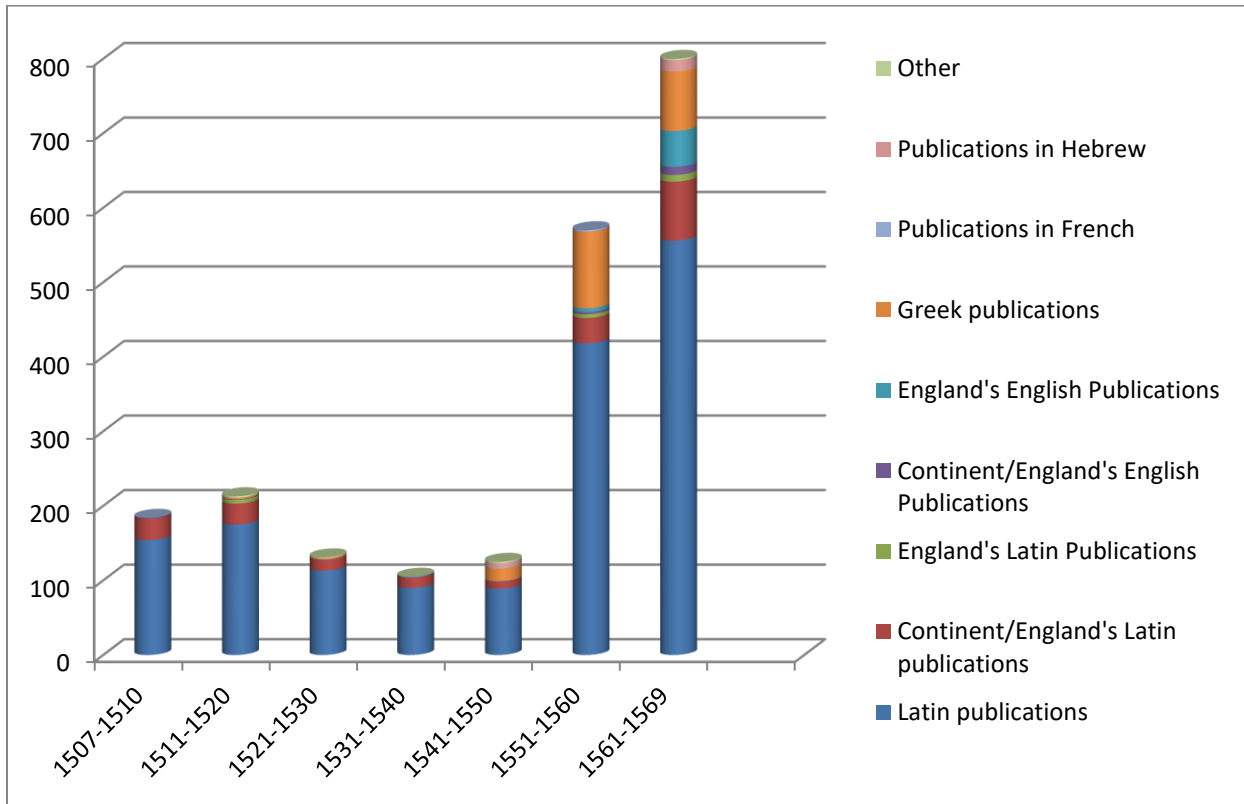


Table 2-2 Numerical chart demonstrating the breakdown of the books in different languages, printed on the continent or in England. Statistical information gathered from PLRE vol. II-III.

	# of books	Continent or English Latin Publication	English Latin Publication	Continent or English Publication in English	England's English Publications	Books in Greek	Books in French	Books in Hebrew	Books in Aramaic	Other
1507-1510	185	29	1		1					
1511-1520	211	28	5	1		2				
1521-1530	131	14		1		2		1		
1531-1540	105	14			1					
1541-155-	125	9		1		17	1	6	1	1
1551-1560	570	34	5	3	5	103	2			
1561-1569	800	79	9	11	48	80		15	2	1
Totals for 1507-1569	2127	207	20	17	55	204	3	22	3	2

As is clearly illustrated through the graphs above, the vast majority of books purchased by the seventy-seven men whose book lists have survived, were printed on the continent in Latin. Out of 2,127 books the maximum number that could have been produced on English presses is only 299. Of these only 72 books were in English. The books lists contained 204 titles of books printed in Greek, demonstrating that, for the educated elite at least, Latin was the mainstay of publications, with 207 titles, and Greek texts were second to Latin. Both were far more popular than the vernacular. Given these numbers, it is clear that the lack of English translations of a book does not mean that the English were not purchasing that book in another language. The

educated elite clearly preferred, either for financial reasons or convenience, to purchase books in the learned languages.

The subject matter of the books on the lists analyzed is, for the most part, what one would expect from a group largely made up of scholars from Oxford. The majority are theological or religious tracts, with a large scattering of books on Aristotle and his work. There are also a significant number of grammars and dictionaries. The majority of the Hebrew books are dictionaries. There are also a fair number of medicinal books, as is expected. Along with these are several copies of John Holywood's *De Spaera Mundi*, the thirteenth century introduction to the basic elements of astronomy. There are also two copies of More's *Utopia* included in the lists, with the first showing up in 1553 in the book list of Thomas Simon.⁴⁵³

While the majority of the men making up this analysis were scholars, the few who were not scholars purchased books in a similar pattern; the one exception is John Shoesmith. Shoesmith's occupation is unknown; however, he was likely at least marginally successful in his profession, since for he lists a library of eleven books in his will of 1563. All were printed in English, and the majority were printed on English presses. However, this is the outlier in the study. While merchants and the educated elite around Henry VIII's court may or may not have held the same interest in Aristotle as the students at Oxford, it should not be assumed that they did not read a particular book simply because it had not yet been translated into English. As this analysis of the PLRE lists demonstrates, and as the book list of Mores reveals, Englishmen were buying and reading books in Latin. This should not be surprising, for Latin was the language of the international community of scholars.

⁴⁵³ PLRE 65.115. vol. II, 241.

Throughout the Middle Ages the educated elite had been trained in the “learned” languages of scholars. Part of the reason for this was the international community of scholars that developed during the late Middle Ages as Europeans shared their knowledge, particularly their knowledge of geography, exploration and history.⁴⁵⁴ Jonathan Hart states that “This was as true of the French and English as it was of the Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, Dutch, and other nationalities ... One central aspect was geography.”⁴⁵⁵ Rather than keeping geographic and exploration knowledge locked away, classifying it as a state secret, as Spain increasingly did during the sixteenth century, scholars shared knowledge. This was illustrated in chapter one through the discussion of John Day’s letter and map as a possible source for Juan de la Cosa’s map. McLean argues that Latin remained the language of learning in the early sixteenth century and that when books began to be widely printed in the vernacular it fractured the international community of scholars.⁴⁵⁶ When More published *Utopia* in 1516, he published it in Latin, not English, indicating that his targeted audience was well versed in Latin.⁴⁵⁷ Therefore, it can be expected that many, if not all of those, within More’s circle of influence would have been able to read Latin. Vives pointed out the value of having a common language for conducting business and scholarship and expressed fear that the growing popularity of printing in the vernacular, while an essential initial step to the development of a man’s power of rational and coherent thought, might lead to the abandonment of Latin, which would lead to great confusion and a

⁴⁵⁴ Hart, 14-5.

⁴⁵⁵ Hart, 15.

⁴⁵⁶ McLean, 22-24. A similar argument is made by T.E. Earle who argues that for “at least a hundred years after the arrival of Protestantism in England, Portugal and England shared and contributed to an intellectual heritage, made the more accessible because it was mediated through Latin, the universal language.” He then argues that this allowed England and Portugal to contribute to an “intellectual community between scholars in Portugal and in England.” T. F. Earle, *Portuguese Writers and English Readers: Books by Portuguese Writers Printed before 1640 in the Libraries of Oxford and Cambridge*, Third Series, vol. VI (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2009), xvi.

⁴⁵⁷ Hart, 35.

separation and estrangement of men.⁴⁵⁸ The culture of an international community of scholars which shared information, especially of geography, which existed in the early sixteenth century, indicates that such profound academic discussions as the discovery of the New World would have been carried to scholars across international and language barriers.

In addition to being able to read Latin in order to communicate with the international community of scholars, it is very likely that many would have also possessed the ability to read German, as the German provinces in this period had become a center of learning.⁴⁵⁹ John Rastell, More's brother-in-law and a member of his circle, had access to the best Continental knowledge and drew heavily for his *Interlude of the IIII Elements* on the works of Martin Waldsemüller and Gregorius Reisch, both of whom published extensively in German as well as Latin.⁴⁶⁰ Rastell also owned books in French, Latin, Greek and English.⁴⁶¹ As demonstrated in the next chapter, several of the references Rastell makes in his poem also indicate that he was very familiar with the information brought back by Amerigo Vespucci. Thomas More indicates that the accounts of Vespucci were well known in England by 1516, despite the fact that they had not yet been translated into English. In the opening scene of *Utopia*, when Peter Gilles, a printer from Antwerp and good friend of More and Erasmus, introduces More to Raphael, Gilles states that Raphael had "joined himselfe in company with Americke Vespuce; and in the three last

⁴⁵⁸ Vives, pp. 14, 90-93, 103, 110.

⁴⁵⁹ Elizabeth M. Nugent, "Sources of John Rastell's the Nature of the Four Elements" *PMLA*, vol. 57. (March., 1941), pp. 74-88. 75.

⁴⁶⁰ Nugent, pp. 75-9. These will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. M.E. Borish, "The Source and Intention of *The Four Elements*" *Studies in Philology*. 35, (Jan, 1938), 149-63, 151. This is also argued by Parker who states that Rastell had "access to the best Continental knowledge, as is evident by the direct relationship that has been found between his play and the major early sixteenth-century works on geography, cosmography and exploration." Parker, 24.

⁴⁶¹ TNA, Prob. 2/692.

voyages of those four that be now in print, and abroad in every mans hands.”⁴⁶² By describing Vespucci’s voyages as the ones “in every mans hands,” More indicates they were well known throughout the educated world, including England, despite the lack of an English translation.⁴⁶³ It stands to reason, therefore, that More’s circle of friends were aware of and discussed the discovery of the Americas and the potentials that lay therein. Margaret Lane Ford’s study of private ownership of printed books shows that close groups, such as circles of friends or family, often owned the same books and circulated books amongst themselves.⁴⁶⁴ This, added to the fact that More’s circle was known for their intellectual debates on topics of interest and their shared conclusions on so many topics, points to the fact that they read the same books and would have discussed them. The argument that the learned elite in England, specifically those who were part of Henry VIII’s court, were not interested in the discoveries of the New World because of the lack of publications in English, or on English presses, regarding these discoveries is misleading.⁴⁶⁵ These men were more than willing to read in other languages and did, in fact, read much of the leading literature published in Europe.

This trend of acquiring books from the continent continued during the mid-sixteenth century. Many of the leading proponents of Atlantic expansion during Elizabeth’s reign acquired large portions of their libraries from the continent. For example, William Cecil, the first Baron

⁴⁶² Thomas More, *Utopia*, (1516), (London: Printed by B. Alsop & T. Fawcet, and are to be sold by Wil: Sheares, at his shop in Bedford-street in Coven-garden neere the New Exchange, 1639), 7.

⁴⁶³ Amerigo Vespucci’s letters describing his voyages saw sixty editions between 1502 and 1529 throughout Europe, being published in various cities in what is today Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Czechoslovakia. Thirty-seven editions were in the vernacular, half of which were in German. Dickason points out that this reflects the financial as well as the scholarly interests in the discoveries. She goes on to argue that one of the best-known editions appeared in Waldsemüller’s *Cosmographiae Introductio* of 1507. Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage: And the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 7-8.

⁴⁶⁴ Margaret Lane Ford, “Private ownership of printed books: Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. III, 1400-1557, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 205-228, 213-14.

⁴⁶⁵ Jonathan Hart has stated that there was “little market for the printing of travel narratives in English,” Hart, 34.

Burghley, bought seventy books from the London bookseller, William Seres from January 1554 to December 1555. These included a half dozen on cosmography, geography and navigation.⁴⁶⁶ Among Cecil's books are cosmographies printed on the continent such as, Pomponius Mela printed in Venice (1482), the Roman edition (1490), and the Venice (1548) edition of Ptolemy, Gemma Frisius' cosmography printed in Antwerp (1544), Rembert Dodeons' edition printed in Antwerp (1548) and the Sebastian Munster (1550) edition.⁴⁶⁷ Likewise, Richard Eden based his works, which are the first English translations of travel narratives of the Americas, on the publications of Peter Martyr and Sebastian Münster. He could not have done this if he did not have access to these books in England, despite the fact that they had yet to be published there.

The argument that the English were unaware of the discoveries in the Atlantic World, or at best uninterested in them, due to the lack of English editions of travel narratives and geographical material is a misleading argument. The English were not isolated from the current academic discussions and debates taking place on the continent. Rather, they were very well connected to these academic circles and through the network of academic discussions they stayed relevant and became leading voices in many of the discussions. To say that the English could not have been interested because they did not translate the travel narratives into English is to misunderstand the English book market at the time. The English purchased their books mostly from the continent in the learned languages. The lack of English translations or publications of travel narratives means little in this discussion. The English were well read and through the networks of knowledge they represented some of the most informed and brightest minds of the

⁴⁶⁶ R. A. Skelton, and John Summerson. *A Description of Maps and Architectural Drawings in the Collection made by William Cecil First Baron Burghley now at Hatfield House*. With a forward by the Marquess of Salisbury. Printed for Presentation to the Members of the Roxburghe Club. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 100.

⁴⁶⁷ For a more detailed breakdown of Cecil's library see Skelton and Summerson.

time. Thomas More's circle and Henry's Court did discuss the New World discoveries, and Henry's court was well aware of the new cartographic discover.

Chapter 3

Imagining the New World: More, Rastell, Rotz and Eden

Historians have often pointed to Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616) as the “intellectual progenitor of the Empire,” the first to make public and popular the call for English colonization of North America.⁴⁶⁸ It is to Hakluyt that historians often look for the origin of English arguments for colonization as a way to expand England’s territory, find new lands rich with resources for the English people, and to bring glory to God in the great struggle against the Catholic Empire of Spain. It is to Hakluyt historians look to find the explanation for the unique “ideas and outlook of the Elizabethans,” which led to England’s famous maritime exploits and the growth of a North Atlantic Protestant Empire.⁴⁶⁹ Historians have argued that the main reason that the English took so long to become interested in the Atlantic World after the voyages of John Cabot is that Cabot’s initial discovery revealed a cold, foggy region with no obvious source of wealth, and that it was not until Hakluyt revealed a land of plenty and added a Protestant evangelical twist to his calls for colonization that the English would truly become interested in the Atlantic World. This explanation of the English Atlantic, however, only tells half of the story. Hakluyt was not the first to make these public calls for colonization. In fact, they were made throughout the sixteenth century, originating in the early days of the reign of King Henry VIII, among Thomas More’s circle of friends, before England became a Protestant nation. The discussions that took place within the More circle reveal that the English did have access to travel narratives, geographies and cosmographies being published on the continent in the learned

⁴⁶⁸ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 2000), 70.

⁴⁶⁹ J.A Williamson, from his introduction to George Bruner Parks, *Richard Hakluyt and the English Voyages*, James A. Williamson ed., (New York: New York American Geographical Society, 1928), xiv.

languages. These discussions reveal the concepts forming among the educated elite about the Americas. Paired with the available cartographic knowledge of the Americas, it is possible to tease out the possible imaginings of the New World present at Henry's court that helped shape the imaginings of the next generation of Englishmen, represented by Richard Eden, who in turn, shaped the concepts and goals of the Elizabethans.

Discussing Thomas More and English colonization might seem a bit out of place for this master statesman who lost his life for refusing to compromise his religious beliefs, however, when one looks at his family life it becomes evident that More was linked to discussions and even attempts at colonization. More's brother-in-law, John Rastell, was the first Englishman to publish in English an argument for the colonization of North America in his 1519 play, *A Merry Interlude of the IIII Elements*. Rastell and More appear to have been fairly close, often dining together and sharing a close circle of friends. Both More and his father invested financially in Rastell's attempted colonizing voyage of 1517.⁴⁷⁰ Rastell's children were close in age to More's children and Rastell's sons, John and William, seem to have spent quite a bit of time as children with their uncle. William Rastell sided with his uncle on religious issues, straining his relationship with both his father and his brother. As an adult, William collaborated with his uncle and his cousin, John More, on several publication projects and eventually married Winifred Clement, the daughter of Thomas More's ward, Margaret Giggs.⁴⁷¹ Joan Rastell married John Heywood, the dramatist and epigrammatist who was one of More's close friends.⁴⁷² More's nephew, John Rastell the younger, embarked on a venture to North America

⁴⁷⁰ Hogrefe, 29-30.

⁴⁷¹ Helen Miller, "Rastell, William (c. 1508-65), of London" ed. S.T. Bindoff, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558*, (Boydell and Brewer, 1982).

⁴⁷² Routh, 144.

in 1536 with the likely motivation for the voyage being the seeking of a suitable location for a colony.⁴⁷³ These family connections will be explored further in the next chapter.

While *Utopia* is a political satire, it also offers insight into the imaginings that More and his circle of friends might have shared regarding the possibilities of the New World. More created an image of the New World as inhabited with peaceful, innocent people. He described a society free of private property, living at one with the land. The people do not regard the land as their property, stating “they count themselves rather the good husbands, then the owners of their lands.”⁴⁷⁴ Nor do they worry about fencing in their gardens or locking their doors, having instead doors that do not latch “so easie to be opened, that they will follow the least drawing of a finger . . . Who so will, may goe in, for there is nothing within the houses that is private, or any mans own.”⁴⁷⁵ Nor is there a need for currency, as one simply has to ask for the resource or equipment needed and it will be given.⁴⁷⁶ More went on to state that the Utopians do not value pearls or jewels, which are seen as trinkets for infants to wear, and use gold for the humblest of objects, such as chains to bind slaves.⁴⁷⁷

This is very similar to Vespucci’s account of his first voyage in which he describes one of the Amerindian groups he encountered as living free of the demands of private property and borders, for when they go to war it “is not for lust of dominion, nor of extending their frontiers, nor for inordinate covetousness, but for some ancient enmity which in by-gone times arose

⁴⁷³ For an account of this voyage see Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages and Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*, (London: 1600), Published by the Hakluyt Society in twelve volumes, (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904), vol. VIII, pp. 3-6.

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas More, *The Common Wealth of Utopia: Containing a Learned and pleasant Discourse of the best state of a Publike Weale, as it is found in the Government of the new Ile called Utopia*, (1516), (London: B. Alsop & T. Fawcet, 1639), 112.

⁴⁷⁵ More, 122.

⁴⁷⁶ More, 116.

⁴⁷⁷ More, 169-171.

amongst them.”⁴⁷⁸ They are very free in giving gifts, and in asking for gifts in return, a fact which might be interpreted as meaning that they had very little concept of private property and openly shared their goods.⁴⁷⁹ Vespucci stated that the manner of living appeared to be Epicurean, as their “dwellings are in common,” and in one place, “we saw a village of only thirteen houses where there were four thousand souls.”⁴⁸⁰ This is very similar, if a bit more extreme, to More’s description of communal living in Utopia, when he stated that in the farming villages each house accommodated at least forty adults.⁴⁸¹ More might well have lowered the number from four thousand to forty adults to make it more believable. In addition to these similarities, which further illustrate More’s familiarity with Vespucci’s *Voyages*, there are several similarities to Peter Martyr’s works.

Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, who has often been called the “first historian of America,” offers a similar account as he highlights the stories of a society living in a “Golden Age.” Amerindians lived in an age of peace and communal living. Martyr stated that Columbus discovered Amerindian groups that “lived in harmony with nature, content with little, almost ascetic in their manner of life. They were generous with what material possessions they had.”⁴⁸² He states that the land belonged to the people and that there was no need for fencing in gardens or for fortifying villages, observing that while the Tainos were willing and able to fight to defend their liberties, they were devoted to music and dance, living in a Golden Age of Innocence.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁸ Amerigo Vespucci, *The First Four Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci*, (1505-6), (London: B. Quaritch, 1893), 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Vespucci, 11.

⁴⁸⁰ Vespucci, 11.

⁴⁸¹ More, 70.

⁴⁸² Peter Martyr, *Selections from Peter Martyr*, translated and edited by Geoffrey Eatough, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), vol. V, 32. This is only one of many accounts throughout Martyr’s *Decades* which describes the Amerindians as living in a Golden Age.

⁴⁸³ Martyr, 30-31.

This description is remarkably similar to More's description of the Utopians as a people without private property, with no need to fence in their gardens and no form of currency.

Rastell's description of the lifestyle of North Americans resembles the earlier accounts. He depicted natives as possessing neither tools nor weapons to help them build or mine the land. He carried this idea further, "buyldyng nor house they have no at all ... for they be no maner of yron/Nother in tole nor other wepon/That shulde helpe them therto."⁴⁸⁴ The similarities that appear in these works indicate the sharing of information coming into England regarding the Americas. The question arises, did they also discuss the possibilities and morality of colonizing the Americas?

The most direct insight into More's opinions on colonization comes from the passage in *Utopia* on the colonizing practices of the Utopians. In this passage More stated that whenever the Utopians found their population exceeding the optimal limits of the cities, they would send a group of their citizens into the neighboring lands "where the inhabitants have much waste and unoccupied ground" to build new cities.⁴⁸⁵ The new city would be established under Utopian law and custom and would welcome the people of that country "if they will joyne and dwell with them."⁴⁸⁶ More apparently imagined that the civility and superiority of the civilized Utopian way of life would appeal to the uneducated peoples of the land being colonized as the reader is given to assume that once the native peoples joined with the Utopians they would easily adopt the Utopian lifestyle, stating:

They thus joyning and dwelling together doe easily agree in one fashion of living, and that to the great wealth of both the peoples: For they so bring the matter about by their

⁴⁸⁴ John Rastell, *A Merry Interlude of the IIII Elements*, (London 1530), Lii.

⁴⁸⁵ More, 145.

⁴⁸⁶ More 146.

Lawes, that the ground which before was neither good nor profitable for the one nor for the other, is now sufficient and fruitfull enough for them both.⁴⁸⁷

More was insinuating that colonization is justifiable and beneficial for both peoples since wasted land would be turned to good use.

While this presentation of colonization makes it appear that it would be relatively easy to win over the native inhabitants, as they would see the virtue of making the land beneficial to all, More was not so idealistic that he did not anticipate resistance. More argued that if the natives refuse to adhere to Utopian, or civilized law, then they should be pushed from the land, for this is the “most just cause for warre,” taking land from people who do not cultivate it. Not only is this the most just cause for war in the view of the Utopians, but More elevates this cause by stating that it is the law of Nature that the land be nourished and relieved. It is a basic law of nature that man should come in and cultivate the land. Thus, those who allow the land to go to waste are in violation of Nature’s law.⁴⁸⁸

In 1517, one year after More published *Utopia*, John Rastell organized and led a voyage to the New World with the supposed intention of establishing a colony in Newfoundland. While this voyage failed before it ever fully got underway, as the crew mutinied, stranding Rastell in Ireland while taking his ship on a trading expedition to Bordeaux, the results of the voyage are significant as they produced the first English call for the colonization of the New World. While stranded in Ireland, Rastell wrote his play, *A Merry Interlude of the IIII Elements*.⁴⁸⁹ Rastell wrote this play in English as a morality play, thus targeting the common man in an attempt to

⁴⁸⁷ More, 146.

⁴⁸⁸ More, 146-7.

⁴⁸⁹ While it is believed that Rastell wrote this while in Ireland, in 1517-1519, the earliest known surviving publication of this work is not until 1520.

disseminate lessons in the natural sciences, such as cosmology, geography, and geology.⁴⁹⁰

Rastell generally maintained a factual dialogue, refraining entirely from exaggerated accounts of monsters and, other than the mention of Prestor John, he also refrained from the mention of mythical beings. While this is unique for a time when cosmographies still recorded the rumors of monstrous beings in distant lands, this is not surprising given his association with More's circle and their abhorrence for the propagation of superstition and for their emphasis placed on reason.⁴⁹¹ Rastell also added a high level of lexicon that would have escaped the common man but appealed to the educated elite, making this a work that targets both.⁴⁹²

As noted in the previous chapter, Rastell drew heavily on the works of Martin Waldseemüller and Gregorius Reisch, for his *Interlude of the IIII Elements*.⁴⁹³ To what extent and from which edition he drew on the work of these men has been hotly contested and debated by Elizabeth Nungent, M.E. Borish, Gorge B. Parks and Johnstone Parr. A brief summary of their debates is warranted to understand the breadth of Rastell's possible sources. Borish argued against the idea that Rastell used Waldseemüller's 1507 publication, arguing that the similarities between Rastell's *IIII Elements* and Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica* are more numerous and much stronger. Borish pointed out that both works take on the form of a dialogue to present the audience with a lesson on cosmology, natural history and geography, and that much of Rastell's

⁴⁹⁰ Morality plays were a kind of drama which used abstract qualities as the main characters to present a lesson about good conduct and character. M.E. Borish has pointed out, "of the literary forms in use at the time the morality play belonged peculiarly to the people." Borish, M.E., "Source and Intention of *The Four Elements*" *Studies in Philology* vol. 35 (April, 1938), pp. 149-163, 151.

⁴⁹¹ As will be discussed in the following chapter, Rastell's other works also demonstrate his hesitancy to simply accept as fact mythical stories, instead questioning the ones he feels must be included in his histories, showing his readers what the most reasonable truth is.

⁴⁹² As will be discussed in the following chapter, there is the possibility that Rastell intended his play to be performed for the court. Borish, 151.

⁴⁹³ This is also argued by Parker who states that Rastell had "access to the best Continental knowledge, as is evident by the direct relationship that has been found between his play and the major early sixteenth-century works on geography, cosmography and exploration." Parker, 24.

dialogue is a simple paraphrase of Reisch's.⁴⁹⁴ Borish pointed to the illustration of the stars and the moon controlling the tides, as well as the discussion of the position of the North Star in relation to a traveler on the earth, and the use of the illustration of a ship at sea slowly seeing objects on shore to prove the circular nature of the earth, as proof that Rastell simply copied Reisch's arguments.⁴⁹⁵ Borish showed that Rastell must have used the 1515 edition of Reisch's work published at Strasbourg by John Grüninger because this edition was accompanied by a large folded map of the world that was fairly crude and possessed the outlines of the four continents, which bears a marked resemblance to the two maps in the 1513 edition of Ptolemy, which was also published in Strassburg.⁴⁹⁶ It is possible that both the 1513 maps in the Ptolemy and the 1515 map in *Margarita Philosophica* were based on, if not originally made by, Waldseemüller. Borish argued that this makes the most sense, for the references in Rastell's play to the world as seen on the map (apparently a map was used on the stage) are simplistic and vague, giving the impression that the map used for demonstration to the audience is a generalized and crude sketch map. Furthermore, Rastell described the lands of Prester John as being in "India Major." Borish stated that he found only two early maps with this name applied to Prester John's territory, the 1515 edition of *Margarita Philosophica* and the 1516 *Carta Marina* of Waldseemüller. Borish stated that this is conclusive proof that Rastell used the Reisch map.⁴⁹⁷

Nungent countered this argument by stating that it is obvious that Rastell was familiar with Reisch's publication, but that Rastell also drew on other publications for his play. She argued that Rastell also drew heavily on Caxton's publication of *The Myrroure and description of*

⁴⁹⁴ Borish, 151-154.

⁴⁹⁵ Borish, 154.

⁴⁹⁶ Borish, 154-156.

⁴⁹⁷ Borish, 157. Parr notes that the reference to Prester John indicates that Rastell also drew from a source such as the popular *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, Johnstone Parr, "More Sources of Rastell's Interlude of the Four Elements" *PMLA* vol. 60 (Mar., 1945), pp. 48-58, 49.

the World, which was a translation of the French cosmographical treatise *Image du Monde*.⁴⁹⁸ Nungent argued that there are several similarities between Caxton's publication and the illustrations Rastell used. For instance, she pointed out that both Rastell and Caxton use the illustration of the yolk in the egg to explain how the earth rests in the elements.⁴⁹⁹ She acknowledged the similarities to Reisch, but argued that the example Rastell used of a ship being able to slowly see an object on land to explain the circular nature of the earth is taken not from Reisch but from Sacrobosco's *Textus de Sphaera*, which had a French edition published in Paris in 1511.⁵⁰⁰ She argued that this proves that Rastell learned his Euclid, Aristotle, Strabo, and Ptolemy from the works of both Reisch and Waldseemüller as well as from their predecessor Sacrobosco.⁵⁰¹ However, she argued that rather than paraphrasing Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica*, Rastell used Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiae Introductio* as a "sort of textbook" to guide his discussion and define various points of cosmography, and that he closely follows Waldseemüller's directions for computing distance.⁵⁰² As to the map used in Rastell's play, she argued that this had to be the 1507 Waldseemüller map, as Rastell refers to the new world as America, stating that "But this newe lands founde lately/ Ben callyd america by cause only/ Americus dyd first them fynde," and that Rastell stated that there is a northern and a southern continent. She stated that at this point only Waldseemüller had given full credit for the discovery of America to Amerigo Vespucci, naming the newly discovered continents America, the Latin form of Amerigo. She also pointed out that it appears that Rome was featured prominently on Rastell's map, as it is on Waldseemüller's map.⁵⁰³ Using these two points, she argued that

⁴⁹⁸ Nungent, 74-79.

⁴⁹⁹ Nungent, 79.

⁵⁰⁰ Nungent, 80.

⁵⁰¹ Nungent, 75.

⁵⁰² Nungent, 81.

⁵⁰³ Nungent, 83-4.

Rastell either had the 1507 or the 1509 Waldseemüller map and based his cartographic knowledge on this map.

George B. Parks admitted that Nungent had a valid point that Rastell was likely familiar with the text of Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiae Indroductio*, however, he disagreed strongly with Nungent regarding the use of the map, arguing that the 1507 map is far too large for Rastell to have used on the stage for his play and that, as there is only one extant copy of the map, it cannot be assumed that the map was well known or widely disseminated.⁵⁰⁴ While he did admit that the prominence of Rome on both maps, signalized on the Waldseemüller map by both the keys of the Church and the eagle of the empire, is difficult to explain, as there are no other known maps from the time to do this, he argued that the rest of Rastell's descriptive discussion of the world is so far removed from the map that he cannot be using this map as his illustration.⁵⁰⁵ Parks also disagreed with Borish's argument that Rastell used the 1515 copy from Reisch. Parks rejected that Rastell had a simplified sketch map that only showed the northern hemisphere and would have been almost similar to a medieval wheel map, for in the discussion of the map in the play Rastell also illustrated the elements, showing where the earthly and celestial regions lay.⁵⁰⁶

Johnstone Parr, on the other hand, has pointed out that the illustrations used to prove that the earth is round, such as the eclipses of the sun and moon being observed at different times in different locations, the north star seeming to rise and fall as one travels to the north and south, and the example of a ship are all to be found separately in several contemporary texts and that all

⁵⁰⁴ George B. Parks and Elizabeth M. Nungent, "Rastell and Waldseemüller's map" *PMLA*, vol. 58 (Jun., 1943), pp. 572-574, 573.

⁵⁰⁵ Parks, 573-574.

⁵⁰⁶ Parks, 574.

three can be found in Pliny's frequently published *Historia Naturalis*.⁵⁰⁷ Parr further asserted that the example Rastell used of the earth relating to the elements as a yolk within an egg could be taken from more than just Caxton. Parr pointed out that the same metaphor is in the *Elementorum phiosophiae libri iv* as well as the *Kalender of Shepherdes*.⁵⁰⁸ Parr also pointed out that the *Kalender of Shephedes* contained a narrative of Prester John which placed his kingdom in "hye ynde" which he took to mean India Major.⁵⁰⁹ Parr concluded his argument by stating that "One should be reluctant to consider as a direct source of Rastell's material any passage I have cited; for the culling and "plagiarism" practiced by Renaissance writers on cosmology, cosmography, natural history, and kindred sciences make it perilous to assign such works as definite sources on the basis of parallel passages alone."⁵¹⁰

While these debates are useful in understanding the wide range of sources Rastell was likely familiar with, rather than arguing that Rastell based his argument primarily on one source or another, it might be better to argue that Rastell was simply very well read on the subject and drew from the leading authorities of the time to create his cosmographical descriptions and arguments. The illustration of the yolke within the egg is too similar in wording to Caxton and to the *Kalendar of Shepherdes* to dismiss these as being some of Rastell's sources. As a printer in London it would be surprising if Rastell had not read Caxton's cosmographical translation, the first of its kind printed in England, and was not familiar with the *Kalendar of the Shepherdes*, which was translated from French in three versions in 1503, 1506 and 1508 and printed in

⁵⁰⁷ Parr, 54.

⁵⁰⁸ Parr, 55.

⁵⁰⁹ Parr, 50. The *Kalendar of Shepherdes* was a very popular almanac that sold for a few pence, it remained in print until the middle of the seventeenth century. This almanac gave a simple account of the universe along Ptolemaic lines, contained a calendar showing the entry of the sun into the zodiac, information about astrology, a method of establishing the meridian line and how to read the hour from the stars. See McLean, 127-8.

⁵¹⁰ Parr, 58.

London by both Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde.⁵¹¹ All three of the previously mentioned historians agreed that Rastell was at least familiar with Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiae Indroductio*, and that he had more than just a passing familiarity with Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica*, whether or not he pulled more heavily from one than the other is a moot point once it has been established that he had a deep familiarity with both. Nungent's argument that Rastell was also familiar with Sacrobosco's *Textus de Sphaera* is also sound as this work is known to have been circulating in England for some time. It should also be noted that Rastell had an apparent familiarity with Vespucci's travels, as will be seen in the discussion of his poem below. It is not known which version of Vespucci's travels Rastell read, however, given the evidence that Rastell read *Cosmographiae Indroductio*, to which was appended Amerigo Vespucci's *Quattuor navigationes*, it is likely that this was the version.⁵¹²

The question then falls to whether or not Rastell was also familiar with Waldseemüller's map or if he used a map from one of the editions of Reisch. The best answer to this is that he was familiar with both and used neither in the play. Parks has a point when he admits the uniqueness of the prominence of Rome on the map. Nungent was also correct in her assertion that Rastell's labeling of both the north and south continents as America is a strong indicator that he was familiar with the Waldseemüller map, if not in possession of it, as there are no other known maps to make this distinction. The 1512-1515 editions of *Margarita Philosophica* contain a map similar to Waldseemüller's 1516 *Carta Marina*. All of these maps bear the basic nature of the northern hemisphere as Rastell's map, with one distinction. They do not include

⁵¹¹ Given Rastell's desire to see scientific works translated into English and made available to the general public it would be surprising if he were unfamiliar with this work. He might have even printed a few copies of it himself, though there is no record of this yet. For more on the *Kalendar of Shepherdes* see McLean, 127-8.

⁵¹² It should be noted that Johnstone Parr is in disagreement with this argument. He states that after the publication of Waldseemüller's 1507 map "currency to Vespucci's fame as the first discoverer was given by all cosmographers until 1533." Parr, 48.

the name America, so it cannot be the map used in the play. It seems much more likely that Rastell had access to both maps, as well as the medieval style elemental maps, and that he created his own map, or planned to create his own map, for the play by combining the information found on all of the maps he had access to.⁵¹³

John Rastell was more than just a simple playwright, he was also an architectural engineer and an artist. The Royal household employed Rastell several times to design and oversee the construction of elaborate sets and pageants. Rastell sought the advice of Henry's astrologer Nicholas Kratzer to help design the roof of the banquet hall for the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Rastell is also noted for constructing the earliest known stage for plays in Tudor history and for having a sizeable collection of costumes and props in his estate.⁵¹⁴ With this in mind, it would be surprising if Rastell did not have his own map specially designed for use in his play. This would be the only way he could guarantee that the map clearly presented the information that he deemed relevant to his audience in a manner which would be clear to all. It would be impossible for his audience to clearly see the Reisch map if used on stage, and while the 1507 Waldseemüller map might have been large enough, it does not make a significant note of Prester John, which Rastell does. Therefore, the most logical conclusion is that Rastell was familiar with the leading authorities on cosmography and he combined this knowledge, and the still accepted knowledge of past authorities, in both his play and on the map that he used in the play. The fact that Rastell was so clearly familiar with these continental sources also indicates that

⁵¹³ As will be discussed in the next chapter, it remains unknown whether or not Rastell performed the play for the public or a royal audience.

⁵¹⁴ TNA REQ 2/8/14, In this court case John Rastell sues Henry Walton who has borrowed some "players' garments" to use while Rastell is in France. However, upon his return from France Rastell has been unable to regain the costumes or receive payment for them. The court case reveals that there are a number of elaborate costumes. For assertions of the significance of Rastell's stage see Routh, pp. 43-4; Hogrefe, 28; A. W. Reed, *Early Tudory Drama: Medwall, the Rastells, Heywood, and the More Circle*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 13, 17; Albert J. Geritz and Amos Lee Lain, *John Rastell*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 15, 17.

they were available in England at the time, and the similarities between Rastell's discussions and those of More indicates that the information presented served as conversation between the two, if not within the wider circle of friends who shared so many of the same ideas.

While the majority of *The IIII Elements* serves to educate Rastell's audience in the sciences, some historians have argued that the main purpose is to inspire further exploration and colonization of the New World.⁵¹⁵ Rastell offered the first known English publication to describe North America and to apply the name America to both the north and south continents, indicating his familiarity with Waldseemüller's work.⁵¹⁶ Rastell began his description of North America by stating that it is a country much larger than Christendom, with a shoreline five thousand miles long. So great is the continent that no one can tell what goods and commodities might be found within her borders. Yet there is some information known about this mysterious and promising land. Rastell described some of the known resources in the northern parts of America, first discovered during the reign of Henry VII, which are in such abundance they simply lie on the ground, ready for the taking. "Copper they have whiche is founde/ In dyvers places above the grounde ... Great haboundance of woddess ther be ... Great riches might come therby/ Both pyche and tarre and sope asshys/ As they make in the eest lands/ by brynnynge therof only."⁵¹⁷ England could reap the benefits of all these resources. With copper in such abundance, one must wonder at what rich resources lay just beneath the surface. The English, who know how to mine the land, could easily reap the rewards of the minerals that the native

⁵¹⁵ David Quinn has argued that one of the main purposes for this work was to encourage colonization among the common man. *NAW* 169.

⁵¹⁶ Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 54.

⁵¹⁷Rastell, lii.

peoples have yet to make use of “for they be no maner of yron/ Nother in tole nor other wepon/
That shulde helpe them therto”⁵¹⁸

The vast forests of North America, which some would say presented the English with an image of an inhospitable wasteland, Rastell described as being a key resource from which the English could gain pitch, tar, and soap ash, which they currently had to trade for with the east. Timber, an essential resource for the maintenance and building of ships, was in short supply in England throughout the sixteenth century. If Henry VIII were to build a strong navy that could challenge the French, he needed timber for masts, as well as pitch and tar to seal and maintain the ships. If the English merchants were to expand their networks and businesses then they too would need these resources to maintain their merchant ships. Throughout the sixteenth century England had to look east to Europe, and in particular the Baltic regions, to purchase these items. This was a complicated and expensive process, for much of the timber had to be transported great distances across multiple territorial and national borders that required their own tariffs and taxes.⁵¹⁹ Rather than go through the trouble and expense of trading with “the east” for these goods, Rastell argued that the English should utilize the vast resources of the forests of Newfoundland and lay claim to this region, which had first been discovered by the English during the reign of Henry VII, for the English would be able to obtain great riches “by brynnynge therof only.”

⁵¹⁸ Rastell, Lii.

⁵¹⁹ Pepys Library, *Missiliarium of Matters Historical and Naval* (2878), vol. 10. Ff. 364-6, 475-8, These letters, written to officials in the King’s court, offer to arrange for the delivery of timber for masts. The letters illustrate the great distances the timber traveled and the expense involved. *Missiliarium* (2878), vol. 10. Ff. 525, 528-9, 530, 531-76. These letters and accounts illustrate the continued expense in the sixteenth century of importing timber for masts and planks, as well as cordage and other ship building goods from central Europe, particularly Denzig and Russia. David Loades discusses the shortage of suitable timber for ship-building during the reign of Henry VIII, stating that England imported most of the need pine and fir for masts and spars from Scandinavia. David Loades, *The Tudor Navy: An Administrative, Political and Military History*, (Brookfield, Vermont: Scolar Press, 1992), 87.

Rastell's point regarding the value of the vast forests, which were close to the shore and that would be easily harvested if the English would simply go to the region, echoes the point More made in *Utopia* regarding this. More praised the wisdom of the Utopians who have purposefully cultivated timber, stating that they have "a whole Wood by the hands of the people plucked up by the rootes in one place, and set again in another place. Wherein was had regard and consideration, not of plenty, but of commodious carriage, that wood and timber might be nigher to the Sea, or the Rivers, or the Cities. For it is less labour and businesse to carry graine farre by land then wood."⁵²⁰ *Utopia* was written as a political satire, yet it also served to create an image of the New World for its readers. With this dual function, this passage serves to do two things. First, it points out that having vast forests near a coastline is something to be valued and desired, so much so that the Utopians purposefully transplant their forest, as it is the most logical and expedient way of getting timber quickly to the cities. Second, by making this point, the readers who are familiar with Cabot's descriptions of the new found lands as a heavily forested region, would see the value in laying claim to this timber, as it would be easily transported to England's major ports.

Rastell also argued that the vast fisheries of Newfoundland should, by right of discovery, belong to England and would bring easy profit to all who ventured there. He described the abundant fisheries as having "Fyshe they have so great plente/ That in havyns take and slayne they be/ with stavys withouten fayle."⁵²¹ As if this were not enough of an incentive, Rastell informed his audience that the French, who the English competed with during Henry's reign,

⁵²⁰ More, 209.

⁵²¹ It should be noted that this reference to the fisheries indicates that Rastell had talked to someone who had visited the region, as there were no printed sources on the topic. Thus, Rastell would have had to have talked to either Sebastian Cabot at some point, or to fishermen who had been to the region. Rastell, lii.

already made use of the fishing shoals, filling more than one hundred ships with fish each year. “Nowe Frenchmen & other have founde the trade/ That yerely of fyshe there they lades/ Above an hundred sale.”⁵²² Thus, Rastell painted the picture of a land full of valuable resources England needed, all of which were ready for the taking. This is hardly the cold and inhospitable region Cabot supposedly described upon his return during the reign of Henry VII.

Historians have argued that the reason it took England so long to establish a permanent presence in the New World after John Cabot’s discovery of the Newfoundland region, and thus the reason English activities in Newfoundland have been marginalized, is that Cabot’s initial discovery of the New World revealed a frozen, foggy region with no obvious source of wealth, while Columbus discovered a land overflowing with resources.⁵²³ Thus, Newfoundland was a false start as “there was little reason to explore this cold, inhospitable, and unattractive land except to search for a passage that could lead to the wealth beyond.”⁵²⁴ David B. Quinn seems to agree with this sentiment when he stated that “the voyages of the Cabots and the Company of Adventurers had revealed a land that was unprofitable—either because its inhabitants had nothing worthwhile in which to trade and showed no great enthusiasm for English goods, or because the seas were cold, their margins frozen, their promise after the rigors of exploration still unrevealed.”⁵²⁵ This explanation of English activity in the New World, however, only tells half the story, ignoring the English arguments for colonization which lauded the bountiful resources of North America. As has been demonstrated, Rastell was not alone in his opinion that North

⁵²² Rastell, lii.

⁵²³ Mary C. Fuller, *Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narratives in the Age of European Expansion*, (New York: Pelgrave, 2008), 121-124.

⁵²⁴ Fuller takes this quote from Franklin McCann, 123.

⁵²⁵ David B. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620: From the British Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: the Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 160.

America held vast resources, especially within its forests and seas, and that England could and should reap the benefits.

In addition to being a land overflowing with profitable resources, Rastell presented North America as inhabited with Native Americans who, in their childlike innocence, lack all knowledge of God and the ability to cultivate their land, simply waiting for the English to come and instruct them. Rastell described the Native Americans:

And what a great merito woule dede
It were to haue the people instructed
To lyve more virtuously
And to lerne to knowe of men the maner
And also to knowe god theyr maker
Which as yet lyve all bestly
For they nother knowe god nor the Devell
Nor never harde tell of hevyn nor hell
wrytynge nor other scripture
But yet in the stede of god almyght
The honour the sone for his great lygge
for that doth them great pleasure⁵²⁶

Despite having no knowledge of God, and living as beasts, the Native Americans have a childlike innocence, “For they nother know god nor the devil/For never hard tell of heaven nor hell.”⁵²⁷ Rastell played on England’s Christian duty, presenting a poignant case for bringing salvation and civilization to the natives. As noted earlier, Rastell stated that the Native Americans have no iron, and thus no tools to build habitations, farm or mine the land, or to make weapons, presenting his audience a picture of a land inhabited by peaceful, innocent natives with

⁵²⁶ Rastell, lii.

⁵²⁷ Rastell, lii.

an abundance of rich resources. It would be a great, virtuous thing for the English to educate the Native Americans of their maker, and in basic skills, such as mining, which the English knew well, and thus “help” them cultivate the land. Rastell presents an argument similar to More’s depiction of Utopian colonization efforts; that by following a higher law, in More’s case Nature’s law, in Rastell’s case God’s call to share the Gospel, and by cultivating the land, the English would be able to reap rich rewards.

To tie it all together, and to attract those few who might not have seen the virtue of colonization from his other arguments, Rastell played on the patriotic feelings and chivalric notions of his countrymen stating:

But yet not longe a go
Some men of this contrey went
By the kiynges noble consent
It for to serche to that entent
And coude not be brought therto
But they that were they venteres
Have cause to curse their maryners
Fals of promys and dissmeblers
That falsly them betrayed
Which woldes take no paine to saile farther
Than their owne lyst and pleasure
Wherefore that vyage and dyvers other
Suche kaytyffes⁵²⁸ have destroyed
O what a thyng had be than
If that they that be Englyshe men
Might have ben the furst of all

⁵²⁸ A base, mean, villainous person.

That there shulde have take possessyon
And made furst buyldynge & habytacion
A memory perpetuall
And also what a honorable thyng
Bothe to the realme and to the kynge
To have had his domynyon extendynge
There into so farre a grounde
Whiche the noble kinge of late memory
The moste wyse prynce the .vij Henry
Causyd furst for to be founde.⁵²⁹

With this description of his own failed voyage, and reference to Cabot's discovery of North America while under the commission of King Henry VII, Rastell attempted to spark righteous indignation in his fellow countrymen at the outrage that England had failed to form a colony in North America. If it were not for the weak hearted mariners who were "false of promise" and who had given in to their own "lust and pleasure" England might have already been reaping the benefits of a New World colony. The English would have earned the honor of being the first to extend the King's realm to North America. Rastell offered what David Quinn called the "first patriotic manifesto of the colonizing movement."⁵³⁰ This, combined with the suggestion that the French were taking advantage of the wealth of the New World that England had just claim over, makes Rastell's interlude not only a patriotic manifesto for colonization, but an example of a popular appeal to national pride and identity as Englishmen.

⁵²⁹ Rastell, li.

⁵³⁰ Despite the fact that Quinn acknowledges this role of Rastell's work, he relegates Rastell to the sidelines of England's Atlantic activities, presenting him as more of an oddity, or at best a man before his times. Quinn goes on to state that Rastell's patriotic call was "a feeble squeak only—no matter how interesting that it should have been made at all." Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 169.

The two stanzas quoted above are more dramatic than Rastell's normal writing. In general, Rastell expressed his ideas in a factual, straightforward expression of his thoughts.⁵³¹ By stating "O what a thing had be than/ If that they that be English men/Might have been the first of all/That there should have take possession," Rastell added a dramatic element. He could have easily stated this thought in a more moderate tone, but he chose to dramatize it and make it stand out.⁵³² "Oh what a thing had be than" carries much more emotional weight than simply stating that England could have been the first to take possession but did not. The same is true of his statement, "And what a great meritorious deed/It were to have the people instructed/To live more virtuously."⁵³³ This statement is also emotionally charged, "what a great meritorious deed," seems to bring forth the notion of an epic task laid out for the English people, a holy endeavor to bring the gospel to those who neither "know god nor the devell/For never heard tell of haven nor hell/Writing nor other scripture."⁵³⁴ Rastell could easily have stated this notion in a simple, factual manner, but he chose to use a dramatic tone, one that would play on his audience's emotions. Rastell longed to stir the hearts of all loyal Englishmen to undertake colonization of North America. Unfortunately for Rastell, the timing was not right.

The public call for colonization was picked up by Richard Eden in in the 1550s. In *The Decades of the New World*, (1555) Eden stated in his address to the reader that one of his

⁵³¹ This can be seen in Rastell's many publications, especially his history of England, *The Pastyme of Peoples*, in which he seems to carefully avoid dramatization, giving very dry, factual accounts of England's many kings and heroes. John Rastell, *The Pastyme of People, The cronycles of dyvers Realmys and most specially of the Realme of Englande* (London: 1529). A key exception to this is in the Introduction to his many copies of *The Statutes*, in which he describes the late King Henry VII as "the most noble prynce our late sovereyn kyng henry the vii worthye to be called the seconde Salomon." John Rastell, *The Statutes (abridged in English by J. Rastell)*, (Chepesyde, 1527), 3.

⁵³² Rastell, *III Elements*, lii.

⁵³³ Rastell, *III Elements*, lii.

⁵³⁴ Rastell, *III Elements*, lii.

purposes is to inspire English ventures to the Americas.⁵³⁵ Eden writes that the Spanish have already begun to bring the gospel to the peoples of South America, for God ordained them “to be a light to the gentyles, to open the eyes of the blynde, and to delyver the bounde owt of pryson and captivitie.”⁵³⁶ All good and honest men should rejoyce to “see the kingdom of God to be so fare enlarged upon the face of the earth, to the confusion of the devil and the Turkysse.”⁵³⁷

Eden did not see the Spanish spread of Catholicism as a negative, as would become the mantra of Protestant proponents of empire at the end of the century. However, the Spanish had not been able to reach all of America’s peoples, and God had set aside “an other portion of that main land reaching towards the northeast, thought to be as large as the other ... neither inhabited by any Christian man.”⁵³⁸ Overflowing with rich resources, this land was “fayre and fruitful” with “high mountains, and fayre rivers, with abundance of gold and diverse kinds,” and populated by people who lack knowledge of Christ.⁵³⁹ Eden thus presented his readers with an image similar to that offered by Rastell. North America awaited English colonization, having been set aside by God. Like Rastell, Eden described the primitive nature of the Natives, stating that;

But these simple gentiles lyving only after the lawe of nature, may well bee liked to a smoothe and bare table unpainted, or a white paper unwritten, upon the which yow may at the first paynte or wryte what yow lyst, as you can not upon tables already paynted, unlesse yow rase or blot owt the fyrste forms ... If we were therefore as desirous to enlarge the faith of Chryste as to seeke worldly gooddes, why do we deferre to adventure that wherin we may doo bothe.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁵ Edward Arber, ed. *The First Three English Books on America [? 1511]-1555 A.D. Being chiefly Translations, Compilations, &c., by Richard Eden From the Writings, Maps, &c., of Pietro Martire, of Anghiera (1455-1526). Sebastian Münster, the Cosmographer (1489-1552). Sebastian Cabot of Bristol (1471-1557), With Extracts, &c., from the Works of other Spanish, Italian, and german Writers of the Time*, (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1895), 5. This work will be cited as Eden, unless Arber’s introduction is cited at which point it will be cited as Arber.

⁵³⁶ Eden, 50.

⁵³⁷ Eden, 50.

⁵³⁸ Eden, 55.

⁵³⁹ Eden, 55.

⁵⁴⁰ Eden, 57.

In this way, Eden argues that the Native Americans are innocent and ignorant, a clean slate ready and waiting for the Gospel and civilization, as the people, just like the land, are uncultivated, and if the English were to colonize North America it would be as easy to cultivate the land and bring the Gospel to the Natives as it is to paint upon a clean table.

Eden adds a new element by arguing that through sharing the Gospel with the Native Americans, the English would gain God's blessing on their efforts, which would benefit any secular reasons for colonizing the New World. Eden reminds his reader in several places that "if we would take the matter in hand accordingly, god would not forget to aide us with miracles."⁵⁴¹ Eden implied that the English have been preordained to take possession of North America, specifically the Northeast region of the continent, which would be the Newfoundland region. In case his point was not clear enough for the reader, Eden takes his argument a step further and states that:

Howe much therefore is it to be lamented, and howe greatly dooth it sounde to the reproche of all Christendome, and especially to such as dwell nerest to these lands (as we doo) beinge muche nearer unto the same then are the Spanyardes (as within xxv dayes saylinge and less) howe muche I saye shall this sounde unto owre reproche and inexcusable slothfulnesse and negligence bothe befor god and the worlde, that so large dominions of such tractable people and pure gentiles, not beinge hitherto corrupted with any other false religion (and therefore the easier to be allured to embrace owres) are nowe knowen unto us, and that we have no respecte neyther for goddess cause nor for owre owne commoditie to attempte summe vyages into these coastes, to doo for owr partes as the Spaniardes have done for theirs.⁵⁴²

There is little room for doubt here. Eden reprimanded his fellow Englishmen for not taking hold of the region which God had set aside for them, which was less than twenty-five days sailing, and thus brought the Gospel to the Native Americans. When the English fulfilled God's purpose for them, they could expect "god wolde not forget to ayde us with miracles if it shuld so be

⁵⁴¹ Eden, 56.

⁵⁴² Eden, 55.

requisite,” and that “if we wolde fyrste sette owre hands to the plowe, we ought to hope that he wolde giue increase and woorke with us.”⁵⁴³ Like Rastell, and similarly to More, Eden’s arguments for colonization present the idea that both the land and the people are uncultivated and untamed, and need the English to come alongside and teach them, and that in doing so, the English would be doing God’s work.

Cartographic Imaginings

The image Eden presents of North America, specifically of the Newfoundland region, stretching out towards England, as if predestined to be colonized by the English can be seen in many sixteenth-century cartographic depictions of North America. One of the most famous examples is the map of Juan de la Cosa of 1500. This map is one of the earliest representations of the New World and depicts North America as stretching northeast, almost as if reaching out a finger towards the British Isles.

⁵⁴³ Eden, 56.



Figure 3-1 Juan de la Cosa map, 1500. This map depicts the northern reaches of North America as stretching almost all the way to England, which is located just to the upper right of the compass rose in the upper right corner. This image has been modified to enhance the outline of the British Isles.

This image of Newfoundland as just a short journey from England, became prevalent through the sixteenth century. While this closeness is due to the inaccuracies in determining longitude at the time, it would, nevertheless, have created an interpretive image for the viewer, especially those who lacked understanding of the mathematical difficulties involved in charting longitude.

A book of portolan charts made for Henry VII in 1508, and then in Henry VIII's collection upon his father's death, also shows Labrador reaching almost all of the way across the Atlantic to England.⁵⁴⁴ The Reinel portolan chart of the Atlantic, dated 1535, also depicts Labrador as stretching halfway across the Atlantic to meet England, giving visual credence to the idea presented by Eden that God had set aside the great land mass of North America for the English by having it stretch to the northeast. Another example which would have been well known to the court is Jean Rotz's depiction of Labrador. On this chart Labrador has an exaggerated peninsula that stretches more than halfway across the Atlantic towards England.⁵⁴⁵ The Newfoundland fishing shoals are also depicted in this chart as stretching eastward into the Atlantic, being relatively close to England.⁵⁴⁶ This image was reinforced by the arguments of such advocates of the Northerly or Norwest Passage as Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow.

⁵⁴⁴ This portolan is held at the British Library, Egerton MS 2803 and is dated 1508. No image of this chart is available as this chart is not yet digitized and is unavailable for photography.

⁵⁴⁵ See figure 4.

⁵⁴⁶ Helen Wallis states that Rotz's depiction of the Newfoundland fisheries is the earliest known chart to delimit the extent of the Newfoundland, Labrador fisheries. Wallis, 48.



Figure 3-2 Pedro Reinel Portolan, c. 1535. Once again, the exaggerated closeness of Labrador to England is clearly evident.

Personal photo taken of the Pedro Reinel portolan at the National Maritime Museum's Caird Library. Pedro Reinel portolan, circa 1535, Caird Library, G 213 : 2/4.



Figure 3-3 Rotz's chart of Labrador and the Newfoundland region. In this south oriented chart Labrador is clearly depicted as stretching across the Atlantic towards Iceland and England, appearing to be a short journey from England via Iceland. Personal photo of F. 23v taken from a facsimile copy held by the Virginia Garrett Special Collections at the University of Texas at Arlington. All of the images used for Rotz' book are taken from the facsimile copy instead of the original at the British Library due to the restricted access of the original copy. Personal study of this document was conducted at the British Library using the original. BL Royal MS. 20 E IX.

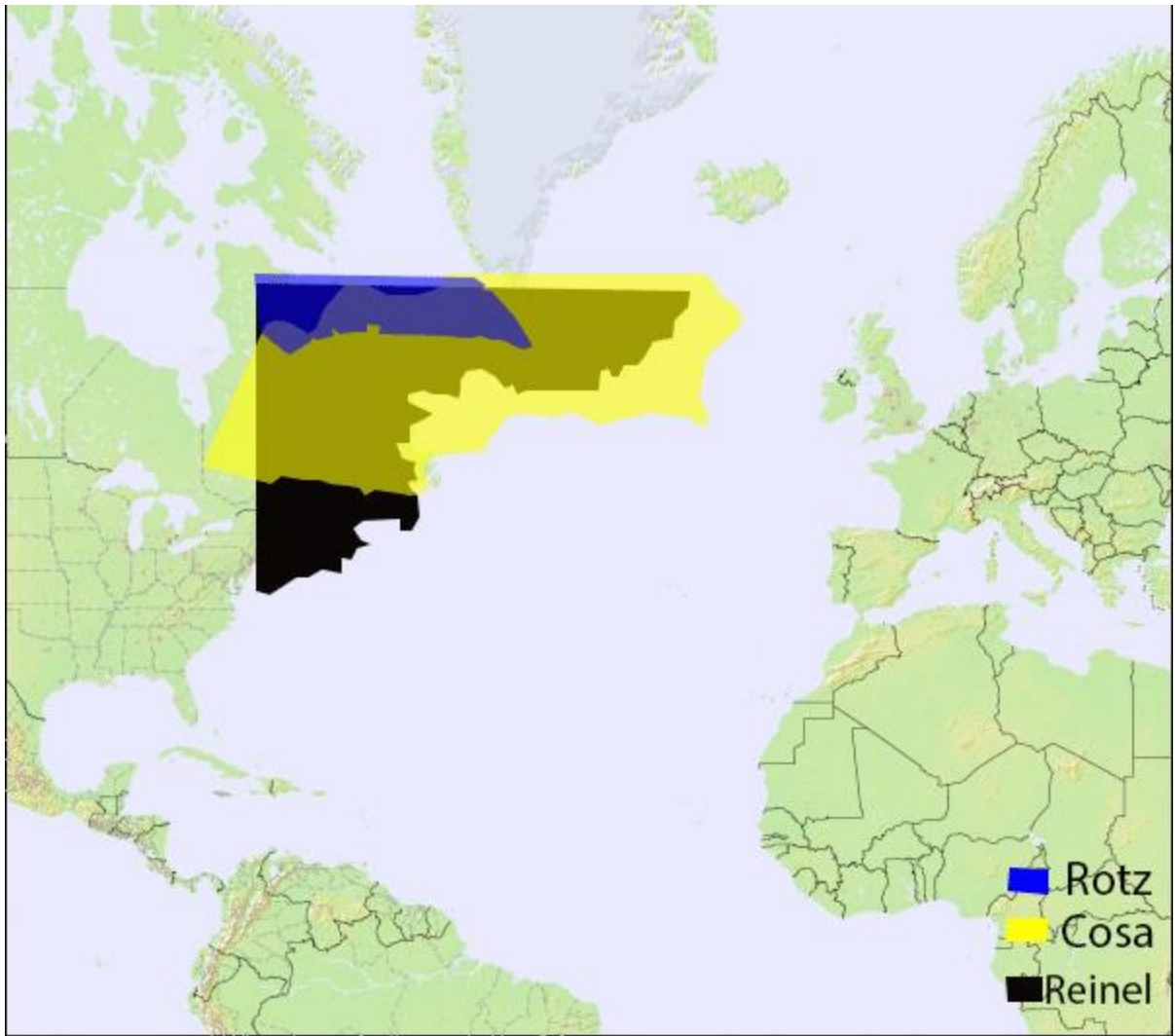


Figure 3-4 This overlay map demonstrates the differences in coastlines of the three maps above. This map was created specifically for this dissertation by the author.

Robert Thorne, an English merchant who lived in Seville along with his brother Nicolas and Roger Barlow, sent Henry a letter in 1527 in which he argued that the English should look north to find a route to Cathay.⁵⁴⁷ His arguments will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter, however, what is relevant to the present argument is that Thorne argued that God had set aside this northerly route for the English to use as the English would be able to sail quickly to Labrador, which was only a short voyage from England, being closer to England than any other European nation, resupply the ships and then sail over the north pole and on to Cathay.⁵⁴⁸ To help prove his point, Thorne sent Henry VIII a small map of the world. The original of this map has since been lost; however, Richard Hakluyt published a copy of it in his 1582 *Diverse Voyages*. Roger Barlow would take up Thorne's arguments in 1541, putting pressure on the crown for an expedition to the Northwest to test Thorne's theories.⁵⁴⁹ The fact that both Thorne and Barlow studied and discussed cartographic discoveries and the exploration of the Americas while in Seville, and then communicated their findings with members of Henry's court, as well as with Henry himself, further illustrates the flow of information and knowledge during this time. This flow of geographical information from Spain to England indicates that travel accounts published in Spain would have been known in England by the merchant class and the educated elites who had contacts in Seville. In addition to his call for a northerly passage, Barlow sent

⁵⁴⁷ BL Cotton MS Aug.I.i.I.

⁵⁴⁸ BL Cotton MS Aug.I.i.I. In addition to arguing for a short cut, Thorne also made arguments based on imperialist ideas, stating that Henry would be able to find new lands and win perpetual glory. In addition, he argued that this would be a way in which Henry would be able to finance his wars against France. While these arguments are somewhat familiar to those discussed earlier in this chapter, Thorne's letter was not well circulated and was not published until Richard Hakluyt published it in 1582. Therefore, it would have had limited impact on the broader image of the Americas during the middle part of the century, but it would have informed Hakluyt's ideas.

⁵⁴⁹ Parker, 32-3.

Henry a world geography, his own translation of Enciso's geography, with notes on the New World to help drive home his point.⁵⁵⁰

Thorne's map is a crude drawing, showing much of Asia and Africa in a manner that would have been familiar to students of cosmography of the time. The regions are set off with straight lines and lack definition. The northern coastline of Asia is clearly hypothesized and lacks any true definition or knowledge. What is of interest here is the knowledge it imparts of the Americas. South America appears to be smaller than North America, which runs off of the map in the upper right-hand corner. Where Labrador and Newfoundland should be, Thorne depicts two broad inlets which might turn into wide rivers, but seem to fade into the continent. England appears to be closer to this region than any other European power. Even Iceland, which is depicted north of England is not as close to North America due to the curvature of the land mass, as North America takes a sharp northerly turn, with a wide-open waterway running directly north to the North pole. This map clearly presents the viewer with Thorne's argument that North America is closest to England and that a northerly route over the pole via the new found lands has been all but set aside by God for the English. In addition to this, this map presented Henry's court with a decent picture of what was known in Spain of the Caribbean and Central America, with a basic understanding of South America. North America, however, is a great unknown, a large land mass that might have a few major waterways and large capes along the coast. To those whose only thoughts were on the Spice Islands, this land mass would have looked like a major obstacle lying between England and the East Indies, but to those like Rastell,

⁵⁵⁰ This further illustrates the manner in which news about the Americas and publications regarding the Americas travelled at this time. E.G.R. Taylor argues that it is very likely that Thorne based his map off the planesphere of Enciso's *Mappa Mundi* which Enciso intended to publish in his geography. E. G. R. Taylor, ed., Roger Barlow, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1932., xiv.

and later Eden, this would have presented an image of a vast unknown, where anything might be found, a yet unclaimed land full of potential, that rested just beyond England’s shores.

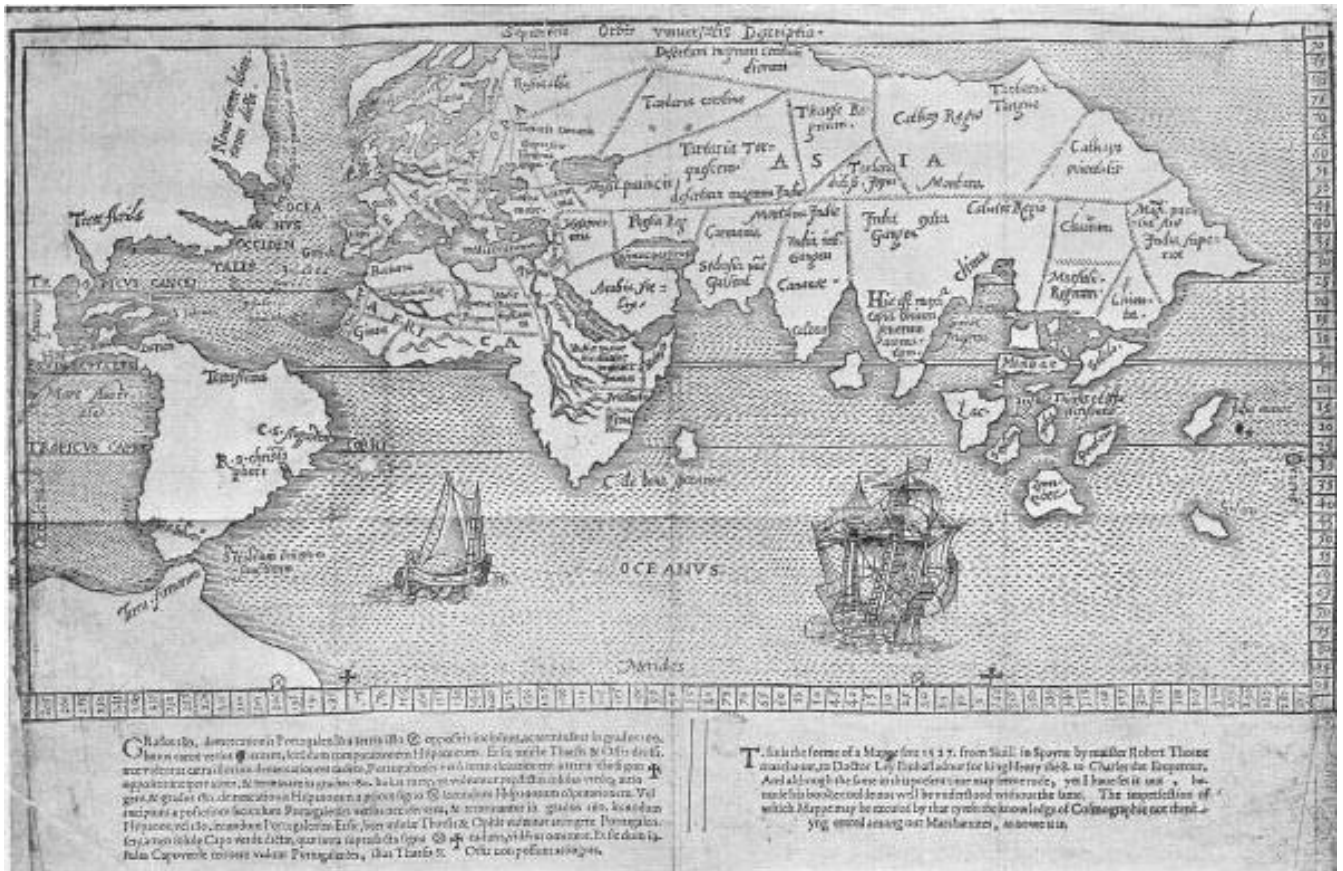


Figure 3-5 Robert Thorne’s *Orbis Universalis Descriptio* from Richard Hakluyt, *Diverse Voyages*, (1582). image taken from the British Library, “Lines in the Ice: top five highlights” Maps and views blog, accessed 6/1/2018. <http://blogs.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/2015/04/lines-in-the-ice-top-six-highlights.html>

Early sixteenth century literature demonstrated imagery of the New World which is also seen through cartography in England. As noted earlier, Henry VIII created an atmosphere of learning at Court that contributed greatly to the development of cartography in England, which, in turn, added to the growing representation of the Americas. Aside from the voyages of exploration Henry sponsored, his main contribution to exploration, was his patronage of cartography.⁵⁵¹ Throughout his reign Henry patronized some of the leading cartographers of the time. In May 1512, he paid Sebastian Cabot twenty-six shillings and eight pence to make a map of Gascony and Guienne. Unfortunately, Henry was not able to offer Cabot a commission significant enough to keep him in England and soon afterwards Cabot entered the service of the king of Spain.⁵⁵² He did not return to England until 1547.

Giovanni da Verrazzano is one of the most significant cartographers that Henry sponsored. After a very successful voyage of exploration along the eastern seaboard of North America on behalf of France in 1524, Verrazzano sought new patronage and likely traveled to the court of Henry VIII in 1525. There is some debate over whether he or his brother appeared before Henry's court.⁵⁵³ Verrazzano entertained the court with tales of his expedition, and presented Henry with a map and a globe depicting his discoveries.⁵⁵⁴ Verrazzano was one of the

⁵⁵¹ David Quinn argues that Henry was more than willing to act as patron to cartographers who came to him and references the fact that Henry commissioned a map from Girolamo de Verrazzano and served as patron to Jean de Rotz. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 161.

⁵⁵² L&P, vol. 2 part II 1517-18, #4, p. 1456; Peter Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government" David Buisseret ed., *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 26-56, 27.

⁵⁵³ See the discussion of this in chapter 5.

⁵⁵⁴ It is still debated whether or not Henry acted as patron for part of the creation of this map, or if it was simply a gift in hopes that Henry would sponsor a second voyage. Unfortunately, both of these, which are dated 1525, have been lost. One of the closest surviving examples is the map by Gerolamo Verrazzano, Giovanni's brother, which appears to have been begun around 1528 and finished (or simply updated) around 1540. Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano 1524-1528*, (London: Yale University Press, 1970), 172. Most cartographic

first explorers to sail nearly the entire length of the eastern seaboard of North America and complete a chart of his findings. By presenting Henry with this chart, which was well known among the court, Verrazzano gave Henry's court one of the earliest, most accurate representations of North America. He depicted a wide-open region, void of any civilization with prior claim to the resources. More importantly, Verrazzano argued that there was a narrow isthmus between the Atlantic Ocean and a large body of water which would surely reach Cathay. This inland sea, he argued, presented the shortest route to Cathay.⁵⁵⁵ If England could chart this region and take possession of it, then England would gain access to Cathay. This map had a dramatic impact on England, shaping much of England's cartographic understanding of North America for the next century, to the point that Lawrence Wroth has called the presentation of this map to Henry a "seminal element in later English maritime and colonization adventure. For more than a century the false sea shown on that map took its place in English thought as an assurance of the closeness of the Atlantic to the Pacific at some point along the North American coast."⁵⁵⁶ This map likely served as the motivation for John Rut's voyage of exploration in 1527, which was instigated and funded by Henry.⁵⁵⁷ Verrazzano was not the only European cartographer to find a ready reception at Henry's court.

historians agree that it is safe to assume that the representation of the New World found in Gerolamo Verrazzano's maps is very close to Giovanni's original, though the latitudes are a bit higher than they should be.

⁵⁵⁵ See figure 6, for an image of North America and the inland sea as depicted on the 1540 G. Verrazzano map.

⁵⁵⁶ Wroth, 164.

⁵⁵⁷ As will be discussed in chapter 5, the traditional argument is that Rut's voyage was inspired by the letter from Robert Thorne dated 1527, the same year Rut set sail. One of the main reasons for this traditional interpretation is that Samuel Purchas opens his discussion of Rut's voyage by stating that Thorne's argument inspired Henry to send forth two ships for the discovery, one of which perished in the North parts of new-found Land." Samuel Purchas *His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and others* vol. 14 (originally published 1613), (New York: AMS Press Inc. 1965), pp. 303-4. However, I argue that there was not enough time for this letter to be written in Seville in 1527 and then delivered to Henry in time for Rut's expedition to be organized. I contend that it is much more likely that Rut's voyage was inspired by Verrazzano's map. David Quinn has also made this argument in his book *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 164. Wallis also argues that this map inspired Rut's voyage, Helen Wallis, ed., *The Maps and Text of the Booke of Idrography Presented by Jean*



Figure 3-6 Depiction of North America from Girolamo Verrazano's World Map ca. 1540. The inland sea Verrazzano believed he had seen, is lightly drawn just above the flag. It is depicted as a southeasterly running coast that then turns sharply west/southwest roughly where the Carolinas should be. The contrast has been heightened on this image to better highlight this faint coastline.

Personal image taken at the British National Maritime Museum's Caird Library, G. Verrazzano World Map- Caird Library, G 201: 1/15.

Rotz to Henry VIII: Now in the British Library, (Oxford: Printed for Presentation to the Members of the Roxburghe Club, 1981), 57.

Henry encouraged the best technicians from Europe to work for him and by the end of his reign, Henry employed at least sixty French pilots and hydrographers, among whom were such notables as Jean Rotz, Raulin Secalart, Nicolas de Nicolay and Jean Ribault, all of whom proved themselves to be among the most skillful pilots and hydrographers of their day.⁵⁵⁸ At the end of his life, Henry also welcomed the renown Portuguese cartographer, Diogo Homem. This patronage of foreign cartographers, hydrographers and pilots allowed Henry and his court to have access to the most current cartographic knowledge of the Americas. Secalart was a pilot and cosmographer who had been associated with the famous João Afonso, a Portuguese cartographer working in France who aided in a voyage to Canada.⁵⁵⁹ When Rotz arrived at court he brought with him the cutting edge in cartographic knowledge of the Dieppe school. Dieppe had been the leading French city in maritime exploration to the Americas and Africa for most of the sixteenth century, however, by 1539 prohibitions had been placed on Norman voyages to the South Atlantic, which might have made Rotz's position as the leading hydrographer less lucrative.⁵⁶⁰ This might have been what led Rotz to begin work on his treatise on navigation and his *Booke of Idrography*, which he initially intended for the King of France. Instead, Rotz would take all of the most current navigational and cartographic knowledge of the world that he could access and present it in his two works to Henry VIII, giving the English court the most up to date cartographic knowledge to be had at the time.⁵⁶¹ Rotz served Henry as a hydrographer and

⁵⁵⁸ Tyacke, pp. 1728-30; Wallis, 16.

⁵⁵⁹ Tyacke, 1729.

⁵⁶⁰ Wallis, 3-8.

⁵⁶¹ Wallis demonstrated that Rotz's knowledge came from the leading continental authorities, such as Johann Stöffler, Peter Apian, and Gemma Frisius, as well as from the first-hand knowledge obtained from living in Dieppe which was the leading maritime city in Normandy at the time, from travel accounts such as Ian Alfonse whose voyages were published about 1536 and from Rotz's own voyages to West Africa, the Caribbean and Brazil, 6-7, 39-40, 46, 57, 70-72. Rotz' book is now at the British Library, Royal MS. 20 E IX.

cartographer until the end of Henry's reign. Around 1540 Mallard presented Henry with *Le premier livre de la cosmographie*, a poetic rendering of Les Voyages aventureux of Jean Alfonse de Santonge, a French navigator engaged in a search for the North West Passage. This account provided Henry and his court with the most current knowledge of the Americas. The accounts of Jean Alfonse appear to have been used by Rotz on some of his charts in his *Boke of Idrography*.

Perhaps one of the best cartographic representations of the arguments made by men such as More, Rastell and Eden is Jean Rotz' *Boke of Idrography* (c.1535-1542). Rotz produced this book to showcase his skills in the hope that it would prove his worth and convince Henry to take him on as a royal cartographer.⁵⁶² Rotz worked to ensure that his book represented the most up to date information available regarding the Americas. To chart the North American coast, he drew on information from the Padron General, the French master map of the world, in both its 1529 and 1536 forms. He also likely relied on an unidentified master map, presumably drawn by a Portuguese cartographer. Helen Wallis has pointed out that the nomenclature of Rotz's charts, where they overlap with the Hague's, appears to be copied from a Portuguese original, with little or no knowledge of the Portuguese language itself.⁵⁶³ She further pointed out that Rotz's charts are the earliest surviving works to provide evidence of Cartier's discovery and exploration of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534, and that he is the first to show Cape Breton Island in insular form, and to locate it correctly on Cabot Strait. In addition, his charts are the earliest known to delimit

⁵⁶² Wallis, 8.

⁵⁶³ Wallis, 47-8. She pointed out that David Quinn came to the same conclusions from his studies of the book and thus argued that it was likely the *Hague Atlas*, however, Wallis did not believe that Rotz used the Hague, rather that both the *Hague Atlas* and Rotz's *Boke of Idrography* used the same original source. I argue that this can be seen in that the place names often do not make sense and the lettering of the Portuguese names is often hesitant and unclear, whereas in other places his lettering is quite clear and precise.

the extent of the Newfoundland-Labrador fishing banks.⁵⁶⁴ With his presentation of his *Boke of Idography*, Henry and his court gained access to this cutting-edge information.

Rotz's book contains several maps of the Americas that present two key images of North America to the English. One is of Native Americans, similar to that produced by Rastell and Eden. In his illustration of the Newfoundland and Labrador regions, Rotz includes the image of three Native Americans wearing animal skins and carrying bows.⁵⁶⁵ They do not appear threatening, but have pleasant expressions, and appear to be curious. The land around them is heavily wooded and without any sign of civilization. In addition, the coastline appears to have numerous, well-shaped harbors, making it an ideal place for navigation, while it also stretches nearly three quarters of the way across the Atlantic, appearing very close to England. His chart of the East Coast of North America also depicts Native Americans, this time in two separate groupings. In the first group, which is located in the north of the continent, there are two men wearing animal skins with long bows.⁵⁶⁶ Again, the Native Americans have pleasant expressions and appear curious. This time there is a wooden structure which looks very similar to a wigwam, roughly in the area of present-day New England. Further to the south, in the general vicinity of Florida and the Carolinas there are four additional native people.⁵⁶⁷ Instead of animal skins, these natives are dressed in short blue tunics. These tunics are decorated with gold bands, suggesting that the inhabitants of this region not only know how to make textiles, but can produce decorated cloth of some value.⁵⁶⁸ While these men still carry bows, they are much more civilized in appearance. Two appear to be engaged in friendly discussion, while the other two

⁵⁶⁴ Wallis, 48; see figure 4-3 for Rotz's depiction of North America and the Newfoundland region.

⁵⁶⁵ Jean Rotz, *Boke of Idography*, British Library Royal MS 20 E IX. F. 22r. See figure 7.

⁵⁶⁶ Rotz, f. 23v. See figure 4-6.

⁵⁶⁷ Rotz, f. 24r. See figure 4-6.

⁵⁶⁸ Rotz, f. 24r. See figure 4-7.

stand in a thoughtful pose. This illustration gives the impression that the southern portion of North America is inhabited by civilized people who are kind, thoughtful, and contemplative. The land around the natives appears wooded with some open grassland. In this image Rotz also includes two bulls placed relatively close to another wooden structure, giving the impression that this region can support domesticated animals.



Figure 3-7 Rotz's map of Labrador. Here the Natives wearing skins can clearly be seen. As noted above, while they do carry long bows they do not appear to be threatening, rather, they appear to be curious. Personal photo taken of F. 23v from a facsimile copy held by the Virginia Garrett Special Collections at the University of Texas at Arlington.



Figure 3-8 Rotz' map of North America. Here two different groups of Native Americans can be seen, one which seems to be a more primitive group and the other much closer to those depicted in the Mediterranean world. Personal photo taken of Rotz, f. 24r, facsimile copy held at the Special Collections at UT Arlington.



Figure 3-9 In this image the gold detail on the tunics worn by the North Americans can be seen. Personal photo taken of Rotz, f. 24r from the facsimile copy at the Special Collections at UT Arlington.

With these images, Rotz presents the idea that North America is inhabited by peaceful, perhaps even civilized Native Americans, which would make it easy for the English to not only establish trade connections, but with the less civilized Natives in the north of the continent, it would also appear that it would be easy for the English to establish colonies in North America. In addition, the depiction of heavily forested areas, and areas where livestock would flourish, highlights the

natural resources available in North America, resources such as timber and fair valleys, just as Rastell and later Eden focus on.

This is in stark contrast to an Atlas produced for Queen Mary just over a decade later. *Queen Mary's Atlas*, c. 1558, by Diego Homen is believed to have been intended as a gift to King Philip II of Spain from Queen Mary. It is believed that Mary commissioned the atlas in 1555, however, Homen did not complete the work until 1558, after Queen Mary died and left the throne to her sister Elizabeth I.⁵⁶⁹ The atlas thus remained in the English court and never made it to Spain. Diego Homen was the son of the leading Portuguese cartographer, Lopo Homem, and with his father is considered one of the best Portuguese cartographers of the time. Diogo Homen had moved to London in 1547 and spent the remainder of his life splitting his time between London and Italy.⁵⁷⁰ The atlas currently contains nine maps; however, Peter Barber believes that the current atlas is incomplete and that it originally contained fourteen maps, and is the most iconographically complex of Diogo Homem's known atlases.⁵⁷¹

The atlas includes a map of North America which, unlike the other maps in the Atlas, lacks elaborate illustrations.⁵⁷² The illustrations make North America appear to be a less than ideal place to explore and clearly label it as the sole possession of the King of Spain. There is a large Spanish coat of arms in Terra Florida, above which is the depiction of sandy, almost desert like mountains with a few trees here and there. This is by no means an illustration of forests,

⁵⁶⁹ Barber points out that while there is no existing written evidence of the commission the internal evidence in the Atlas leaves no room for doubt that it was a royal commission meant for Philip II of Spain. Barber, *The Queen Mary Atlas*, 45.

⁵⁷⁰ R. A. Skelton, *Explorers' Maps*, originally printed by Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1958. (Reprint, London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970), 143, 158. Hans Wolff, ed. *America: Early Maps of the New World*, (Munich: Prestel, 1992), 60; Barber, *The Queen Mary Atlas*, pp. 26-28, 35-38; Tyacke, 1730.

⁵⁷¹ Barber, *The Queen Mary's Atlas*, 45.

⁵⁷² *Queen Mary's Atlas*, BL Add MS 5415A, F. 19.

rather it presents the image that the area has barely a scattering of trees. Next to this is an illustration of grasslands with no sign of life or of fertile land. There is another Spanish flag near what would be Cape Cod and a Spanish crest in the Newfoundland region, clearly claiming all of North America for Spain. The North Atlantic itself is depicted as a hostile environment with a battle scene between two ships in the middle of the Atlantic and a total of four sea monsters in the oceans around North America. This is exceptional considering there are only four other sea monsters in the entire Atlas. Clearly the intent of this cartography was to make clear that the North Atlantic was not a place the English wished to investigate and that North America belonged to Spain. This is an excellent example of cartography being used as a tool for propaganda.



Figure 3-10 Map of North American in the Queen Mary Atlas. The desert like illustrations are clearly seen, as are two of the sea monsters on this map, one that could represent a whale, just north of the Newfoundland region and one that looks more like a sea serpent near the Caribbean. There are two more sea monsters near Iceland, which is not included in this expanded view of the western Atlantic.

BL Add MS 5415A, F. 19. Image taken from the eBook Treasures digital reproduction of the BL manuscript. Personal study was conducted in the British Library with the original manuscript, however, photo restrictions prevented personal photos of the Atlas.

When compared to *Queen Mary's Atlas*, it becomes evident that Rotz not only wanted to demonstrate his skill and knowledge as a cartographer, but that he was also playing on England's North American aspirations. Coming from France it would have made sense for him to include French flags or images in North America, especially as he is the first known cartographer to include Cartier's discoveries, which laid claim to most of the northern half of North America for France. However, Rotz did not do this. Rather, he presented the English court with imagery that depicted North America as the ideal place for English expansion, the visual representation of Rastell's depictions. Likewise, he also leaves West Africa free of any French flags. This image of North America is contrasted with Rotz's depiction of South America, which is heavily populated by violent, even barbarous Native Americans and which is already clearly being harvested by the Portuguese to their great benefit.



Figure 3-11 Here the Natives of Brazil are seen being forced to harvest brazilwood for the Portuguese. There is also a cannibalistic scene in the bottom right corner where a Native is roasting a human leg over a fire. Personal photo of Rotz, f. 28r taken from the facsimile copy at the Special Collections at the University of Texas at Arlington.



Figure 3-12 In this northern section of Rotz' map of South America several violent scenes as well as a ritualistic dance and communal living can be observed. Rotz, f. 28r. Personal photo taken of the facsimile copy at Special Collections at the University of Texas at Arlington.

The illustrations of South America are far less welcoming, with several scenes of cannibalism, warfare, executions, and of Natives dancing in a large circle as part of a religious practice.⁵⁷³ The continent appears heavily populated with a large Tupinambá village in the center of the continent.⁵⁷⁴ This stockade appears to depict communal living, as there are three long houses inside the stockade and a large group of Natives gathered around a group of hammocks in the center. The Portuguese had already laid claim to this region and are seen forcing the Natives to help them harvest logs from a large, dense forest. All of the Natives are naked, except for those taking part in a ritualistic dance. These appear to be wearing grass or

⁵⁷³ Rotz, f. 28r. See figures 4-10 and 4-11.

⁵⁷⁴ Wallis not only identifies the illustrations in South America as representing the Tupinambá but she also argues that Rotz's depictions are so accurate and detailed that this map should be considered as one of the earliest primary records of the Tupinambá. Wallis, 41, 57-8.

feathered skirts. Many of the Natives are armed with very large bows, or with long spears. The arrows used by the natives are nearly as long as they are tall. This image stands in stark contrast to the images of North America, which appear welcoming and somewhat tame. With these images, Rotz presents the interesting idea that South America is full of savagery and violence, and is already being conquered by the Portuguese, whereas North America is presented as inviting, free of European incursion and sparsely inhabited by friendly, innocent looking Native Americans. This visual representation, which would have been well known at court, and probably familiar to many of the educated in England, such as merchants, scholars, and cartographers, highlighted England's chances in North America, a land that appears open and ready for trade partners or colonizers.

These scenes of cannibalism and violence should not be surprising. They had been common in Medieval travel narratives, were prevalent in contemporary exploration narratives, and included in some cartographic illustrations. *Queen Mary's Atlas* included graphic scenes of depravity in the map of South America, despite the fact that this Atlas so obviously focuses on glorifying the Spanish Empire. Take for example the scene in the center of South America which details a cannibalistic feast with four women conversing next to body parts which have been hung up on a tree to drain.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁵ BL, Add MS 5415A, f. 23.



Figure 3-13 Here the illustration of a cannibalistic feast can be seen on the map of south America from the Queen Mary Atlas. Queen Mary's Atlas, BL Add MS 5415A, F. 23. Image taken from the eBook Treasures digital reproduction of the BL manuscript

These contrasted with Rastell's and Eden's images of Native Americans in North America as innocent and childlike. Eden stated that in North America there are "cities and towres so well buylded and people of such sivilty, that this parte of the world seemeth little inferior to owre Europe, if th[e] inhabitants had received owre relition. They are wyttie people and refuse not barteryng with strangers. These regions are cauled Terra Florida and Regio Baccalearum or Bacchallaos."⁵⁷⁶ This description of the natives in the region around Florida as almost on the level of Europeans is similar to Rotz's illustration and indicates that this might have been a shared or common impression. This idea of civility and innocence in North America is very different from the literary depictions of the native peoples of South America.

Vespucci's accounts of Caribbean exploration, widely read and discussed, are full of stories of cannibalism and barbarousness, far too many to discuss here. Vespucci includes accounts of women overcome by their sexual urges and who are skilled in the art of abortions.⁵⁷⁷ His tales of cannibalism depict groups of Natives who "eat little flesh except human flesh" and who go on periodic hunting expeditions to neighboring islands in order to capture young boys, who they castrate and then fatten before eating.⁵⁷⁸ In his third voyage, he encountered a cannibalistic tribe in which the women lured some of his fellows to the shore and killed them. The women roasted and ate their victims as Vespucci and his fellows watched helplessly.⁵⁷⁹ These accounts are not of one tribe or village, but encompass a wide geographical region, recorded throughout his travels, with some distinction in Native American groups. In addition to cannibalism, Vespucci also records an island of giants, who go about "entirely naked."⁵⁸⁰ On his

⁵⁷⁶ Eden, 55.

⁵⁷⁷ Vespucci, 10.

⁵⁷⁸ The first quote is from Vespucci 13, the story of castration is found on page 26.

⁵⁷⁹ Vespucci, 36.

⁵⁸⁰ Vespucci, 30-1.

third voyage he encountered a village that displayed such savagery that he describes the people as “worse than animals.”⁵⁸¹ Whether these accounts were exaggerated or not, they were consumed by the literate and informed the general opinion Europeans held of the Americas.⁵⁸²

Peter Martyr’s accounts also are filled with mentions of Cannibals, though he downplays them. He simply states that people of a certain place were cannibals, and then discusses the vegetation, buildings, and other aspects of the region.⁵⁸³ Eden’s translated accounts of South America and the Caribbean are also filled with stories of cannibalism, with many going into great detail, such as the account of a group who fattened their victims “as we are wont to doe with capons or hennes” for a number of years before eating them. This particular group did not kill the women they captured “but reserve them to increase, as we doe hennes to lay egges.”⁵⁸⁴ All of these tales of savagery and barbarity are reserved for South America and the Caribbean. It was South America that Walter Raleigh named as the location for the Ewaipanomas, headless men with their eyes and mouths in the middle of their chests.⁵⁸⁵ Stories of giants in South America became so well-known, and widespread during the sixteenth century, that most of Europe came to believe that there was a nation of giants in the southernmost part of the New World.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ Vespucci, 35.

⁵⁸² William Brandon has pointed out that one of Vespucci’s frequently reprinted and immensely popular, though distorted letters, contained tales of cannibalism in which the father ate the son or the son the father and in which one native boasted of having eaten more than 300 persons. William Brandon, *New Worlds For Old: Reports from the New World and their effect on the development of social thought in Europe, 1500-1800*, (London: Ohio University Press, 1986), 37.

⁵⁸³ A good example of this is found in the Second book of the Ocean Decade, Peter Martyr. *Selections from Peter Martyr*, Geoffrey Eatough, editor and translator, (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), vol. V., pp. 50-51.

⁵⁸⁴ Arbor, 29.

⁵⁸⁵ Jorge Magasich-Airola, Jean Marc de Beer, *America Magica: When Renaissance Europe Thought it had Conquered Paradise*, Translated by Monica Sandor, 2nd ed., (New York: Anthem Press, 2007), pp. 86, 165. According to popular beliefs in Northern Europe at the time, these monsters were said to symbolize the return of the dead.

⁵⁸⁶ Magasich-Airola and Beer, 183.

Tales of the monstrous should not be surprising. There are examples of the monstrous living in exotic places in many, if not most, of the cosmographies and histories of the time. Caxton's well known *The Myrroure and description of the World*, includes tales of men who eat raw flesh, pygmies, horned men, men who are half man and half beast, beasts with heads of dogs and bodies of men, dragons, panthers that breath poison, and many more, in its description of the Indies.⁵⁸⁷ These tales of savageness appear to be restricted to India, South America and the Caribbean in the relevant cosmographies. However, just as Rotz' illustrations of the inhabitants of the Americas present North Americans as innocent and childlike, so too do the literary representations, such as Rastell, More, and Eden present North Americans in a good light, depicting them not only as innocent but also as ready to receive the gospel. Rastell only presents this image of Amerindians, not discussing natives in South America. Eden also gives this representation of North American Amerindians, with his statement that the people of Florida are very civil and willing to trade, while depicting South American Amerindians as barbarous.

The works of Rastell, More, Rotz, and Eden show that during the first half of the sixteenth century Englishmen were imagining the New World and their role in it. From the patriotic calls for colonization to the missionary motivations of spreading the gospel, to the images of a land overflowing with abundant resources and inhabited by peaceful, childlike Amerindians, the works of the early sixteenth century laid the foundations for the later works of Humphrey Gilbert and Richard Hakluyt. This foundation helped foster the image of North America as the logical place for England's colonizing efforts, due to location and the character of the inhabitants, and for the concept that God had called the English to colonize North America.

⁵⁸⁷ William Caxton, *The Myrroure and description of the World*, (printed by Laurence Andrewe, 1529?), second book, pp. 58-67

While Hakluyt would perfect this image by the end of the sixteenth century, he did not invent it. Rather, through the works discussed in this chapter, it can be seen that there was a continuation of interest in the New World through the sixteenth century.

Chapter 4

John Rastell: A Man of his Times

It has been said that John Rastell was a man before his times, that his “enterprising and versatile spirit” would have been better suited to the Elizabethan era than the Henrician, and had he lived in the Elizabethan era he would have flourished and probably even be remembered as one of the founding voices of English colonialism.⁵⁸⁸ Rather than arguing that Rastell is an anomaly, a man before his times, this dissertation argues that Rastell exemplifies a growing movement within the Henrician era, defined by men who possessed an “enterprising and versatile spirit.” They recognized the growing possibilities of the Atlantic world, not just for the enterprising individual but for the greater good of the commonweal. However, like so many of his contemporaries among the educated elite, Rastell found himself consumed by the Reformation and his diverse interests quickly whittled down by the all-consuming issue of shaping the Church of England and navigating the rapidly changing political environment.

Rastell is a case-study for the educated elite, and therefore, it is worth discussing his life and attempted voyage to North America in detail. While this voyage is normally written off as a failure with no real impact on English history, it demonstrates English interest in colonization as more than a passing curiosity to find a westward passage to Cathay. For Rastell, North America, not a Northwest Passage, represented England’s future. His voyage, the reasons Rastell embarked on it, the reasons it failed, and why Rastell did not undertake a second voyage, adds to

⁵⁸⁸ E.M.G. Routh, *Sir Thomas More and his Friends 1477-1535*, with a preface by Elizabeth Wordsworth, (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 45; Geritz and Laine, in their book argue that Rastell was never considered a “great man” in his time because he was ahead of his times, he should have lived in the Elizabeth era. Albert J. Geritz and Amos Lee Laine, *John Rastell*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), 92-3.

our understanding of attitudes within Henry's Court towards colonization and help reveal why England seemingly was uninterested in colonization until the Elizabethan era.

To appreciate Rastell's embodiment of the intellectual movements and attitudes of his times, it is important to understand the core of the humanist movement which guided many of the movers and shapers of the Henrician era. Two defining features of the humanist movement were the emphasis placed upon education, as it can reform society and bring the individual closer to the Divine or the Law of Nature, and a deep interest in the betterment of the commonweal.⁵⁸⁹ In these two areas, of all of those in the More circle, John Rastell best exemplifies the humanist movement in England.⁵⁹⁰ Throughout his life, Rastell was concerned with the education of the English populace, both the common man and those of privilege, and demonstrated a concern for the commonweal, including the commoner, in the sense of social democracy and the betterment of the English middle class.⁵⁹¹ This drove his legal career, guided his publishing business, spurred his passionate interest in geography, motivated him to establish a North American colony, eventually labelled him a religious zealot, and led to his death.

The Public Servant

⁵⁸⁹ Robert Grudin, "Humanism" *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., accessed November 22, 2017 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/humanism>.

⁵⁹⁰ Pearl Hogrefe has stated that "of all the men in the More circle, no one was more persistent in his comments about the commonweal than John Rastell." Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and their Impact on Secular Drama*, (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1959), 116.

⁵⁹¹ Geritz and Lain state that "He is always the serious-minded citizen, of some vision and outlook, interested and concerned for the commoner and the common weal, in the sense of social democracy." 272. As discussed in chapter 2, the term Commonweal had developed two meanings by this point. First, it could mean the common well-being, general good, or welfare of a group of people. Second, it could mean the whole body politic, the state, community or the commonwealth. More and his friends tended to combine these two meanings and where Rastell is concerned it seems to especially embody the concept of the common welfare of all. Hogrefe, 98.

There is some discrepancy over the year of Rastell's birth. A. W. Reed placed his birth at approximately 1475, based on his entry into the Corpus Christi Guild book in 1489.⁵⁹² However, Alan Harding believed he was born as early as 1468, though he offers no explanation.⁵⁹³ Tradition has it that Rastell was born in London, as he is recorded as "John Rastell of London" in 1548 by John Bale, and John Pits (1619) named London as the place of birth.⁵⁹⁴ However, both of Rastell's parents appear to have lived their entire lives in Coventry. It was common for merchants who moved around to take up the place of their current residency, when they had lived there for a number of years or reached a level of distinction in the city, as their identifying place of residence. For instance, Robert Thorne is known as both "Robert Thorne of Bristol" and "Robert Thorne of London" at different points in his life. The same is true of Roger Barlow. Rastell likely spent his early years in Coventry, then moved to London as an adult and spent the remainder of his life there. Thus, Bale's identification of Rastell as a citizen of London does not mean that he was born in the city, simply that he had reached the position of a denizen of London at some point in his adult life. This is not surprising given Rastell's active life in the city as an adult.

⁵⁹² Reed has found that the earliest recorded entry of an instalment of Rastell's guild fee was paid in 1489, if Rastell entered the gild at the age of fourteen, as was normal at the time, then it would put his birth at 1475. This is the date that is also used by Albert Geritz and Lee Laine Amos, in both of their dissertations on Rastell as well as in their coauthored book on him. A.W. Reed, *Early Tudor Drama: Medwarll, the Rastells, Heywood and the More Circle*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 1; Albert John Geritz, *The Dramas and Prose Works of John Rastell*, Diss. University of Missouri, 1976, 16-17; Geritz and Laine, 1; Amos Lee Laine, "John Rastell: An Active Citizen of the English Commonwealth" Diss. Duke University, 1972, 4.

⁵⁹³ Alan Harding, "Rastell, John (by 1468-1536), of London" *The History of Parliament; the House of Commons 1509-1558*, ed. S.T. Bindoff, 1982. Online format, accessed 8/9/2017. This dating of Rastell's birth seems highly unlikely, I include it only because it is the official date offered by *The History of Parliament; the House of Commons*.

⁵⁹⁴ Laine, 1; John Bale, *Illustrim Majoris Britanniae Scriptorum hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae summarium in quasdam centurias diuisum, cum diuersitate doctinarum atque annorum recta supputatione per omnes aetates a Iapheto sanctissimi Noah filio, ad annum domini. M.D.XLVIII. Autore Ioanne Balaeo Sudouolca.*, Wesel, 1548, f. 222; The Oxford University alumni list describes Rastell as "a Londoner born" Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714: Their Parentage, birthplace, and year of birth, with a record of their degrees. Being the matriculation register of the University, alphabetically arranged, revised and annotated*, vol. III, (Oxford and London: Parker and Co., 1891), 1234.

Rastell came from a fairly prominent family, with both his father and his grandfather serving in positions of local governance. In the late fifteenth century, Coventry was a leading artisanal, trading, and financial center in England, with a developing civic spirit evidenced by its economic, political, religious, and cultural activities.⁵⁹⁵ The two major guilds of the city, Trinity and Corpus Christi were both very active and held influence in both the social and political life of the city and its environs.⁵⁹⁶ Rastell appears to have first entered Corpus Christy guild in 1489, when the first of a series of installments of his guild fee was paid by a Joan Symonds, the widow of an ex-mayor of Coventry.⁵⁹⁷ Rastell then attended Oxford where he was liberally educated in philosophy, theology, history, and literature.⁵⁹⁸

Eventually Rastell made his way to London and joined the Middle Temple. He appears to have been in contact with the More family before his entry into Middle Temple. The first record of Rastell's association with More is an entry in Henry VII's Book of Payments in 1499 when John More, John Rastell, Thomas More and one other provided securities for the repayment of a loan or debt valued at one hundred marks.⁵⁹⁹ Rastell married Sir Thomas More's sister Elizabeth, and then returned to Coventry as a lawyer in 1502-3, where he was named as Sir John More's son-in-law in a quit-claim of tenement in 1504.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁵Geritz, 16-17; Geritz and Laine, 1; Harding, no pagination.

⁵⁹⁶ Geritz and Laine, 1. Edward Kasabov and Usha Sundaram, "An Institutional Account of Governance Structures in Early Modern Business History: The Coventry Business (hi)story" *Business History*, vol. 56, (2014), pp. 592-622, pp. 605-09. The Trinity and Corpus Christi Guilds of Coventry are of particular note at this time as both exerted considerable financial and political power over the city. These Guilds used their member's monetary contributions and political connections to promote commercial interests within the city and surrounding areas, to build schools, support chaplains and keep the peace (to a degree) and even supported stage pageants. Guilds like these were common at the time in England.

⁵⁹⁷ Reed, 1.

⁵⁹⁸ Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 1234.

⁵⁹⁹ While the purpose of the debt is not known, it is known that they paid off the debt in full the following year. Reed, 2.

⁶⁰⁰ Geritz, *Dramas and Prose*, 17. Reed, 2.

In Coventry, Rastell pursued a career similar to that of his father and grandfather, and held several civic positions such as coroner and clerk of recognizances and debts, as well as presiding over the Court of Statute Merchant.⁶⁰¹ In these positions Rastell quickly earned a reputation for championing the plight of the lower classes and siding with them against the established hierarchy of the church and wealthy burghers.⁶⁰² This would have strengthened the bond between Rastell and More, as the latter is known to have condemned the lust for wealth and the corruption it brought, and believed that the law should be used to bring justice to all, not oppression to the lower classes. These sentiments would have been encouraged and further developed in Rastell through his association with other members in More's group, including Erasmus and Vives, who emphasized the rights of men to beneficial economic conditions, such as employment, fair wages, and provisions for sickness and old age.⁶⁰³

In 1507 the first indications of Rastell's eventual Protestant leanings can be seen in the will of Richard Cooke. Cooke appointed Rastell overseer of his will, in which he bequeathed one Bible in English to Trinity Church, Coventry and one to Walsall Parish Church.⁶⁰⁴ It is interesting, that in what would be considered a case of Lollardry, Richard Cooke considered Rastell as someone who would ensure that his request was carried out. As a printer in London, Rastell became well known for publishing works in English and pushed throughout his life for a greater volume of material to be translated into English for the betterment of the common man.

⁶⁰¹ Geritz and Lain, 2-3.

⁶⁰² Geritz and Lain, 2. At this time the wealthy merchants were known for squeezing the smaller artisans and the town for every penny possible. The town experienced increasing resentment and unrest towards the perceived abuses of the wealthier merchants during the latter part of the fifteenth century and the first part of the sixteenth century until Henry VIII dissolved the guilds and other institutions during the reformation. Kasabov and Sundaram, pp. 606-609.

⁶⁰³ Richard Marius, *Thomas More: a Biography*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.25, 30. For a further discussion of More's critique of society see the discussion of More's *Utopia* in chapters 10-12; Hogrefe, 138.

⁶⁰⁴ Reed, 3; Geritz and Laine, 2-3.

However, this was before Rastell moved to London and may indicate that he, like many of his future humanist friends, already leaned towards the idea that the Bible should be made more readily available to the literate, whether through the publication of English editions or the education of the literate in Greek so that they might access more accurate translations. The timing of the will is also interesting. The will was processed in 1507. Rastell resigned his post as Coroner of Coventry in 1508-09, moving to London soon afterwards.

Though some posit that Rastell felt pressured to leave Coventry after enforcing Richard Cooke's bequest⁶⁰⁵ It is more likely that Rastell simply found this the opportune time to move his growing family to London where they would be closer to his wife's family. Rastell had just received a considerable inheritance from Joan Symonds, who had paid his guild instalments, and remained close to the Rastell family. She was god-mother to Rastell's daughter Joan, who apparently was named after Symonds. When Symonds died in 1507 the disposition of her wealth was left almost entirely in Rastell's hands, benefiting him greatly. It does not appear that Rastell cut all ties with Coventry when he moved. His eldest son John was a member of Corpus Christi Guild in 1511 and regular payments were made for him until 1513.⁶⁰⁶ If Rastell had left Coventry under a cloud of suspicion it is unlikely that he would have sent his eldest son back to Coventry to enter the Guild where the family was well known.

At some point between 1508 and 1512 Rastell established his first print shop, emerging in 1512 as a London printer with two devices and an establishment at Paul's Chains near the Deanery on the south side of the Churchyard.⁶⁰⁷ Rastell's first publication was an updated

⁶⁰⁵ Geritz and Laine posit that the will indicates that Rastell had Lollard leanings and now that his views were made known he was forced to leave Coventry, 2-3.

⁶⁰⁶ Reed, 4.

⁶⁰⁷ Reed, 8.

translation of Thomas More's *Life of Pico della Mirandula*. The book is undated, making it impossible to precisely nail down the year in which Rastell began printing. One of Rastell's first major publications was the *Grand Abridgment of Cases* by Anthony Fitzherbert, the Recorder of Coventry, demonstrating his continued ties with his hometown. While this three-volume work was not finished until 1516, Rastell announced its publication in 1513, which is about the same time that he appears to have first become interested in printing law books, acquiring a special, small type used by Rouen printers for this purpose.⁶⁰⁸

In 1512 Rastell also entered into the service of Sir Edward Belknap, brother-in-law of Henry Smyth of Coventry. Belknap served as Clerk of the King's Works, sat on the Privy Council for both Henry VII and Henry VIII, and was the peer charged with organizing the king's revels and occasions of state.⁶⁰⁹ Belknap was frequently sent on special assignments to France and it is through this connection that Rastell found himself serving as the overseer for the unloading of ordinance at the Tower during the French War of 1512-14. In the Royal Ordinance documents related to Rastell's appointment, he is referred to as "John Rastell gentleman" indicating that by 1514 he had reached a new level of success and status.⁶¹⁰ Through Rastell's connection with Belknap he entered into the service of the King.

⁶⁰⁸ Reed, 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Reed, 7; Routh, 43; David S. Shields "John Rastell's the *III Elements*" *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 107 (September 2013), pp. 297-309, 301.

⁶¹⁰L&P vol. I, Part II: 1513-14, #3539, p. 1476; An entry dated December 11, 1514 lists "John Rastell, gentleman" as an overseer receiving 12d a day, along with Geoffrey Hughes also an overseer who received 8d a day. TNA SP 1/230 f. 280, entry dated December 19, 1514 lists Rastell as a gentleman along with a Geoffrey Hewis, both overseers of sixty-eight day laborers. In this document Rastell's payment has been increased to 1s a day. At this time the definition of the title "Gentleman" was shifting from the Medieval definition of a gentleman which was roughly equivalent to *nobilis* and indicated someone entitled to bear arms and not of common birth, to include those with enough wealth and education that they could afford to purchase and bear arms, and did not have to do manual labor to survive. During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century this term seems to have implied that courtly training and graces. Thus, the use of this title for Rastell at this time indicates that he had reached a level of wealth and prestige in society that he did not have to do manual labor to live and could associate in higher

In 1515 Belknap secured for Rastell the indenture of the lands, tenements, goods and debts of Richard Hunne, a well-known heretic who had recently died under suspicious circumstances.⁶¹¹ Hunne was a wealthy Merchant Taylor who had been found hanged in the Lollard's Tower just before Christmas 1514. His main crime was the refusal of an "offering" of mortuary for the burial of his infant child. The issue of tithes and offerings was in debate in London at the time and when the coroner declared Hunne murdered, and the Church ruled Hunne a heretic post mortem, it did not go over well among Hunne's friends and associates or with those who sided against the church in the current debate over tithes.⁶¹² Along with these worldly possessions, Rastell also secured the wardship of Hunne's two daughters. The Hunne estate provided Rastell with a significant amount of land and wealth, but embroiled him in years of legal proceedings after his return from his failed voyage. The irony of this situation should not be lost. Rastell gained these lands because Hunne refused to pay an "offering" to the church, which both Rastell and More argued was excessive at the time. The court cases over Hunne's estate lasted most of his life, and he eventually died because of his objection to such "offerings" and tithes.

When Rastell moved his family to London all three of his children, John, Joan and William had been born. Rastell settled his family in a country-house at Monken Hadley, only a mile or so from Sir John More's Manor House at Gobions, in 1514 taking a thirty-year lease on the house. Rastell's children were about the same ages as More's children, and it appears that the two families spent quite a bit of time together. When More moved his family to his country

social circles, even, apparently, the court. For a more technical definition see, "Gentleman" *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, (June 29, 2017), accessed online 7/14/2018.

⁶¹¹ TNA C1/560/51; C1/56/47.

⁶¹² Reed, 9.

home at Chelsea in 1524, Rastell built a second residence at Finsbury Fields where he also built an open-air stage for the performance of plays, and where his family would continue to be walking distance from the More household.⁶¹³

Upon moving to London Rastell entered into More's circle of friends. As discussed in chapter two, More's circle epitomized the humanist movement in England, and Rastell especially embraced their enthusiastic belief in man's ability to explore and know the world. Above all, Rastell came to embody and exemplify their belief in the duty of man to become well educated, and of an educated man to actively pursue a life of service to his King and country.⁶¹⁴ It is also likely that it was during this time spent with More that Rastell became interested in the New World. More is said to have taken "a lively intellectual interest in the great discoveries,"⁶¹⁵ including the idea of colonization, as is reflected in *Utopia*. More realized that colonies would create, as David Quinn states, "both opportunities and problems to human society."⁶¹⁶ Richard Marius has pointed out that More liked to "toy with riddles" with his friends, and the riddle of how to approach a project such as colonization, which presented both problems and

⁶¹³TNA REQ 2/8/14; This is the estate that is discussed in Rastell's court case against Henry Walton regarding "players' garments." This is also the first Tudor reference to a stage specifically built for plays, an important step in the formalization and commercialization of plays and pageanties in England. Maura Giles-Watson, "John Rastell's London Stage: Reconstructing Repertory and Collaborative Practice" *Early Theatre*, vol. 16.2 (2013), pp. 171-184; Routh, 44.

⁶¹⁴ Geritz and Lain, 4. According to Robert Grudin a central tenet of early humanism was that the possessor of *humanitas* (i.e. a well-trained humanist) "could not be merely a sedentary and isolated philosopher or man of letters but was of necessity a participant in active life ... Just as action without insight was held to be aimless and barbaric, insight without action was rejected as barren and imperfect. *Humanitas* called for a fine balance of action and contemplation." Grudin, no pagination.

⁶¹⁵ Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government: Maps at Court to 1550" David Buisseret ed. *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, 26-56, 29.

⁶¹⁶ David Quinn, *England and the Discovery, of America, 1481-1620: From the British Voyages of the Fifteenth Century to the Pilgrim Settlement at Plymouth: the Exploration, Exploitation, and Trial-and-Error Colonization of North America by the English*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 162. Kenneth Andrews also states that Rastell, "shared More's intellectual interest in the great discoveries and the potentialities of the New World." Kenneth Andrews *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 54.

opportunities, would have been just the kind of riddle More would have enjoyed discussing with his circle of friends.⁶¹⁷ We know from *Utopia* that More thought about the role and purpose of colonization, and many of his ideas share similarities with Rastell's. It can, therefore, be inferred with some degree of plausibility that Rastell engaged More in such debates as Rastell developed his desire to become the first Englishman to colonize the New World.

The Voyage

As seen in chapter 3, Rastell strictly followed the literature of cartography and appears to have reached out to the fishermen and the merchants who were pioneering Newfoundland fisheries in order to gain the knowledge he needed to create a colony.⁶¹⁸ With the wealth of the Hunne estate, he gained the financial ability to support a colonizing venture to the New World. By this time, Rastell possessed a considerable reputation as a mathematician and cosmographer, which added to the credibility of his proposition, and had gained enough influence in official circles to interest those with authority over the king's ships.⁶¹⁹ With the publication of More's *Utopia* occurring at the same time that Rastell proposed his venture to the King and to the leading circles in London, Rastell quickly pulled together enough support, and borrowed enough money from the crown, to obtain a passport for his venture and to supply his ships.⁶²⁰ Thus, by

⁶¹⁷ Marius, 261.

⁶¹⁸ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 162. E. J. Devereux also points out that Rastell's discussion of pitch, tar, soap ash and fish depart from known published sources on the Americas and thus must have come from first-hand accounts. E.J. Devereux, "John Rastell's Utopian Voyage" *Moreana*, (September 1976), pp. 119-23, 123.

⁶¹⁹ Arthur W. Reed, "Rastell's Voyage in the Year 1517" *The Mariner's Mirror* (1923), pp. 137-47. For a discussion of Rastell's familiarity with the leading cartographic information see chapter 3. For further discussion of Rastell's reputation as a mathematician and cosmographer see Barber, 30.

⁶²⁰ Some historians, such as Williamson, have argued that Henry VIII only became interested in the idea of exploration after the publication of *Utopia*. Williamson has argued that Henry did not become interested in the New World until after the publication of *Utopia* in 1516 and that he took up the study of cosmography and developed a love for ships and seamen only after More made learning fashionable in Henry's court in 1519. James A. Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots and the English Discovery of North America Under Henry VII and Henry VIII*, (London: The Argonaut Press, 1929), 252. However, as has already been shown, Henry appears to have been interested in the sciences from his childhood.

1517, Rastell was ready to set out on an officially sanctioned voyage to establish a colony in the New World.

John Rastell and his small fleet (the exact size of the fleet is unknown) set sail in the spring of 1517 with an official letter of recommendation from the king in hand. This letter, dated March 5, 1517, lists the voyage as being conducted by John Rastell, Richard Spicer, and William Howting. While at first glance this appears to be a simple letter of introduction from the king to any princes or officials who might be encountered, requesting safe conduct for the men and their ships, it also shows that this was an officially sanctioned expedition that Henry had invested in for “the accomplishing of certain business of ours and theirs.”⁶²¹ The phrase “certain business of ours and theirs” indicates that this was not simply a trading mission supported by royal patronage, but a voyage, “to have (Henry’s) domunyon extendynge there into so farre a grounde.”⁶²² Another indication of Henry’s involvement was Sir Thomas Spert’s patronage.⁶²³ Spert was responsible for the king’s ships. Richard Eden later blamed him for the failure of Sebastian Cabot’s voyage of 1517, which is likely an incorrect reference to Rastell’s voyage.⁶²⁴ While the exact role Spert played in the voyage is unknown, he did not accompany the expedition as he was in London throughout 1517, overseeing the ballasting of ships in the

⁶²¹ Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, Document no. 68, p. 85.

⁶²² John Rastell, *A Merry Interlude of the IIII Elements*, (1530?), Li. While it is believed that Rastell wrote this work between 1517 and 1519 the only extant copy is an imperfect copy at the British Library which has a questionable date of 1530.

⁶²³ Eden states that in 1517 Henry VIII sent out an expedition under the governance of Sebastian Cabot and Sir Thomas Perte (Spert) “whose faynt heart was the cause that that viage toke none effect” and that if it were not for Spert’s faint heart England would have claimed the great treasures of Peru. Eden, 6.

⁶²⁴ It is quite possible that Eden was in error when he blamed Spert for the failure of the voyage in 1517 and that there were two voyages, one in 1508-09 and 1517 and that it was the 1508-09 voyage in which Spert’s “faint heart” caused the voyage to fail. Alwyn Ruddock makes a good case for Cabot having sailed both in 1504 and 1508, with the 1508 voyage ending in failure. A. A. Ruddock, ‘The Reputation of Sebastian Cabot’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xlvii (1974), 95-99.

Thames.⁶²⁵ There is also no evidence that Sebastian Cabot was involved in the expedition outside of Eden's account. However, it is possible that the expedition took place with Cabot's knowledge or blessing. Cabot still held the royal patent to all settlements and official trade in the region, which had been granted under Henry VII. Eden records that the voyage was "under the governance" of Cabot, indicating that he held some supervisory role, but he was not directly involved in the physical operations or sailing of the voyage.⁶²⁶ The fact that Rastell set out with an official letter but does not appear to have received a royal patent is curious. Perhaps Cabot's patent precluded one for Rastell, who had to receive permission from Cabot as well as Royal support for the expedition. Additional evidence for Henry's involvement in the expedition lays with Rastell taking with him the *Barbara*, which apparently was owned by the Earl of Surrey, the Lord High Admiral. Rastell also received royal funding for the voyage, as well as funding from his father-in-law Sir John More.⁶²⁷

Rastell, along with Richard Spicer, set out onboard the *Barbara*, while William Howting sailed on the *Mary Barking*, with Philip Tyse serving as the ship's master.⁶²⁸ Rastell also took with him one "Thomas Bercula of London, printer some tyme shervant unto maister Rastell."⁶²⁹

⁶²⁵ Reed argues that it is possible that Rastell's voyage is the same as the rumored 1517 voyage organized under Cabot and Spert, which some historians have disputed. He argues that it is possible that Cabot had nothing to do with the voyage and that it was organized under Surrey and Spert, who would have had the influence over the mariners to sabotage the voyage. Reed, 187-8. Quinn and Wallis simply state that Spert was a sponsor of the voyage. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 163; Wallis, "Some New Light on Early Maps of North America, 1490-1560" *Land-und Seekarten im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, [München: 1980] pp. 91-212, 99. Spert's signature appears on several documents during this period and he was granted the Indenture for granting of the office of ballasting ships in the Thames from April 22 1517 to April 21, 1527. TNA E 101/57/17.

⁶²⁶ James Williamson makes a similar argument, pointing out that there are enough references to Cabot in certain rolls of the City of London to suggest that he was in the city in 1516. He argues that Cabot likely was an organizer and "general director" of the expedition. Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 244-47.

⁶²⁷ Reed has identified that John More and John Rastell were bound in 1517 to find securities for advances made from the Royal Treasury for three obligations to pay 250 marks by 1521. Reed, 12; Routh states that both John and Thomas More were guarantors for the 1517 voyage. Routh, 44; Hogrefe, 29-30.

⁶²⁸ TNA REQ 2/3/192. Most of what is known of this voyage comes from this court case which is dated April 22, 1519 to April 21, 1520.

⁶²⁹ TNA REQ 2/3/192.

The names of the other ships in the fleet, and even the size of the fleet, are unknown, as they were simply referred to in the court cases as “the other ships” or “the fleet.” It is known that at Falmouth Rastell had with him thirty to forty soldiers, or more, in addition to the mariners. The expedition was fully equipped with the items needed to establish a successful colony, along with those items of comfort which Rastell could not do without. From the subsequent court cases it is known that Rastell took with him such items as, “white flour, baye salt with certeyn pakks of frysis and canvas and cofers of silks and tukes and other mercery ware with divers other goodes and howsold stuff as fedyr bedes napery pannes pottes and dyvers other wares as salt/ hides tallow and other thyngs,” along with tools for masons and carpenters.⁶³⁰ Items such as feather beds and household stuff were unnecessary if the voyage was simply a fishing expedition, as historians have tried to argue.⁶³¹ Others have suggested that Rastell merely intended to establish an outpost that could serve as a resupply stop on the way to Cathay.⁶³² While Rastell does state in his interlude that Cathay “can not lye Lytell paste a thousande myle” from America, this line was not included in his argument for colonizing the New World, but in his general description of the world and the relationship of the continents to each other.⁶³³ Rastell gives no indication that he considered trade with the East as an end game, nor does he ever mention the possibility of the

⁶³⁰ TNA REQ 2/3/192.

⁶³¹ Williamson has argued that while Rastell might have intended to establish a colony, it was most likely only an outpost to support the fishing off Newfoundland and expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage, just as Frobisher and the Gilberts would argue for in the Elizabethan era. Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 246-7. This seems very unlikely, however, as Rastell’s *IIII Elements* focuses on permanent colonies, he makes no mention at all of the possibility of a Northwest Passage, pp. 246-7.

⁶³² David Quinn argues that Rastell might have valued North America for its resources but that “it is also likely that he hoped to use a foothold on North America to make contact with Asia.” Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 163. In a later work Quinn stated that Rastell’s objective was “to exploit the fishery from a base nearby, but to go on himself with some of the merchandise and armed men to trade with Asia.” David Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612*, (London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 350. However, there is no indication that Rastell ever argued for or pursued opening greater trade with the East and there is no evidence that he believed there to be a Northwest Passage.

⁶³³ Rastell, *IIII Elements*, I.iiib.

Northwest Passage, which consumed so many Elizabethan explorers. Rastell's soldiers would have only been necessary for the establishment of a permanent colony, as they would not have been required to establish a trading post or temporary stopping post for a trip to Cathay.

According to the arrangements Rastell made with his family for overseeing his affairs while he was gone, it appears that Rastell anticipated that the initial trip would take him three years.⁶³⁴

From the beginning, Rastell's expedition faced trouble and delay. John Ravyn, one of Surrey's satellites, had been retained to act as purser for the *Barbara* and, as such, it was his job to ensure that the ship was properly supplied before embarking on her voyage. Ravyn did not adequately perform his job, nor did he intend to correct his mistake. Because of this, the *Barbara* was forced to make stops at Sandwich, Dartmouth, Plymouth and Falmouth to repair leaks (which Ravyn was later accused of causing) and take on additional stores.⁶³⁵ When the ships put in at Falmouth a conspiracy appears to have taken place with the intent of sabotaging the expedition. Thomas Mariable, whose testimony was taken during the court proceedings against Ravyn, testified that Ravyn and John Richards, the master of the *Barbara*, were "always famylyer togeder and every day in secret counsel," and they, along with Philip Tyse, the master of the *Mary Barking*, and the masters of the other ships, "toke a cousell all togedyr at falmouth wt out consent of the seyd Rastell or any other of the cap maisters that venturyd," and that they "concludyd that they wold cause and compel the seid Rastell and the other merchaunts to gyff up theyr viages." Otherwise they would bring them back again whether they wanted to or not, or

⁶³⁴ TNA C1/1512/32; C1/880/9; C1/883/8; REQ 2/8/14, all reference the measures Rastell took to ensure the continued profitability of his business and properties while he was away.

⁶³⁵ Some of the witnesses go so far as to suggest that Ravyn paid either the carpenter or one of the soldiers to create the leaks and make the *Barbara* unseaworthy. TNA REQ 2/3/192.

else they would put them in fear of their lives.⁶³⁶ With the conspiracy to sabotage the voyage agreed upon, the various ships' masters worked to insure the expedition's failure.

The first step taken, after having delayed the voyage thus far, was to separate the ships. At Falmouth Ravyn reportedly disappeared for seven or eight days, a sufficient amount of time to force the rest of the fleet to sail for Ireland without the *Barbara*. When Ravyn had been gone a few days, and no one could find him or tell Rastell where he had gone, Rastell reportedly demanded and forced Richards to sail without Ravyn. However, Richards returned the ship to Falmouth to wait for Ravyn. While Rastell might have hoped to rendezvous with the rest of his fleet in Ireland once his purser returned to the ship, it was not to be. The delay at Falmouth proved too much for the soldiers. The soldiers, presumably with the willing cooperation of the ships' masters, took all but the *Mary Barking* and the *Barbara* and set out for Ireland, not to be seen or heard from by either the *Barbara* or the *Mary Barking* again. The fate of these ships is unknown, as they do not appear again in the records, and as far as Rastell and his aid, Walker, were aware, the soldiers and their ships were not heard from again.⁶³⁷ While waiting at Falmouth for Ravyn, one John Tustell, who was part of the conspiracy with Ravyn to end the venture, approached Rastell and, on Ravyn's orders, attempted to convince him to turn the venture into a trading expedition to Bordeaux. However, Rastell threatened to take all of his men and goods and continue on without Richards, Ravyn and Tustell if necessary.⁶³⁸

Some historians have argued that the loss of the rest of the fleet with the presumed mutiny against Rastell by the soldiers and mariners shows Rastell to have been a weak leader. They argue that it was Rastell's inability to prove himself a strong enough leader to maintain

⁶³⁶ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 1.

⁶³⁷ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 1.

⁶³⁸ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 1.

order long enough to make it to the Atlantic that caused the soldiers to leave, and ultimately caused the voyage to fail. Kenneth Andrews, for instance, states that the failure of the expedition can be attributed to the fact that Rastell “proved himself a remarkably incompetent commander.”⁶³⁹ This view relegates Rastell to the footnotes of history as an interesting failure. While it is true that this does show that Rastell lacked the charisma to command loyalty from his men it must be remembered that Rastell had no maritime experience or status. Rastell was nothing more than a gentleman with some cartographic knowledge attempting to lead an expedition, a dreamer with no experience leading men. At this time, the ship’s master, not the captain or merchant captain had the final say and it fell to the ship’s master to maintain order. Unless it was a military vessel, captains had very limited power aboard ship, especially ones with no maritime experience.⁶⁴⁰ This would change in the decades to come.

After the debacle at Falmouth, Rastell managed to get his ship to Waterford. However, it was already well into the summer and the crew of the *Barbara* refused to go any further. Raven approached Rastell with the suggestion that they give up their transatlantic voyage and turn to piracy. An Irish ship had just taken a Portuguese vessel and Ravyn argued that according to the law of the sea they could take both the Irish ship and the captured Portuguese vessel and make more profit than they could fishing in the “new lands.” When Rastell refused, Ravyn once again put forth the idea of turning the expedition into a trading voyage to Bordeaux. When Rastell again refused, he was informed that William Howting had made it as far as Cork, at which point he had also been informed by his ship’s master, Philip Tyse, that the voyage should be changed

⁶³⁹ Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 54; David Quinn makes a similar argument when he states that the failure of the voyage is likely due to “the lack of effective direction and control by Rastell himself. He did not exhibit any exceptional qualities of leadership and allowed himself to be intimidated into giving up his goods and his enterprise.” Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 166.

⁶⁴⁰ Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína, *Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, (1992) translated by Carla Rahn Phillips, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 83, 87-95.

to a trading voyage to Bordeaux. When Howting refused to give up the transatlantic voyage, Tyse had him locked in his cabin, with fear for his life, and took the ship to England.⁶⁴¹

Having learned of the fate of William Howting, Rastell decided to disembark and take up residence at Thomas Dryvams' house. This served the dual purpose of allowing him a chance to recruit Irish mariners and to put distance between himself and Ravyn for his own personal protection, as he feared Ravyn taking physical action against him. As Ravyn and Richards continued to press Rastell to give up his transatlantic voyage, Rastell threatened to simply fire the entire crew and hire a new one in Ireland, at which point Ravyn and Richards informed Rastell that if he followed through with his threat, they would take "the ship again to my lord admyrall as they had him promised."⁶⁴²

While at Dryvams' house, Ravyn came again to Rastell and in a fit of rage, told Rastell that he had been commanded by the Lord Admiral to see to it that the ship "occupied after Ravyns counsel and mynd to my lords most profet and seyde yt yf that Rastell wold not be orderyd by hym that he would bring ship and goods home agayn to my lord whyther Rastill wold or no."⁶⁴³ If these statements are true, and the witnesses in the court case reported that they were indeed true, then it would appear that Lord Surrey had instructed Ravyn to insure that the voyage brought him the most profit possible. It also seems that Lord Surrey never intended the expedition to make it to North America. If all of the ships' masters joined together to see that the merchants were persuaded against the venture, and if the ships' masters were instructed to seek profit, then it seems unlikely that they had ever intended to make a transatlantic voyage. More likely, they had intended from the beginning to delay the voyage long enough to make the excuse

⁶⁴¹ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 1.

⁶⁴² TNA REQ 2/3/192, ff. 1-2.

⁶⁴³ TNA REQ 2/3/192, ff. 1-2.

that it was too late in the year for a transatlantic voyage, but they could sail to Bordeaux to trade. And indeed, they used this argument, asking Rastell several times to give up the voyage and try again the following year, which he continually refused.⁶⁴⁴

It might seem odd for Lord Surrey to have invested in the voyage if he did not want it to succeed, however, as the Lord High Admiral, he most likely did not have any say in whether or not he could participate in the venture. If Henry had decided that he wanted the venture to be, in part, a royal venture, and had commanded his Lord High Admiral to assist in manning the fleet, then Lord Surrey would have been compelled to see to it that the fleet was adequately outfitted with ships and trusted mariners. If the venture failed after leaving harbor and still managed to bring back a profit, then Lord Surrey would have been able to gain from the venture with no risk to his own investment. Regardless of Lord Surrey's motivation, Ravyn used Lord Surrey's orders to ensure that the voyage failed.

Ravyn went to Rastell once again and informed him that if he did not give up his colonizing venture and agree to take the ship to Bordeaux, then the same as happened to Howtyng, or worse, would happen to him. Apparently fearing for his life, and unable to gain access to the ship, Rastell agreed to give up on the voyage for the year and sent the Lord Admiral a letter, "to desire hym to be good lord to hym to performe his viage the next yere."⁶⁴⁵ Richard Walker, who served as Rastell's factor, went to Lord Surrey to inform him of the mariners' "evil" treatment of Rastell. Surrey told Walker that he "had send down John Ravyn to take the ship unto his oln hand." Surrey commanded Walker "that he shuld no more meddyll wt rastells goodis being in the ship and sayd yt ravyn knew forther of hys mynd therin."⁶⁴⁶ In the end,

⁶⁴⁴ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 2.

⁶⁴⁵ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 4.

⁶⁴⁶ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 4.

Ravyn divided most of the articles of clothing among the mariners and the rest he appears to have taken to Bordeaux, claiming that it was the Lord High Admiral's command that they be sold and distributed to the mariners.⁶⁴⁷ Despite years of litigation, Rastell never received compensation for his lost goods valued at roughly £100.

Once Ravyn departed with the *Barbara*, Rastell was left on his own in Ireland to nurse his wounded pride. Having made arrangements to be gone for three years, Rastell does not seem to have been in a hurry to return to England, despite the need to file legal charges against Ravyn. This unusually long stay could be due, in part, to the fact that Ravyn departed with all of Rastell's goods, leaving him with close to nothing. It could also be indicative of his state of mind at the time, as he was surely embarrassed by his betrayal and failure. Instead of returning home and fighting for his lost investment and a second voyage, he remained in Ireland over a year until 1519 and wrote his interlude, *The IIII Elements*, in which he laments his failed voyage, gives his audience a lesson in the natural sciences, such as cosmography and basic geography, but more importantly, offers his audience the first published English defense of, and public call for, the colonization of the New World.⁶⁴⁸ Through the publication of this work, Rastell became the first person to publicly apply the name America to both the north and south continents.⁶⁴⁹ He purposefully set out to popularize among the masses the "best available scientific knowledge" by selecting the use of a morality play as his medium. As Borish stated, "of the literary forms in use at the time the morality play belonged peculiarly to the people."⁶⁵⁰ As pointed out in chapter 3, the play was written in English. This, along with the fact that it was a

⁶⁴⁷ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f.4.

⁶⁴⁸ The interlude can be dated 1517, despite the lack of an extant copy from this year due to the fact that he references Cabot's 1487 voyage as being twenty years past. The only surviving copy of the play is held by the British Library which has placed a tentative publication date for the surviving volume at 1530.

⁶⁴⁹ Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 54.

⁶⁵⁰ M.E. Borish, "Source and Intention of *The Four Elements*" *Studies in Philology* vol. 35 (April, 1938), 149-163, 151.

morality play, indicates that Rastell intended this work to reach the common man, however, it also contains sections of scholarly language that would have escaped the common man and been only relevant to the educated elite. Thus, it is likely that Rastell intended his play to educate the elite, perhaps even the royal court, in cosmography and colonization. While this work does serve to educate his audience in the sciences, the main purpose of this work was to inspire further exploration and colonization of the New World.⁶⁵¹

In his arguments for colonization Rastell argued that it would benefit the commonwealth of England by bringing in a great abundance of fish, lumber and supplies, which England normally attained through trade with the East. Colonization would also bring greater glory to the realm and the king, and benefit the Native Americans, educating them not only in the Gospel, but in the basics of civility, such as the use of tools and basic building skills. Rastell generally portrayed Native Americans in a positive light, as living as one with nature in a state of innocence. Rastell embodied much of the humanist movement, placing value on education in all its forms and yet praising the innocence of being close to the natural world.⁶⁵² These arguments were picked up by Richard Eden and made famous in the Elizabethan era through the works of Richard Hakluyt.

When he returned to England in 1519 Rastell had to deal with several legal proceedings, the first of which was his suit against Ravyn, before he could do anything else. Rastell filed charges against Ravyn in 1519 in the Court of Requests, not the High Court of Admiralty, as one would expect with a case involving activities of the sea. This might well have been an attempt to sidestep Lord Surrey's authority. If Rastell had brought his case before the High Court of

⁶⁵¹ For a discussion of Rastell's familiarity with the scientific knowledge of his day see chapter 3.

⁶⁵² Rastell, *IIII Elements*. For a further analysis of this work see chapter 3.

Admiralty, then the case would have ultimately been under the authority of the Lord High Admiral, Lord Surrey, whom Ravyn had implicated as part of the conspiracy against the expedition, and who had told Richard Walker not to “meddyll” with the issue of Rastell’s goods any more.⁶⁵³ If Lord Surrey truly was involved in sabotaging the expedition, Rastell would have lost in the High Court of Admiralty. Ravyn tried to no avail to have the case thrown out based on the suit being filed in the wrong court, and later brought a chancery suit against Rastell, which also failed.⁶⁵⁴ It is likely that Lord Surrey would not have been able to come to Ravyn’s aid in this case, as he was sent to Ireland to suppress an uprising in 1519 and did not return to England until January 1522.⁶⁵⁵ All of the witnesses, whose testimonies have been preserved, confirm Rastell’s claims that Ravyn sabotaged the voyage. He had recruited mariners and soldiers loyal to him, conspired with the masters of the other ships to convince the merchants to give up the voyage. The outcome of the case, however, remains unknown, and there is no evidence that Rastell was ever compensated for his lost goods. He never overcame the debt incurred by his failed voyage.

Ravyn was an interesting character. A search of the Chancery records reveals that during the first half of the sixteenth century a John Ravyn (Ravon, Raven), merchant of Bristol and a John Ravyn (Ravon, Raven) merchant of London, was in and out of the court system. In each

⁶⁵³ TNA REQ 2/3/192, f. 4.

⁶⁵⁴ TNA C 1/562/13.

⁶⁵⁵ Edward Halle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke: Beeeyng Long in Continual Discension for the Crowne of the Noble Realme, with all the Actes Done in Both the Tymes of the Princes Bothe of the one Linage and of the other, Begynnyng at the Tyme of Kyng Henry the Fowerth, the First Aucthor of the Devision, and so Successively Proceadyng to the Reigne of the High and Prudent Prince King Henry the Eight, the Undubitate Flower and Very Heire of Both the Sayd Linages*, (1548). Reprinted as *Hall’s Chronicle; containing the History of England, During the Reign of Henry the Fourth and the succeeding Monarchs, to the End of the Reign of Henry the Eighth, in which are particularly Described the Manners and Customs of those periods*. Carefully collated with the editions of 1548 and 1550, (London: Printed for J. Johnson; F.C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and J. Mawman, 1809), 601, 629.

lawsuit, whether brought by or against Ravyn, he is accused of some crime. In the case of John Raven vs. the Mayor of London, “John Raven of Bristol, merchant” argued that he has been accused of failing to pay back a debt owed to John Fisher, which he had already paid in full and is thus being wrongly arrested.⁶⁵⁶ In another case, a “John Raven of the citie of London merchantalor” brought suit against the Sheriffs of London, arguing that he had purchased a bag of saffron from one Henry Mylls, Grocer, only to find the majority of the thirty pound bag spoiled. When Mylls refused to take back the spoiled goods, Ravyn refused to pay the full amount owed and was arrested for owing Mylls the rest of the money.⁶⁵⁷ Two more cases, one in the Court of Requests, and one in the Chancery courts, relate to a case in which John Ravyn, merchant of London sued and was sued over the detention of deeds relating to messuages and land in Staunton.⁶⁵⁸ In all of these court cases John Ravyn is accused of owing money or misrepresenting a financial matter to his benefit. It would not be that surprising if John Ravyn of Bristol and John Ravyn of London are one and the same. As the court cases involving Rastell do not indicate Ravyn’s place of origin and name him only as the purser on the voyage, and as the subsequent court cases offer no solid date, it is difficult to say with certainty that it is the same John Ravyn. However, the likelihood that they are the same man is good. Interestingly enough, there are two more mentions of John Ravyn, one dated January 27, 1557, when a John Raven and a Richard Hore are listed on a transfer of prisoners list and again with Richard Hore on a list of persons committed to prisons dated August 29, 1558.⁶⁵⁹ If this is the same John Raven as the one involved in Rastell’s case, it appears that he ended his days in prison. It is extremely

⁶⁵⁶ TNA 1/883/18.

⁶⁵⁷ TNA C 1/883/19.

⁶⁵⁸ TNA REQ 2/4/319; C 1/560/24.

⁶⁵⁹ TNA PC 2/8 f. 26; SP 11/13 f. 19.

interesting that he is mentioned twice on prisoner lists with Hore, since Hore also was accused of foiling a venture to the New World.

Some might argue that if Rastell had been serious about his colonizing venture then he would have embarked on a second venture, or at least attempted to put one together. However, when Rastell returned to England his financial difficulties from the failed voyage as well as mismanagement of his estate while he was away left him short of funds.⁶⁶⁰ Rastell and John More owed the Crown 250 marks for the voyage which had to be repaid by 1521. Rastell owed the crown 810 marks for the Hunne indentures by Michaelmas 1522.⁶⁶¹ He was never able to pay off this last sum. To further complicate matters, William Whaplode took Rastell to court soon after his return from France in 1520 in an attempt to take the Hunne estate away from Rastell.⁶⁶² Rastell completely lost the Hunne estate, as indicated by a Grant issued in May 1523 that granted the entire estate to Roger Whaplode and his wife Margaret, daughter of Richard Hunne.⁶⁶³ This sudden loss was likely due to politics, as Belknap had recently died and Wolsey was trying to win the sympathy of the City of London, which hated the tithes for the great Subsidy and thus felt sympathy for Hunne, and by extension Whaplode's efforts to "liberate" the Hunne estate from Rastell, who had profited from Hunne's death.⁶⁶⁴ However, as Reed points out, Rastell took the case back to the chancery court and appears to have won some concessions,

⁶⁶⁰ See TNA C1/1512/32; C1/880/9; C1/883/8 and REQ 2/8/14, all of which relate to different suits involving the mismanagement of Rastell's estate while he was away. In most of these cases Rastell accuses his wife's brother-in-law of having appropriated Rastell's wealth, mismanaging the funds and selling without permission leases and tenements belonging to Rastell.

⁶⁶¹ Reed, 14. For the court cases concerning the mishandling of Rastell's estate see TNA C1/880/9; C1/883/8; C1/1512/32.

⁶⁶² TNA C1/560/47; C1/560/51.

⁶⁶³ L&P vol. 3 part II: 1521-23 # 3062, Grants in May 1523, Roger Whaplod and Margaret his wife, the daughter of Richard Hunne are granted the Hunne estate, 1285.

⁶⁶⁴ Reed, 15-16.

as he was still in possession of parts of the estate in 1529 and Wolsey forgave the 810 marks Rastell owed the Crown.⁶⁶⁵

The Pageants

While engrossed with these financial problems, that made it nearly impossible for Rastell to immediately embark on another voyage, he was put to work to prepare for the Field of the Cloth of Gold, possibly being sent to France as early as 1519. Edward Hall records in his chronicle that in 1519 three master artificers, “were sent to Guysnes under the rule of sir Edward Belknap ... which buylded out of the yearth on the plain before the castle of Guysnes, y most goodlyest palaiace of timber that ever was wrought in the same place. And so curiously garnished without & within,” in preparation for the Field of the Cloth of Gold that would be held in June 1520.⁶⁶⁶ It is possible that Rastell was one of the three master artists sent since he still worked for Belknap and is listed with two other artisans, Clement Urmeston and John Browne, in a letter from Sir Nicholas Vaux to Wolsey dated April 18, 1520, as overseeing the creation and decoration of the roofs of the great banquet hall.⁶⁶⁷ In this and another letter written earlier in the week, Vaux and Belknap requested that Wolsey send across the three men so that the work on the banquet hall could be completed by the end of May.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Reed, 16.

⁶⁶⁶ Halle, 600.

⁶⁶⁷ BL Cotton Caligula D/VII f. 224. Brewer transcribed these letters to read that Rastell was tasked with painting the roses of the banquet hall, a transcription which has often been repeated, however, I concur with A.W. Reed that the proper transcription is “rofes” not “roses” as Rastell was more than simply a painter and would be commissioned to create roofs for additional pageants for the King. Reed, 13.

⁶⁶⁸ BL Cotton Caligula D/VII f. 208, 224. This casts some doubt on the idea that Rastell was sent to oversee the entire construction process for the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Regardless of whether or not Rastell was sent to France in late 1519, as Hall seems to indicate, or did not arrive until April 1520, he was preoccupied with plans for the Field of the Cloth of Gold almost immediately upon his return to England and soon after his return found himself preparing for a trip to France.

How Rastell decorated the roofs of the banquet hall is not known in detail. Hall found the roofs so magnificent that he was at a loss for words, writing that the roofs

were in kindly course furnished so to mannes sight that no living creature might but joye in the beholding thereof for from the iawe pece of thesaied selyng: whiche pece was quylte with fine Golde, were woorkes in paan paled, all the walles to the crest encountering the clere stories, the same creste which was of large depenes, the worke was antique knottes with bosses cast and wrought with more cunning then I can write, all which works and overages were gilte: and to set it the more to the glory, the florishyng Bise was comparable to the riche Ammel.⁶⁶⁹

It is said that Wolsey ultimately designed and oversaw the construction of the tent. However, it is possible, and would not be surprising if Rastell included some elements of cosmography in the designs, as cosmological ceilings depicting the heavens and the four elements were especially associated with grand diplomatic occasions during the medieval era.⁶⁷⁰ It is quite possible, given the timing, that Rastell intended the *IIII Elements* to be used as part of the pageantry here. As Helen Wallis pointed out, the timing is quite remarkable. Rastell is believed to have finished the interlude in 1519. He then prepared the roofs for the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, and in 1521 Wolsey and Henry attempted to send out a voyage to the New World.⁶⁷¹ It is likely that Rastell used this opportunity to present his argument for colonization to Henry's court. The Field of the Clothe of Gold showcased Rastell's talents as a set designer and creator of pageants. When Belknap died in 1521 Rastell advanced to become chief stager of the king's public events, giving him the opportunity and means to present his interlude to the court. Though it is unknown whether he did so, it is known that he repeatedly featured terrestrial space and the elements in his

⁶⁶⁹ Hall, 606.

⁶⁷⁰ Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government," 29-30. Barber intimates that he believes this to be very likely.

⁶⁷¹ Helen Wallis "Some New Light," 99. David Shields makes a similar argument stating that "the date range, the circumstances of Rastell's employment in 1519, and the message of the piece strongly suggest that the *IIII Elements* was a royal entertainment and the episode concerning American exploration an encouragement to Henry VIII." Shields, 300. Maura Giles-Watson also states that it is likely that *IIII Elements* was "performed at court or the inns of court, or both," 172.

works.⁶⁷² He received two royal commissions in the 1520s of which we have details regarding his elaborate displays. The first commission was in 1522 in preparation for the state visit of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. The second was in 1527 for the French Ambassador's visit regarding Princess Mary's betrothal to the Dauphin of France. Between these two commissions for royal entertainment, Rastell also served as a trench maker in the French war of 1523, as well as resumed his printing and legal practices.⁶⁷³

In 1522 Rastell was commissioned to create a pageant to entertain the royal procession as Charles V and Henry VIII rode through London.⁶⁷⁴ Rastell incorporated cosmography into the pageant. Hall recorded that Rastell's pageant

buylded a place like heaven curiously painted with cloudes, orbes, stares & the Ierarchies of angels, in the top of this pagiant was a great type & out of this type sodainly issued out of a cloude a fayre Lady richely appareled, & then al the minstrels whiche wer in the pagiant plaid & the angels sang & sodainly she was assumed into the cloud which was very curiously done, and aboute this pagiant stode the Apostles⁶⁷⁵

Here the astronomical aspect of Rastell's pageant is emphasized, indicating that this aspect received specific attention from Rastell, being curiously and elaborately designed so that it caught the chronicler's eye amidst all of the pageantries and splendors of the day. While the use of some astronomical and cosmographical aspects was not new, and, in fact, was almost common during the medieval era, Rastell seems to have added a new element.⁶⁷⁶ Barber wrote that during the 1520s there was a significant change in the type of map employed in these affairs, that cosmographical depictions became more literal than figurative and served to educate the

⁶⁷² Shields, 301.

⁶⁷³ L&P vol 3, part II, Aug. 1523, there is a mention of John Rastell serving as a trench maker, in the same list of men sent to serve in France which includes Sir Thomas More, 1371.

⁶⁷⁴ LMA COL/CA/01/01/005.

⁶⁷⁵ Hall, 640.

⁶⁷⁶ Steven J. Williams, "Public State and Private Space: The Court as a Venue for the Discussion, Demonstration, and Display of Science and Technology During the Later Middle Ages," *Micrologus: Natura, scienze e società medievali: nature, sciences, and medieval societies*, (2008), pp. 459-486, 459-60.

audience and familiarize them with geography. Barber asserts that this change, “can be attributed to the organizer of the pageants, John Rastell.”⁶⁷⁷

In 1527, Rastell’s entertainment for the French Ambassadors again incorporated his passion for cosmography and cartography. Rastell worked with the painter Hans Holbein and the King’s astronomer, Nicolas Kratzer, a member of More’s close circle of friends. Two halls were built. The first contained the banqueting hall. After the feast, the attendants went through a hall that displayed Holbein’s painting of the besiegement of Turin. The guests then passed into the great hall for Rastell’s pageant. This room is described in detail by Hall, who wrote that

the rofe of this chamber was conninglie made by the kynges Astronimer, for on the grounde of the rofe, was made the whole earth enviroued with the Sea, like a very Mapped or Carte, and by a conning making of another cloth, the zodiacke with the xii. Signes, and the five circles or girdelles and the two pole apered on the earth and water compassing the same, and in the zodiac were the twelve signes, curiously made, and above this were made the seven planettes, as Mars, Jupiter, Sol, Mercurius, Venus, Saturnus, and Luns, every one in their proper houses made according to their properties, that it was a counyng thing and a pleasant sight to behold.⁶⁷⁸

Once the guests were seated, the singers and players took their places and a young man, dressed in blue silk covered in eyes, representing Mercury, delivered a message to the king from Jupiter, the “Father of Heaven,” and so began the dialogue, *Love and Riches*.⁶⁷⁹ The two pageants mentioned above are the only examples in which Rastell’s staging and set are described in detail. It is significant that in both cases Rastell chose to incorporate cosmographical elements. In the first, all of the heavens are displayed. In the second example, not only are the heavens displayed but so too is the “whole earth” displayed like a map. Thus, Rastell used every opportunity to bring royal attention to cosmographical and geographical matters. It would not be surprising at

⁶⁷⁷ Barber, “England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government,” 30.

⁶⁷⁸ Hall, 723.

⁶⁷⁹ Reed has been able to identify the dialogue used for this pageant as *Love and Riches*, while the pageant as a whole is normally referred to as “the Father of Heaven,” Reed, 19.

all to discover that Rastell did the same with the roof for the great banqueting hall in 1520.⁶⁸⁰

This seems even more likely when one considers Rastell's printer's mark, which blends elements of cosmography, fantasy and religion.

At the top of Rastell's printers mark is Christ positioned in the heavens, surrounded by stars as the "Father of Heaven." Just below the figure of Christ are the sun, moon and stars. Below this, surrounding the world, are featured the four elements. There are two prominent figures in the center of the mark, a merman and a mermaid. This is likely a reference to the mermaid used as Rastell's house sign and his print shop, The Mermaid, which appears to have been a fairly large tenement.⁶⁸¹ At the center of the printer's mark are Rastell's initials, JR. Rastell's printer's mark put his cosmographical interests front and center, displaying the four elements, the heavens and the earth on each and every book that he printed. Even here, with the simple use of a printer's mark, Rastell is educating the public and encouraging his readers to become familiar with these basic principles of cosmography.

⁶⁸⁰ Reed makes a similar point when he states that "when we remember that it was upon the roofs that he worked for the Field of the Cloth of Gold, we may perhaps assume that they, too, were astronomical in character." Reed, 19.

⁶⁸¹ C. Paul Christianson, "The rise of London's book-trade" Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp eds. *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. III, 1400-1557, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 128-147, 144; Edwin Elliott Willoughby, "The Cover Design" *The Library Quarterly*, vol. 6, (Oct., 1936), pp. 420-21, 421.



Figure 4-1 Rastell's printer's mark. Here the different cosmographical features can be seen. Personal photo taken of Rastell's printer's mark from an edition of *The Pastyme of Peoples*. University of Cambridge Library, Syn.3.52.1.

Humanist Printer

In addition to his activities on behalf of the crown, Rastell returned to the printing business he had started when he first moved to London as a young man. Rastell kept stock in French, Latin, Greek, and English, and carried a wide range of works covering subjects ranging from law to religion, poetry, grammar, astronomy, history, medicine, etc. Rastell might have printed maps, as his inventory records a map of Europe in his shop.⁶⁸² Rastell invented a revolutionary way to print music, setting the standard for future printers.⁶⁸³ He printed a few of the classic authors and Linacre's famous Latin grammar. Rastell supported his humanist views, and printed works in English, including earlier English works, such as Chaucer's *Assembly of fowls* and *The hundred merry tales*. Of greater significance are his editions of contemporary literature, among them a work by Sir Thomas More's personal servant, Walter Smith's *Twelve jests of the widow Edith* (no longer extant), and his own works, *The interlude of women*, *The interlude of the four elements*, *The dialogue of gentleness and nobility* (formerly ascribed to his son-in-law, John Heywood), *Calisto and Meliboea* (which is attributed to him) and *The pastime of the people*.⁶⁸⁴ Rastell printed several law books, including English translations of summaries of English statutes and laws, such as his work *The Statutes*, and works on religious practices, such as More's *Dialogue of Images*, and his own *Book of Purgatory*. It can be assumed that Rastell also printed his interlude *III Elements*, however, there is only one surviving copy of this play and this copy does not contain Rastell's printer's mark, indicating that it was printed on a

⁶⁸² TNA PROB 2/692. Helen Wallis also makes this point, stating that the presence of a map of Europe in the shop almost certainly indicates that Rastell printed and sold maps. Wallis, "Some New Light," 99.

⁶⁸³ Geritz and Laine, 9-10.

⁶⁸⁴ Willoughby, 421; Reed, 16-17.

different press.⁶⁸⁵ This fact, in and of itself, is significant for it indicates that this work was printed on more than one press around 1530.

In all, Rastell is known to have printed more than 40 separate works. His business appears to have been very successful in the 1520s. In a letter to Cromwell towards the end of Rastell's life, he stated that he had gone from producing 200-300 reams of paper a year to only 50 reams.⁶⁸⁶ In addition to these known works, Reed argued that it appears Rastell also printed an astrological work no longer extant. Reed pointed out that Rastell's contemporary, John Bale, referenced Rastell's pre-eminence in mathematics, "demonstrable science", and cosmography, and then referenced Rastell's *Canones Astrologici*.⁶⁸⁷ This work is of particular note as Rastell complains in the *IIII Elements* that there are no works of science being printed in English. It would only make sense for Rastell to have printed such a work himself. Unfortunately, it does not appear that there are any surviving copies. This could owe to the later burning of Rastell's works as heretical. Mathematical and scientific works were often targeted in religious purges. It could also be that, like his *Pastymes of People*, discussed below, Rastell was not very original and simply restated what could be found in the trusted volumes of Ptolemy or in works such as Waldseemüller. He seems to have done this for the majority of the information in *IIII Elements*.⁶⁸⁸ This could have limited the demand for his publication as those who could afford such a work, and who would have been interested, likely had access to the continental editions.

⁶⁸⁵ BL C.39.b.17. John Rastell, *A new Interlude and a mery of the nature of the iiiii. elements, declarynge many proper poynts of phylosophy naturall, and of dyvers straunge landys, and of dyvers straunge effects*, (1530?).

⁶⁸⁶ TNA SP 1/85 f. 113.

⁶⁸⁷ Reed, 20.

⁶⁸⁸ See the discussion of Rastell's sources for the *IIII Elements* in chapter 3.

From the works that are known to have come off Rastell's presses, it is clear that he used his business to educate and better the general public.⁶⁸⁹ This is demonstrated in the introductions to Rastell's legal works. In the introduction to *The Statutes*, he claimed to have undertaken his translation and abridgement because England's laws and statutes were currently written in French and inaccessible to the people who were supposed to obey them. How could people obey rules they did not know?⁶⁹⁰ The law should be made available to the common man, that the "people might some without gret difficulty have the knowledge of the same lawes." In order for the common man to avoid "danger and penaltes" and to better "lyffe in tranquylyte & pease" the laws should be written in English.⁶⁹¹ Rastell implored the king to cause all the "statutys that have bemade in his days" to be also "idytyd and written in our englyssh tonge to the intent that all his lege people might have the knowledge ther of."⁶⁹² Rastell was clearly concerned with the commonweal, with the good of the common man.

This argument was echoed by his son William Rastell, in *The Grete Abregement of the Statutys of England until the xxii yr of Henry viii*. William opened with his father's introduction to *The Statutes* but he added, "considering that in reason every law wherto any people shulde be Boudyn ought and shulde be written in such maner and so openly published and declared that the people might some without grete difficulty have the knowledge of the same lawes."⁶⁹³ William argued that reason dictates that laws should be written in the language of the people, that people should be able to understand without difficulty the laws to which they are bound. This

⁶⁸⁹ Hogrefe points to the publications of both Rastell and Sir Thomas Elyot to demonstrate that they had a strong desire to educate the public, Hogrefe, 150.

⁶⁹⁰ J. Rastell, *The Statutes*, abridged in English by J. Rastell, Enprynted in Chepesyde: 1527. A.I.

⁶⁹¹ Rastell, *The Statutes*, 3.

⁶⁹² Rastell, *The Statutes*, 4.

⁶⁹³ William Rastell, *The Grete Abregement of the Statutys of England unitl the xxii yr of Henry viii*. (London: 1531?).

demonstrates John Rastell and Thomas More's influence on William, and that he shared their concern with the commonweal.

It is worth noting that John Rastell expressed concern that the public use reason and carefully consider information put before them, not simply accept as fact that which is written. In his history of England, *The Pastyme of People*, Rastell offers several examples of this. Rastell based most of the book off of Fabyan's Chronicle, while stressing natural science and practical learning.⁶⁹⁴ Throughout the work, Rastell cast doubt on several of the common legends or myths of England's history. For example, he included the story of Brute as the reason England was called Britain, a popular way to begin histories of England. However, he found it hard to believe that Brute was the first to inhabit the island or that the island would have been named after him.⁶⁹⁵ Rastell took particular issue with the Arthurian legends, which were coming into high popularity. While he did include the story that Merlin built Stonehenge to bury Arthur, he argued that others say Stonehenge was "made by craft of man as of semed and mortar made of flynt stones."⁶⁹⁶ He offered twelve lines of argument for why the stones could not have been made by magic, after having only spent three lines on the story of Merlin. In another example, he stated that, while Geoffrey of Monmouth relates the tale of Arthur, it is contrary to other writers, pointing to the fact that Bede, who wrote his history close to the time of Arthur, knew nothing of the fabled king.⁶⁹⁷ By dismissing a cherished legend told by a popular chronicler, Rastell went against current thought and accepted history. This willingness to go against the

⁶⁹⁴ It should be noted that Rastell shows a concern here for the teaching of history, another integral subject to the humanist movement.

⁶⁹⁵ John Rastell, *The Pastyme of People: The cronycles of dyvers Realmys and most specially of the Realme of England, (with the pyctures and armes of the Kynges of Englande syth the Conquest.)*, (London, 1529), aii.

⁶⁹⁶ Rastell, *The Pastyme of People*, L. ii.

⁶⁹⁷ Rastell, *The Pastyme of People*, L. iii.

grain when he believed that logic dictated such action is a defining character trait for Rastell and proved his undoing.

During the time spent as a printer Rastell also managed to resume his legal practice. During the 1520s Rastell was busy at Westminster Hall, particularly during the time of More's Chancellorship from 1529-31, earning up to £40 a year through his work there.⁶⁹⁸ Under More's chancellorship Rastell's signature appears frequently as an approving lawyer on Chancery court proceedings, which allowed the cases to proceed to the courts.⁶⁹⁹ In 1528, Rastell was named a "serjeant-at-arms Commission" to investigate the number of "strangers artificers" and craftsmen who were house holders, as well as the number of their servants, within a two mile radius of London and within the city itself.⁷⁰⁰ In 1529 John Rastell became a Member of Parliament, representing a Cornish borough in what would become known as the "Reformation Parliament" which so effectively served both the King and Cromwell.⁷⁰¹ It is also at this time, 1529-30, that John Rastell was sent to France for six months, likely with the delegation sent to seek academic support for the King's divorce. Rastell was too busy serving his king and furthering his humanist goals to embark on another voyage himself in the 1520's, however he used every opportunity to disseminate geographical knowledge and inspire exploration.

The Radical Protestant

At about this time John Rastell and Thomas More seem to have had a falling out and appear to have parted ways. A. W. Reed points to the death of Sir John More in 1530, believing this weakened the family to the point that Rastell and More found themselves on opposite sides

⁶⁹⁸ TNA SP 1/85 f. 113.

⁶⁹⁹ Reed, 20-21.

⁷⁰⁰ L&P vol. 4 part II, #5083, 2215.

⁷⁰¹ L&P vol. 4, part III, #6043, 2689.

of the Reformation by the time of More's execution. However, this does not seem to be the most likely cause of their estrangement. Rather, Rastell's conversion to the Protestant cause and support of Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, who held More's unfailing loyalty, posed a disagreement far too great for the two men to easily set aside, especially given Rastell's doggedness and growing religious zeal. Rastell's response to the reformation preoccupied his thoughts, destroyed his business, and ostracized him from his family.

In 1530 John Rastell published *A New Book of Purgatory* in support of More's *The Supplicacion of soules*.⁷⁰² Both of these works were in response to Simon Fish's *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*, which attacked the Church's practice of tithes and the clerical wealth acquired at the expense of the common man. Why Rastell felt compelled to write this book is a bit of a mystery, as it feels out of place for a man who had long championed the plight of the common man and argued against the hierarchical wealth of the church. Perhaps he felt that by defending the Church's right to tithes he might sway public opinion in his favor in the matter of the Hunne estate, in which he was still entangled in legal battles over with the Whaplodes who championed the plight of Richard Hunne's family. Regardless of why he wrote the book, Rastell was forever changed by this publication. In response to Rastell's arguments the young Protestant, John Frith wrote his own argument, attacking Rastell's logic.⁷⁰³ Frith's work was persuasive, and Rastell found himself convinced of the natural logic used by Frith and converted to the reformed faith. This alone would have strained his relationship with More, however, Rastell was never one to do anything half way, and he joined Cromwell's political camp and quickly became known as a

⁷⁰² John Rastell, *A new boke of purgatory* [whiche is a dyaloge [and] dysputacyon betwene one Comynge an Almayne a Christen man, [and] one Gyngemyn a turke of Machoinett law, dysputyng by naturall reason and good philosophye, whether there be a purgatorye. which boke is deuyded into thre dyalogys.] *The fyrste dyaloge sheweth and treateth of the meruelous existens of god. The seconde dyaloge treateth of the immortalte of mannys soule. The thyrde dyaloge treateth of purgatory.* (London: 1530).

⁷⁰³ Geritz and Laine, 80-82; Reed, 21.

leading voice of the Protestant movement in London. It is likely that this is one of the reasons that his son William separated his business from his father's and set up his own shop.⁷⁰⁴

William had first started working with his father in 1525 when he helped his father write a will. He also worked with his father in 1527 on the Greenwich set, and soon after worked as a printer in his father's shop. William left his father's shop to establish his own business in 1530, the same year that Rastell converted to the Protestant cause. William remained loyal to his uncle and a staunch Catholic throughout his life, so much so that he was twice forced to flee England, first during the reign of Edward VI, and then again after Elizabeth I took the throne.⁷⁰⁵ William worked with More on his book, *Supplication of Souls*, which was part of the debate that led to Rastell's conversion. He then printed a second edition of the *Dialogue of Heresies* in 1531 and the *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* in 1532.⁷⁰⁶ Clearly, William parted with his father on religious matters, and distanced himself from him. One can only wonder at how deeply this hurt John, to lose both his brother-in-law, with whom he had spent so much time in academic debates, as well as his son, whom Reed called his "excellent collaborator ... in law, pageantry and printing."⁷⁰⁷

In the Protestant Reformation Rastell found a way to champion the Commonweal and attached himself fully to Cromwell. Cromwell dined in the Rastell home on more than one occasion.⁷⁰⁸ In 1532 he attempted to make Rastell Governor and Master of Christ Church, or the

⁷⁰⁴ Geritz and Laine point out that when William joined his father's printing business it seems to have marked the height of John's career. After William left his father's shop in 1530 John does not seem to have printed much of note. Geritz and Laine, 19.

⁷⁰⁵ TNA C 78/14/27; SP 10/14 f. 64. William returned to England during the reign of Mary I and found welcome reception and was appointed Justice of the King's Bench. TNA SP 12/2 f. 126.

⁷⁰⁶ Reed, 78; Routh, 143.

⁷⁰⁷ Reed, 75.

⁷⁰⁸ TNA REQ 2/6/202.

Priory of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, however, Henry never signed this bill and gave the position to another.⁷⁰⁹ Cromwell made up for this by having Rastell appointed, along with another lawyer, to the new office for drawing up and sealing of legal instruments in the City to check for fraudulent deeds. Rastell also appears, along with Cromwell, on a lease of all mining rights on Dartmoor in 1533. In 1534 Rastell received two additional positions. First, he was engaged with Roland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, in the checking of lawlessness in Wales. Second, in December, he was appointed to serve on a council tasked with investigating the quality of the coinage printed at the tower.⁷¹⁰

It is during this time that Rastell became almost a revolutionary figure. Letters from Rastell to Cromwell during the 1530s show Rastell's increasing zeal in his pursuit of the Protestant movement and in service of the commonweal.⁷¹¹ Among his more revolutionary ideas were the argument that judges should be removable after four or five years in office and that they should answer all complaints of extortion and injustice. The idea that got him into trouble, however, and ultimately ended his life, was that tithes should be abolished and the clergy made to work for their living.⁷¹² While Cromwell initially sought Rastell's advancement, by the end of 1534 he appears to have grown tired of Rastell's arguments and perhaps found them dangerous.

Rastell's financial troubles caught up with him at roughly the same time as his estrangement from Cromwell. In the summer of 1533 Rastell took as a sub-tenant at his shop, The Mermaid, the stationer John Gough, who had been imprisoned in 1528 on suspicion of

⁷⁰⁹ Reed, 22; Geritz and Laine, 21.

⁷¹⁰ Reed, 22-23'; Geritz and Laine, 21; L&P, vol. 7, #1606, 600.

⁷¹¹ For examples see TNA SP 1/85 f. 111; SP 1/85 f. 112; SP 1/85 f. 113; SP 1/113 f. 188. Some of these letters are undated, so establishing exactly when they were written or which order they were written in can be difficult. However, the trend towards a more zealous stance can be established as he often references past letters.

⁷¹² Routh, 45.

selling or aiding in the sale of heretical books.⁷¹³ While it is possible that Rastell did this to help supplement his income, this could also be a sign of his radical leanings. Rastell's printing business was in trouble by this point. According to Rastell this was due to his efforts to compile "divers books" opposing the Pope's authority to the neglect of other subjects.⁷¹⁴ In 1534 he lost his house at Hadley, which he had held for nineteen years, in a law-suit.⁷¹⁵ In 1534 and 1535 Rastell is listed as owing the Crown £20 for debts "by way of foren receipt."⁷¹⁶ In this same year Roland Lee wrote Cromwell a letter describing Rastell as "the pore man" who "does not interrupt in his own behalf," indicating that Rastell was in financial straits and unwilling to seek help.⁷¹⁷

Rastell's outspoken opposition to the use of tithes to cover the livelihood of the clergy alienated Rastell from Cromwell and landed him in the Tower of London. From the desperate tone of Rastell's letters to Cromwell in 1534 it appears that Cromwell had begun to tire of Rastell's relentless arguments for the removal of tithes and the furtherance of several more extreme Protestant tenets which Rastell believed would advance the commonweal. Rastell wrote Cromwell several letters in which he pleaded for permission and the funds to print 10-20,000 copies of the *Book of the Charge*, have it issued from the King and sent to all Judges and Stewards of Courts and Sessions, and publically read so that "not only the lernyd men themselves but also the people shall be instructed" and brought from ignorance to knowledge and "have no confidence in the pope nor his laws."⁷¹⁸ Rastell requested that several small works be

⁷¹³ TNA C1/798/5-7; Reed, 23.

⁷¹⁴ TNA SP 1/85 f. 113.

⁷¹⁵ TNA REQ 2/6/202. Cromwell is said to have dined at the home with "diverse others" and to have "laye in the same house" with Geoffrey Chambre and others.

⁷¹⁶ TNA SP 1/104 f. 257.

⁷¹⁷ Reed, 23.

⁷¹⁸ TNA SP 1/85 f. 113. SP 1/85 f. 112 is an additional letter to Cromwell on this subject. Both letters make references to other letters written on this top to Cromwell, indicating that there were several letters.

printed before Parliament met, to present the case that priests can marry, men should not revere images, prayers for the dead have no value, and that English sermons written by government appointees should be printed and distributed weekly in all the parishes. Rastell also requested that Cromwell bring forth several bills for the consideration of parliament to enforce these points as well as reform the Court of Chancery and rule against excessive fees taken by law clerks.⁷¹⁹ Such proposals were too radical for the King and indicate the extent to which Rastell had changed as he became known as a religious zealot.

The years 1532-34 saw a revival in the City of hostility to the curates and their claims to tithes and fees. A commission consisting of Cranmer, Cromwell, the Chancellor, Winchester, and two Chief Justices settled the matter by fixing the payment at 2s 9d. on the pound on rental. The decision was then enforced by a Royal Proclamation of 1535 and an Act of Parliament in 1536.⁷²⁰ Rastell, however, strongly opposed the paying of tithes and was arrested and imprisoned in 1535 for his opposition to the Royal Proclamation, that settled the old City dispute of tithes and offerings, the same dispute which had claimed Richard Hunne's life so many years before.

Rastell wrote a final letter to Cromwell from prison in 1536, begging for his aid. Rastell claimed extreme poverty, that he was "forsaken" of his kinsmen, and destitute of friends. He thought he had not offended the king or committed anything against the laws to deserve imprisonment, and if he could just gain an audience, he might excuse himself to the confusion of his malicious accusers. Having been held in prison for some time, he begged for a chance to

⁷¹⁹ TNA SP 1/85 f. 112; SP 1/85 f. 113.

⁷²⁰ Reed, 53; William Easterby, *The History of the Law of Tithes in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1888), 104; *A Succinct History of Tithes in London; Shewing the Progress of that Portion of the Ecclesiastical Revenues, from a Very Early Period: Drawn from Original Records and Respectfully Inscribed to the Inhabitants of St. Botolph, Aldgate*, (London: J. Letts, 1824), 11-14.

either be heard or released on some surety, as he could do nothing to earn a living and had neither alms nor charity. He could not imagine how he might have offended the King. “I desyre most so to spend my tyme to do somewhat for the commyn welth, as God by my Juge.”⁷²¹ Rastell told Cromwell that if he was not soon released, he might lie in his cell and starve to death before he had a chance to defend himself before the king. It is quite possible that this was exactly what happened.

This likely was Rastell’s last letter. It is in a looser hand than others written by him, though not overly shaky or weak.⁷²² By April, Rastell knew things did not look good for his future, and he drew up his will on April 20, 1536. Naming the King as one of his executors, Rastell bequeathed the funds from the sale of his books to Cromwell, monetary sums to each of his children and the rest of his estate to be divided between his wife and an executor.⁷²³ Rastell died in prison just a few weeks later, as his executors reported his death on June 25, 1536.⁷²⁴ By this point Rastell had become a symbol of radical Protestantism, and at a meeting of clerics at Doncaster in 1536 Rastell was listed among those whose heretical writings should be destroyed.⁷²⁵ It is possible that this is why so few of Rastell’s personal works have survived and why so few Protestant works were found in his shop when the inventory was made.⁷²⁶ It would be very surprising if known heretical works survived in the print shop of a man known to have been declared a heretic, especially when it had been declared that his books should be destroyed. With this decree, the man who had spent his entire adult life striving for the betterment of the

⁷²¹ TNA SP 1/113 f. 188.

⁷²² TNA SP 1/113 f.188.

⁷²³ TNA PROB 11/26/34.

⁷²⁴ TNA PROB 11/26/34.

⁷²⁵ This list included Luther, Wyclif, Husse, Tyndell, and Seynt Germayne, among others. Geritz and Laine, 26-7.

⁷²⁶ R.J. Roberts, “John Rastell’s Inventory of 1538” *The Library*, vol. s6-1. (1979), 34-42, 35. R. J. Roberts argues that the absence of Protestant works is likely due to William having removed any Protestant works after his father’s death.

commonweal, calling for the education of the common man and pushing for more works, specifically works with educational properties, to be published in English, ended his life alone and forgotten in the Tower, having his books burned as heretical.

Throughout his life Rastell demonstrated a deep concern for education and it appears that he applied this concern to the education of his children as they would each carry on an aspect of John Rastell's passions, even if they were estranged from him at his death. As already noted, William Rastell followed his father into the printing business, becoming a printer of note by the 1530s. William had attended Oxford in 1525, though he did not finish his degree, and in September 1532 he received a special admittance at Lincoln's Inn, his uncle Thomas More's Inn, and later became a judge, thus following his father into the legal profession.⁷²⁷ William showed some interest in travel narrative and joined forces with his cousin John More to publish a translation of the Portuguese Damyan Goes' report of the church and commonwealth of Prestor John.⁷²⁸ When he died, William Rastell left his brother John a gold ring with astronomical figures on it that he described as reminding him of their father.⁷²⁹

John Rastell the younger also pursued a legal degree, becoming a member of the Inns of Court in 1536.⁷³⁰ More importantly, he inherited his father's restless spirit and interest in colonization. As will be discussed in a later chapter, John Rastell the younger succeeded in making it to the New World with Richard Hore in 1536, though this voyage became an equally notorious failure. He also became a close friend of Roger Barlow who traveled up the Rio de la Plata with Sebastian Cabot, worked closely with Robert Thorne and echoed Thorne's call for an

⁷²⁷ Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis*, 1234; Reed, pp. 72-79.

⁷²⁸ Reed, 79-80.

⁷²⁹ Reed, 92.

⁷³⁰ Hogrefe, 30; Reed, 27.

English expedition to find the Northwest Passage in his English edition of *A Breif Summe of Geography*. Less is known of Rastell's daughter Joan. She married John Heywood in 1523 with whom she had a daughter also named Joan. It is likely through Rastell's connections that John Heywood was admitted to the Stationers' Company. Like Rastell, Heywood went on to become one of the great playwrights of the time and a close friend of More's.⁷³¹

While Rastell's endeavors to create a colony in North America failed, his voyage is significant. The voyage reveals that the ideas of colonizing the North American continent were germinating in England well before Hakluyt advocated for the colonization of the New World, arguing that it would solve many of the ills of the nation, and long before Walter Raleigh approached Elizabeth with the idea of forming a colony in Roanoke. The fact that Rastell gained support from the King and found enough support to put a fleet together so quickly after he first advocated for such a venture demonstrates that interest in colonization was not limited to More's inner circle, or to one or two persons. Rastell's Interlude would have brought the discussion of colonization to the masses, taking it out of the elite circles of the intellectuals. The fact that Rastell returned again and again to cosmographical and geographical imagery in his pageants for royal audiences demonstrates he never lost interest in the subject. His friendship with Kratzer, who was also interested in cartography, would have led to discussions and debates on the subject. The fact that John Rastell the younger embarked on a voyage to the New World in 1536 indicates that Rastell instilled in his son a similar interest in exploration and colonization. Finally, the apparent conspiracy against Rastell's voyage, which appears to have been instigated by the Lord High Admiral, reveals that not everyone had faith in the ability of merchants to conduct transatlantic voyages and reap a profit. It is quite possible that this hesitancy in the

⁷³¹ Hogrefe, 155; Reed, 46-47.

higher ranks of Henry's administration could have suppressed talks of additional voyages at the time.

John Rastell has been called a man before his time, a man better suited to the unique spirit of the Elizabethan era. This is perhaps not fair to Rastell or his generation. Rather, Rastell perhaps best exemplifies the changes that took place during the early sixteenth century that allowed for the unique spirit of the Elizabethans to blossom. Rastell had an entrepreneurial spirit. He held multiple legal and political positions, started a successful printing business, wrote and staged pageants and plays that awed his audience, invented a new way of printing music and acted upon his discussion of the New World, setting out to establish a colony that would financially benefit England. Rastell was also, perhaps, the best example of some of the leading humanist arguments of the time, taking them to the next logical conclusion. Rastell had a deep passion for education, believing that all men, regardless of station had the right to educate themselves on the basics of science, cosmography, history, and England's laws. But Rastell did not simply make this argument with his friends around More's table, rather, he acted on this belief and used his print shop to make available to the public, in English, works which would serve to educate. Once Rastell joined the Protestant cause he brought his business to the brink of ruin in his efforts to educate the masses on the true religion. He, like so many of his time, found himself consumed by the issue of the Reformation, to the point that other interests and pursuits were neglected.

Above all, Rastell was the most outspoken member of More's circle on the issue of the commonweal. Even before his move to London, where he became part of More's inner circle, Rastell showed his concern for the commonweal, taking civil service jobs and siding with the people against the elite. Upon moving to London, he continued this trend, maintaining his legal

profession under Wolsey and Cromwell. In his writings he emphasized those aspects that would best benefit the commonweal. In the end, this passionate drive to pursue what he believed was best for the commonweal proved to be his undoing, putting him at odds with Cromwell and the King. Like many of his time, Rastell showed a wide range of interests throughout most of his life, but like many who were close to Henry, after the split with Rome Rastell became increasingly consumed with matters of the Reformation, until it appears to be all that he could think about. John Rastell was not a man before his times, rather, he best exemplifies those traits that occupied the educated elite and forward-thinking men of his era. He is an exemplary example of his times.

Chapter 5

Royal Interest in the Atlantic

It has been said that Henry VIII lacked interest in the New World, and the vision of his father to see the possibilities which lay beyond the Atlantic for England. Because of this lack of vision, it has been argued, there was a sharp falling off of interest in westward voyages after the death of Henry VII, and this interest would not resume until the visionary spirit of the Elizabethans took over towards the end of the century.⁷³² Many have argued along similar lines to Michael Foss, who stated that Henry VIII did not carry on his father's support of exploration because he, "judged the exploration expensive, the trading unprofitable, and the settlements a waste of manpower: glory was to be won in Europe, not on virgin land across an ugly ocean."⁷³³ While it is true that Henry VIII was preoccupied with winning glory in Europe, and that there were no successful colonizing ventures during the reign of Henry VIII, or any ground breaking voyages of exploration that can be credited to Henry VIII, this does not mean that he lacked interest in the New World or that he did not perceive the possibilities westward voyages represented. Henry VIII was a complicated personality, and his reign is marked by near constant warfare, intrigue, and political and religious upheavals which threatened England's stability and

⁷³² Samuel Eliot Morison has stated that "the accession of Henry VIII in 1509 marks a notable falling off of interest by the English government and people in the New World." Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: Northern Voyages A.D. 500-1600*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 233. Kenneth Andrews has stated that the period between 1509 and 1550 contrasts strongly with the early period, with no notable interest in the Atlantic. Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 56. See also, Patrick McGrath, "Bristol and America, 1480-1631," K. R. Andrews, N. P. Canny and P.E.H. Hair, eds. *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America 1480-1650*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 90; John Friske, *The Discovery of America: with Some Account of Ancient America and the Spanish Conquest*, vol. II (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892), 17.

⁷³³ Michael Foss, *Undreamed Shores: England's Wasted Empire in America*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 33.

dramatically altered the trajectory of the island nation. In the midst of these upheavals and crises, when there were brief moments of stability and calm, there were also voyages, or plans for voyages to the New World. The fact that these plans were made, and that some of the plans actually turned into voyages, despite the turmoil of Henry's reign, reveals that Henry was interested in the New World and that western voyages maintained his interest despite the many distractions and life changing events he had to deal with throughout his reign.

As stated earlier, Henry VIII was well-educated and held a lifelong interest in science, cosmography, and the "new learning" which connected him to the continental networks of knowledge. It is also well-known that Henry possessed a deep interest in, and passion for, the navy.⁷³⁴ Throughout his reign he supported the navy and saw to its maintenance, something previous kings did not do in times of peace, as well as to its growth and improvement.⁷³⁵ When he took the throne in 1509, Henry implemented several naval improvements, such as portholes for cannon, which had been proposed during his father's reign but had yet to be put into practice, and he continued a building initiative that had been proposed and barely begun under Henry VII. When Henry VIII went to war with France in 1511, he was only able to dedicate eighteen ships to his military campaign. By the end of the war he could claim thirty ships as belonging to the crown. This buildup of the royal navy continued throughout his reign and by 1547 Henry had close to sixty ships.⁷³⁶ In addition to this attention to the royal navy, Henry is also given credit for the establishment of the Trinity House of Deptford in 1514.

⁷³⁴ For discussions of Henry's active role in building up the English navy and his interest in naval affairs see David Loades, *The Tudor Navy: An Administrative, Political and Military History*, (Brookfield, Vermont: Scolar Press, 1992); Alwyn Ruddock, "The Trinity House at Deptford in the Sixteenth Century," *The English Historical Review*, vol. 65, (October, 1950), pp. 458-476; G.G. Harris, *The Trinity House of Deptford 1514-1660*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1969).

⁷³⁵ Loades, 72-79.

⁷³⁶ Loades, 58, 67, 69, 88.

Richard Hakluyt recorded that Henry created Trinity House in imitation of Charles V and the Casa de la Contratación, which was the Spanish school of hydrography and navigation, and the central depository for all cartographic knowledge in Spain.⁷³⁷ However, as Alwyn Ruddock has pointed out, this is impossible as Charles V was only thirteen in 1513 when Trinity House was proposed and the Casa was still in its infancy and had yet to garner international fame.⁷³⁸ The proposed charter of 1513 indicates that Trinity House at Deptford was modeled on an older guild with a similar purpose of regulating pilots and navigation of a specified area. However, Henry deserves credit for granting the charter and supporting its establishment. This guild would hold significant sway over the training and regulating of pilots on the River Thames and count among its members some of the greatest seamen of Henry's reign, including Sir Thomas Spert, who was made the first master of Trinity House and appears to have held the position until his death in 1541, and John Rut, whose voyage to America will be discussed below.⁷³⁹

Henry spent most of his reign preoccupied with war, particularly war with France. This is likely the reason that so many historians have argued that Henry did not have much interest in the Atlantic world. David Loades observed that the reason Henry did not act upon Sebastian Cabot's discovery of what he believed was the entrance to a north west passage was because "the new King's warlike ambition, which were to be so stimulating to the navy, left little interest or energy to spare for trans-Atlantic adventures."⁷⁴⁰ In a sense this is true. When Henry took the throne he was preoccupied with impressing his father-in-law, King Ferdinand, and with winning

⁷³⁷ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations voyaes Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation Mde by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeeres*, (1600), (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1903), vol. 1, xxxv-vi.

⁷³⁸ Ruddock, "The Trinity House," 463. G. G. Harris also makes this argument, G. G. Harris, *The Trinity House of Deptford, 1514-1660*, (London: University of London, 1969), 21.

⁷³⁹ Pepys Library, *Missilariam of Matters Historical and Naval Vol 1* (2869), f. 2; Ruddock, 464-468; G. C. Harris, 21-25; Loades, 1541.

⁷⁴⁰ Loades, 48.

glory for England by going to war with France and retaking the lands he believed rightfully belonged to the English throne. To do this he dedicated a large number of ships to his military assault. Henry had to rely on merchant vessels to supplement his navy, a practice with a long tradition that continued for generations to come. In 1513, at the height of the war with France, Henry's navy was made up of twenty-three royal ships and twenty-seven merchant vessels, plus a similar number of supply ships.⁷⁴¹ When Sebastian returned and likely requested another voyage, Henry knew that war was on the horizon and he could not dedicate large, sea worthy vessels to another voyage across the Atlantic. However, war ended in 1514, and in 1517 John Rastell set sail on a voyage to the Americas with the King's full support and a ship partially owned by the Lord High Admiral. By 1520, Henry had a standing peacetime navy of roughly thirty ships, which was a sizable fleet for the time and would have sufficed if tensions with France unexpectedly flared up, and in 1521 Henry once again invested in an Atlantic voyage.⁷⁴²

The Planned Voyage of 1521

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the timing of Rastell's play, the *III Elements*, is intriguing for he is believed to have finished it in 1519, planned much of the architecture and the roofs for the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, and then in 1521 Henry attempted to send out an expedition to the New Found Lands. In 1521, Henry and Cardinal Wolsey began in earnest to try and put together another transatlantic voyage of exploration. This expedition can almost definitively be identified as the voyage Sebastian Cabot was rumored to have been invited by Cardinal Wolsey to lead.⁷⁴³ In an entry found in the Calendar of State Papers for Venice, dated

⁷⁴¹ Loades, 62.

⁷⁴² Loades, 72.

⁷⁴³ This has led some to give credit for the voyage to Sebastian Cabot, labeling it "Cabot's project." Kenneth Andrews calls it "Cabot's 1520-21 project" and gives no mention at all to Henry's involvement. *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 56. David B. Quinn also appears to give credit to Cabot for the project, stating that "Cardinal Wolsey

December 22, 1522, Gasparo Contarini reported to the Council of Ten in Venice on a conversation he had recently had with Sebastian Cabot in which Cabot stated that;

Now it so happened that when in England some three years ago, if I mistake not, Cardinal Wolsey offered me high terms if I would sail with an armada of his on a voyage of discovery. The vessels were almost ready, and they had got together 30,000 ducats for their outfit. I answered him that, being in the service of the King of Spain, I could not go without his leave, but if free permission were granted me from hence, I would serve him.⁷⁴⁴

This reveals that the English government intended to send out an expedition of discovery, likely to the New World, as Wolsey sought out Cabot's help, whose main contribution at this point was his knowledge of the Americas. Cabot had been on at least two voyages to North America and, having been appointed the Pilot Major of the Casa de la Contratación in 1518, he had access to the latest navigational information coming into Spain from the New World. The one fact that has caused some to question whether this letter is in reference to the proposed voyage of 1521 is the reference to three years past, as this is recorded at the end of 1522. As the request for funds from the London guilds was made in the early spring of 1521, it is possible that Cabot was approached in late 1520 regarding the voyage. Cabot was brought to England either late in 1520 or early in 1521. Included among Sir Thomas Lovell's (Treasurer of the King's Chamber) personal liabilities at his death in 1524 is a note of debts paid on February 18, 1521 to John Goderyk of Foly, Cornwall, a draper, for conducting Sebastian Cabot, "master of the pilots in Spain, to London."⁷⁴⁵ Cabot apparently did not receive the needed permission to head an expedition on behalf of England, for the voyage does not appear to have taken place and he soon

attempted to obtain support for Sebastian Cabot's proposed expedition by way of a Northwest Passage to Cathay." Quinn does not mention the King or his council at all in this instance. Quinn, *NAW*, 172. In a different publication Quinn states that Henry was "prepared to encourage a Northwest Passage voyage in 1521 if his London merchants would help." Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 161.

⁷⁴⁴ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 138, p. 179.

⁷⁴⁵ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 134, p. 171.

after was heading a voyage for Spain. Although this expedition does not appear to have taken place, it deserves discussion for what it reveals about the King's interest and the attitudes of London merchants towards such a voyage. These details are revealed in the minute books of the Drapers' Hall and the Mercers' Company records.

On March 1, 1521 a meeting was held at Drapers Hall to discuss a matter brought before them by M. Wynkfield and M. Broun of the king's counsel "concerning the kings shippys."⁷⁴⁶ Though the notes from March 1 do not reveal exactly what the King had asked of the Drapers, it is generally assumed that this request is in relation to the request later made on March 11, 1521 regarding the outfitting of ships for a voyage to the new found lands. The passage from March 1, reveals a few key details that lead to this interpretation. The request came from the King's council and was not the sole doing of Cardinal Wolsey, as some have made it out to be.⁷⁴⁷ The passage states that the Wardens, along with Mr. Rudston, Mr. Perpount and Mr Dolphyn should meet with the Wardens of the other "auncyaunt Feliships to knowe what aunswere were best to be made to M. Wynkfield & M. Broun, of the kings counsel, concerning the kings shippys."⁷⁴⁸ Rather than deliver their answer to Wolsey or a member of his household, as they would have done had the request come from him, they delivered their answer to two members of the King's council, indicating that this is where the request originated. The fact that they met with the

⁷⁴⁶ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 167.

⁷⁴⁷ J.J. Scarisbrick, in his seminal work, *Henry VIII*, states regarding this voyage that "it was almost certainly Wolsey who was the inspiration for this – and it is a measure of the cardinal's vision and (probably) of the extent to which he remained a creature of the previous reign that this should be so." J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, (1968), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 123. E. G. Taylor has also given Wolsey credit for this voyage, calling it "Wolsey's project," E.G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography 1485-1583*, first published, 1930, (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 9. David B. Quinn also appears to give credit to Wolsey for the project, stating that "Cardinal Wolsey attempted to obtain support for Sebastian Cabot's proposed expedition by way of a Northwest passage to Cathay." Quinn does not mention the King or his council at all in this instance. Quinn, *NAW*, 172.

⁷⁴⁸ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 167.

Wardens of the other “ancient fellowships” also indicates that the request was made of several fellowships or guilds, not just of the Drapers, as was the request on March 11 for a fleet to the new found lands.

The Drapers’ answer revolved around four main points. First, they argued that they lacked the authority to compel their members to give up their ships. The use of the plural tense for both members and ships indicates that the King’s request involved several ships belonging to the Drapers. Second, they argued that their ships mostly go to Flanders and as such were “noo grete shippes.”⁷⁴⁹ Thus, the intended voyage was a transoceanic voyage, not a voyage or mission limited to the channel and the immediate European coastline. Third, the Drapers argue that if the King’s pleasure is to have manned, rigged, appareled, and victualed ships as the company shall think convenient, then they shall do so to the best of their powers “having suche a reasonable price of ye freght.” The Drapers offered to cooperate with the King on their own terms, for a price. If the King allowed them to decide what ship to outfit and paid a fair price for the freight, then they would comply with the King’s request. Finally, the Drapers stated that they thought it doubtful that any English ship “shalbe sufferd to laid in Spayn & in other countres, by reason of such actes & statutes there made, after suche lyke manner as be made in Englonde for gascon wyn & colles wood from Birdeux.”⁷⁵⁰ This last argument indicated that the intended destination was most likely either the New World or the Spice Islands. While there were some trade restrictions in place at the time, English trade with Spain flourished, as several Drapers, such as Bridges, well knew. The argument that the expedition might threaten this indicates that the ships were not intended for a simple trading venture and would be embarking on an expedition that might

⁷⁴⁹ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 167.

⁷⁵⁰ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 167.

offend foreign powers. This is all that is recorded on March 1, 1521 regarding the King's request. However, it appears that their response did not go over very well with the King's council, or with the King, for on March 11, the Drapers were again called together to discuss a request from the King regarding ships.

This time the entire body of Drapers, the Wardens, "the hole counsel, the lyverey & the hole body of the Feliship, ryche & poure," were gathered together to hear read to them certain articles sent "by the Wardens of the Mercers from the kings Counsell and to x other craftes of the moste Aunciant."⁷⁵¹ This time, the request appears to be a very formal and straightforward demand from the King and his government. It opened by stating that the request was sent from the King, his council and Cardinal Wolsey, who thought it best for the King's honor as well as for the general wealth of his realm to appoint a certain number of ships to prepare for a voyage to "the newfound iland."⁷⁵² The recipients were then told to supply five ships which the King's Grace would tackle, ordinance, and see to all other necessaries at his own expense. The merchants and companies were also to bear "the charge of the vitayling and mennys wages of the same shippes for one hole yere."⁷⁵³ In return, the King promised that the city of London "shalbe as hede Reulers for all the hole realm, for as many Cites and Townes as be mynded to prepare any shippes forwards for the same purpos & viage ... that x yere after, there shall no nacion have thr trate but you." The city of Bristol, they were told, had already offered its knowledge of the new found lands and committed two ships to the expedition. As for the participating Guilds and

⁷⁵¹ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

⁷⁵² Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

⁷⁵³ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

their merchants, the King promised that they would have a “respite for there custom xv monthes & xv monthes.”⁷⁵⁴ The recipients were given until Wednesday to answer the King’s request.

There are a few points in this request worth noting. First, the request clearly did not originate from Cardinal Wolsey. It came from the King’s government, naming not just the King but his council and the Cardinal, the three highest governmental authorities at the time. Further, the King’s responsibility for the tackle and ordinance made him a financial contributor to the expedition. Secondly, the demand stated that this was for the King’s “honour as for the general welth of this his Realm.” While this phrase could simply be attributed to the official nature of the demand, it is significant as it clearly and specifically represents the two main reasons Rastell put forth in his play for the colonizing of North America; for the general wealth of the kingdom, or for the common weal, and for the King’s honor. As discussed in chapter 3, Rastell blamed the faint-hearted mariners for the fact that England had yet to establish a colony and linked the establishment of a colony to the honor of England and the King:

And also what a honorable thyng
Bothe to the realme and to the kynge
To have had his domynyon extendynge
There into so farre a grounde
Whiche the noble kinge of late memory
The moste wyse prynce the .vij Henry
Causyd first for to be founde.⁷⁵⁵

Bringing up the point that Henry’s constant enemy, the French, were exploiting the lands that rightfully belonged to England insinuates that the King’s honor was on the line. Rastell finished this play in 1519. There is a good possibility that he intended it for a royal audience and that he

⁷⁵⁴ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

⁷⁵⁵ Rastell, *IIII Elements*, Li.

had the chance to present it to the court in 1520. In 1521 the King used the argument that for the general wealth of the realm and his own honor England must send a fleet to “the newfound iland.”⁷⁵⁶

It is also worth noting that the city of Bristol contributed to the voyage, offering two ships for the expedition. This indicates that word of Henry’s planned voyage had spread and that Bristol had not lost interest in transatlantic ventures after Cabot’s last voyage of 1508/09. In addition, it stated that the King’s demand was given to the master Wardens as well as ten other “craftes of the moste Aunciant.”⁷⁵⁷ This reveals the Drapers Guild was not the only one called upon to help with the voyage, but that other merchants and at least ten companies, or guilds, were as well. The Mercers’ Company records also contain a description of the discussions which occurred upon receipt of the demand from Henry regarding the planned voyage in 1521.

The Mercers’ Company records reveal that they received the demand on March 12, 1521, though it appears that it was sent through Wolsey, as the message was “shewde by Maister Wardens upon a mocion made by y lorde Cardynall to Maister John Hewster, Governour, on the Kynge behalfe.”⁷⁵⁸ After the demand was delivered to the Wardens they requested that each company be given a copy in writing so they could take it to their respective halls to discuss with their full body of members. This was done with copies delivered to the wardens of the Grocers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Fishmongers, Haberdashers, Salters, Ironmongers, Shermen, and of course, to the Drapers. After having gathered a general court, they agreed they would be willing to victual and pay the wages for one ship of 100 to 120 tons.⁷⁵⁹ From the

⁷⁵⁶ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

⁷⁵⁷ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 168.

⁷⁵⁸ Laetitia Lyell, ed. *Acts of Court of the Mercers’ Company 1453-1527*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 524.

⁷⁵⁹ Lyell, 526-7.

Mercers' accounts this agreement appears to have been reached with little to no real debate, as this contribution was first agreed to on March 13, with 93 men signing their name. Their response was reaffirmed on March 23, however, upon being called into a meeting with the other companies by the mayor of London on April 10, the answer drafted for the King was changed. The final answer delivered to the King stated they would supply two hundred marks towards the victualling and paying of wages for the ships, a sum which fell well below the amount needed.⁷⁶⁰ It could very well be that by this point some of the doubts held by the Drapers' Hall had influenced the Mercers' Company.

The Drapers' records show they did not reach an agreement on how to answer the king nearly as easily as the Mercers did. The Drapers questioned the expedition on fundamental levels. First, they questioned whether or not the King, his council and the Cardinal had been properly informed regarding navigational matters "by maisters & mariners naturally born with in this Realm of England, having experience, and excercised in and abowt the forsaid Iland, aswele in knowledge of the land," and who had knowledge of the seas, heavens, and the way home from the newfound lands.⁷⁶¹ They went to say that "we think it were to sore aventure to jeporde v shipps wt man and ware unto said land on the singular trust of one man called as we understand Sebastyan, whiche Sebastyan as we here say was never in that land hym self," having only heard his father and other men "spike in tymes past."⁷⁶² These two objections to the voyage are interesting coming from the Drapers' Company, whose members included Sir John Bridges and George Monoux, the largest individual contributors to the voyage, who would have been familiar, if not personally acquainted, with Sebastian Cabot. Bridges's brother was a resident in

⁷⁶⁰ Lyell, pp. 528-89.

⁷⁶¹ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶² Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

Seville, and the Bridges family had a very successful merchant business with Spain. Monoux was from a Bristol merchant family, and he and his father closely associated with the Thorne family. They would have knowledge of North America and Sebastian's voyages from the Bristol seamen, if not from Sebastian himself.⁷⁶³ It is noteworthy that the Drapers question whether or not the King had received information from English mariners who have experience in the new world, and then go on to question Sebastian Cabot's knowledge and abilities. Not only had Cabot's last voyage apparently ended in failure, but he was not a naturally born Englishman and had moved to Spain in 1514. As it was common for the exploratory expeditions to be made up of international crews, it is surprising the Drapers used nationality as a reason to object to the voyage. The fact that they state that Sebastian had never been to the New World is also surprising, as his voyage would have been well known to some of their members. It appears, given these facts, that the Drapers were grasping at any possible reason they could find to object to the expedition.

They further stated that if Sebastian really did possess the knowledge needed to lead the expedition, when no other English mariners or masters did, then it would be unwise to "aventur lyves & goodes" to his leadership, for it would be too great a risk to have the venture rest solely on one man's knowledge. What would happen should Cabot become sick and die? And what would happen if any of the ships became separated in the night, or by a tempest, or for any other reason? The Drapers feared their investments in "the vitaylles and mennys wages shalbe spent in vayn, and they glad to retorn homeward with small comferte, for it is said among maryners in

⁷⁶³ For more on the connections with the Bridges family and Monoux see Heather Dalton, *Merchants & Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, & Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28, 38. See also, Gustav Unger, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2008), pp. 15-16, 22, 61-67.

old proverb: ‘he salys not surely that salys by an other mannys compass.’⁷⁶⁴ In case these arguments were not enough, the Drapers thought it impossible for the ships to hold supplies for a whole year and thus the entire venture was doomed to unprofitable failure.⁷⁶⁵

The Drapers met with representatives of the other ten crafts at Saint Thomas of Akers, where they drafted a formal response delivered to the Cardinal by the Governor and four Wardens. They agreed that the guilds would together furnish two ships, and perhaps a third, and agreed to the “certain articles to them to be graunted by the kings highness & his honorable Councell.”⁷⁶⁶ In this way the guilds offered a counter measure that was better than what the Mercers’ Company records show they were willing to offer on their own, yet not half of what the King demanded of them, while at the same time stating they would accept the benefits the King had proposed to give them. To this proposal they added the addendum that they be given more time so that a “full aunswere therein to be yeven.”⁷⁶⁷ This answer did not please the King.

Henry called the Lord Mayor of London before him to discuss the matter. Henry “wold have no nay there in” and “spak sharpely to the maire to see it putt in execucion to the best of his power.”⁷⁶⁸ To this end, the Mayor went to the Drapers’ hall and called the entire fraternity before him, commanding them “with grete labour & diligence & many divers warnynges,” until it was agreed that the mayor would receive two hundred marks on April 9, 1521 to go towards the maryners wages and victualling of the ships.⁷⁶⁹ A similar passage can be found in the

⁷⁶⁴ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶⁵ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶⁶ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶⁷ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶⁸ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169.

⁷⁶⁹ Drapers’ Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 169. At this time the mark was worth roughly 13s 4d. Henry Percival Biggar, *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier, 1497-1534: A Collection of Documents Relating to the Early History of the Dominion of Canada*, (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1911), see footnote 1, 138. David Quinn and James A. Williamson both put the total value of 200 marks at £133 6s. 8d., Quinn, *England and the*

Mercers' Company records, in which the master Wardens informed their members that the Mayor had

geven in comaundment unto us, as he hath done unto certen other felyshppes that we shuld severally call oure felyshipp together, and to knowe their myndes howe and in what maner we shulde make aunswar unto the Kynge's good grace or to his most honorable Counsell for the wages and vytayll of a certain nnumber of men, for v shippes to be sent unto the new founde Iland as is aforesaid, and that every occupacions aunswar may be brought yn in wrytyg to my lord Mayre.⁷⁷⁰

The Mercers' Company agreed to pay two hundred marks sterling toward the "Charges of certen Shippes to be vitaylled and manned to the new founde Iland. And Ferthermore they be contented, That yf any other felyshipp of this Citie be disposed to beyre any gretter Charge, we shall be contented to bayre and paye asmuche as any other oon felyshipp."⁷⁷¹ The fact that these two accounts are so similar, and that the two guilds agreed to submit the same amount of money, has led to the assumption that there was a misrepresentation in the records, or an omission, and that the two hundred marks was what the guilds gave together. However, the last sentence in the Mercers' Company account refutes this. The Mercers promised that if any one fellowship of London could do better, contribute a greater amount, then they would match that amount. As the records indicate that the only other organizations requested to contribute money to the expedition were the named guilds, this shows that the other guilds made individual offers of contribution, and the two hundred marks recorded in the Drapers' and Mercers' records does not represent the entirety of what was offered towards the 1521 voyage.

Why the expedition does not appear to have progressed beyond this point is unknown.

Many have argued that it was the reluctance of the London merchants that prevented the

Discovery, 146; James A. Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots and the English Discovery of North America Under Henry VII and Henry VIII*, (London: The Argonaut Press, 1929), 252.

⁷⁷⁰ Lyell, 529.

⁷⁷¹ Lyell, 529.

expedition from taking place. J.J. Scarisbrick stated that as long as England's commerce with Antwerp was booming, London would remain uninterested in the New World.⁷⁷² H. P. Biggar and E. G. R. Taylor both argued that it was the conservative nature of the London merchants that doomed the voyage even before it commenced.⁷⁷³ This interpretation has some merit. The London merchants were rapidly growing in power, wealth, and influence by outpacing the port cities of southwest England, which had held much of England's commercial wealth at the start of the century.⁷⁷⁴ While it is true that without the merchants' support it is unlikely that Henry would have been able to successfully launch the expedition, he did have their support to a certain extent. The Drapers' records show that they collected the promised 200 marks, as there is a record of who contributed, and how much they contributed, towards the expedition.⁷⁷⁵ The Mercer's records also contain a list of members that contributed towards the promised 200 marks.⁷⁷⁶ As these two lists of contributors do not match, and given the concluding statement from the Mercers that they would match any fellowship which contributed more than their body, it must be concluded that Henry received a sizable amount of money towards the expedition. Though it is unknown how much the other guilds contributed. However, given the value of 200 marks, if both guilds gave this sum, Henry received just over £267, a sizeable amount.⁷⁷⁷ Thus, a lack of finances does not seem the most logical explanation for why this expedition did not take

⁷⁷² Scarisbrick, 124.

⁷⁷³ Biggar, 134-142; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 9-10.

⁷⁷⁴ Douglas R. Bisson, *The Merchant Adventurers of England: The Company and the Crown, 1474-1564*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), pp. ix, 5, 23-25; Alwyn Ruddock reveals that the sudden growth of London during the reign of Henry VIII and the sudden switch of shipping from Southampton water to London help can be explained in part by the success of Trinity House. Ruddock, "Trinity House," 468-472. Ruddock discusses this switch in commerce to London in her book, Alwyn Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton, 1270-1600* (Southampton: University College, 1951), for example see 264-5.

⁷⁷⁵ Drapers' Hall, Minutes and Records 1515-1529, f. 175-6.

⁷⁷⁶ Lyell, 528-9.

⁷⁷⁷ See footnote 773.

place. Instead, the politics of 1521 must also be taken into consideration, especially given Henry's preoccupation with the honor and glory to be won at war.

Henry and Wolsey had spent much of the previous two years moving the country away from a state of war with France and towards a more permanent peace. This was a main purpose of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. Unfortunately, by late spring 1521 England was once again headed towards war. Relations between the King of France and the newly elected Emperor, Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire, were quickly deteriorating and Charles pushed strenuously for an English alliance against France. By May 1521 Charles obtained this alliance through the secret treaty of Bruges⁷⁷⁸ Regardless of how much the London merchants contributed to the expedition, Henry could not afford to send five seaworthy vessels on a yearlong expedition when he might need them at a moment's notice for a naval assault against France. While there was talk of the destruction of the French fleet and an invasion, and the English fleet was mobilized for war in the spring of 1522, in the end, England contributed little to no real military support to this war.⁷⁷⁹ However, there was no way to know this in May 1521.

The fact that Henry's attention turned so swiftly to war, to the detriment of the planned voyage should not lead to the conclusion that he was uninterested in the New World. The fact that he instigated the voyage, pushed back against the merchants when they first made a counter offer, then called the Lord Mayor before him and, refusing to accept no for an answer, spoke harshly to the Mayor, demanding a more favorable outcome, reveals that Henry was indeed interested in the voyage. He was simply more interested in war with France at this stage in his life. Being interested in one did not preclude interest in the other.

⁷⁷⁸ For a discussion of the effect this had on naval policy see Loades, *The Tudor Navy*, pp. 103-9.

⁷⁷⁹ Loades, *Tudor Navy*, pp.73-77, 104-9.

Verrazano's Map

In 1525 England was once again at peace, and talks of another voyage of exploration began almost immediately. In 1525 Henry promised Paulo Centurione, a noted Genoese navigator and cosmographer, that he would equip several vessels for a voyage of discovery towards the northeast. Plans for this expedition were abruptly ended by the untimely death of Centurione.⁷⁸⁰ However, the English Court soon received news of the French explorer, Giovanni da Verrazano and his exploration of North America, and what he believed to be the discovery of the western ocean.

As discussed in chapter 3, Verrazzano was one of the most significant cartographers to contribute knowledge to Henry's court. It is generally believed, that after a successful voyage of exploration along the eastern seaboard of North America on behalf of France in 1524, Verrazzano returned to France only to find that the French king was being held prisoner by Charles V in Madrid. Having thus lost his patron, and any hope of finding funding in France for a second voyage to the New World, Verrazzano sought new patronage and traveled to the court of Henry VIII in 1525.⁷⁸¹ He presented Henry with a map and a globe depicting his discoveries. Verrazzano was one of the first to sail nearly the entire length of the eastern seaboard of North America and complete a chart of his findings. By presenting Henry with this chart, Verrazzano gave Henry's court one of the earliest, most accurate representations of North America. Richard Hakluyt stated that;

Master John Verazzanus, which had been thrise on that coast, in an olde excellent mappe which he gave to King Henrie the eight, and is yet in the custodie of master Locke, doth

⁷⁸⁰ HARRISSE, 50; J. A. Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558* (1913), (London: Oxford University Press, reprint, 1952), 249.

⁷⁸¹ HARRISSE, 228; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 12.

so lay it out, as it is to be seene in the mappe annexed in the end of this booke, being made according to Varazzanus plat.⁷⁸²

This statement has led to the general belief that Verrazzano visited Henry's court when he sought Henry's patronage. However, Lawrence Wroth pointed out that the surviving evidence is contradictory, with some pointing to Verrazzano's presence in Portugal at the time. Wroth cites a letter written by Doctor Diogo de Gouveia to the Portuguese Secretary of State dated May 8, 1525, which stated that he was in touch with the explorer after his return from a voyage of discovery and that he was sent to Lisbon for consultation with his Majesty.⁷⁸³ This would make it difficult for Verrazzano to also be in England in 1525, though not impossible.

Wroth discussed in detail Hakluyt's description of Michael Lock's map, which is said to be copied from the Verrazzano map which had been given to Henry. This map appears to show the inland sea some six to eight degrees too far north, a mistake Wroth did not believe Verrazzano would have made, as all of his writings indicated that Verrazzano's latitudes were logical and "can be supported by mathematical reasoning."⁷⁸⁴ Gerolamo de Verrazzano, the explorer's brother, on the other hand, was a successful cartographer who consistently placed his North American latitudes six to eight degrees too far north. While Wroth did not unequivocally state that Verrazzano did not physically go to England to seek patronage, he presented the case that it is more likely that the explorer went to Portugal and had his brother send the map and globe to Henry's court to test the waters there.⁷⁸⁵ Regardless of whether Giovanni da Verrazzano physically appeared before Henry's court to describe his findings, or sent his findings to the

⁷⁸² Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching on the Discoverie of America*, (1582), (Fairfield, Washington; Y Galleon Press, 1981), 15.

⁷⁸³ Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano 1524-1528*, (London: Yale University Press, 1970), 163.

⁷⁸⁴ Wroth, 168.

⁷⁸⁵ Wroth, 168-173.

English court via his brother, a map and a globe depicting Verrazzano's inland sea arrived in Henry's court in 1525 and drastically altered England's perception of North America for the rest of the century.

As discussed in chapter three, Verrazzano's representation of North America shows a narrow isthmus between the Atlantic Ocean and a large body of water which would surely reach Cathay. This western sea, which was in all likelihood an incorrect identification of the Carolina Outer Banks that separate the Atlantic from Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds, Verrazzano presented as the shortest route to Cathay.⁷⁸⁶ If England could chart this region and take possession of it, then England would gain access to Cathay. This map likely served as the motivation for John Rut's voyage of exploration in 1527, which was instigated and funded by Henry and departed England less than two years after Verrazzano's supposed visit. E. G. R. Taylor has gone as far as to argue that there is a good chance that Rut carried a copy of Verrazzano's map with him in 1527.⁷⁸⁷

Robert Thorne and the Voyage of 1527

There has been some disagreement within the historiography over the exact impetus behind Rut's voyage of 1527. Hakluyt was the earliest to give a definitive reason for the voyage, and he credited Robert Thorne with sparking the renewed interest in westward exploration.⁷⁸⁸ However, there are a few issues with this pronouncement that make it all but impossible to state that Thorne had any influence on the planning of this voyage. The timeline of Thorne's letter and its relation to the preparations for the voyage during the first half of 1527 is all but

⁷⁸⁶ See figure 6 in chapter 3 for an image of North America and the inland sea as depicted on the 1540 G. Verrazzano map. Wroth, 173.

⁷⁸⁷ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 12.

⁷⁸⁸ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VIII, 1.

impossible to firmly establish. In 1527 Robert Thorne of Bristol, son of Robert Thorne who is credited, along with Hugh Eliot, with the discovery of North America, was living in Seville among the London merchants, when he wrote a brief book of geography and letter to Henry VIII encouraging him to send out an exploration expedition to the north. Thorne argued that, as Spain already had control of the West Indies in the west and south, England's future lay to the north. If England sailed north over the North Pole, they would find a short and fairly easy route to Cathay and new lands that were yet unclaimed.⁷⁸⁹ The exact date that the letter arrived in England is unknown. Several historians, beginning with Hakluyt, have credited Thorne's letter with inspiring John Rut's voyage to the New World. Hakluyt introduced his account of Rut's voyage by stating that Robert Thorne had encouraged Henry VIII in a letter to "set forth a discovery even to the North Pole. And that it may be knowne that this his motion tooke present effect, I thought it good herewithall to put downe the testimonies of two of our Chroniclers. M. Hall, and M. Grafton."⁷⁹⁰

Historians John Friske and Samuel Morison have stated that "Robert Thorne of Bristol instigated Rut's voyage," and that upon receiving Thorne's letter, "Henry VIII reacted promptly by setting up a voyage to discover the Northwest Passage."⁷⁹¹ However, since a date cannot be

⁷⁸⁹ As mentioned in previous chapters the original letter no longer exists. There are three known copies of the letter, and Hakluyt prints the letter three separate times. Each of these copies and prints differs slightly in the wording, indicating that each is a copy of a copy. Hakluyt claimed to have copied his version from a copy held by Thorne's former factor, Emmanuel Lucas. This appears to be the original copy from which all of the surviving texts originate and was, itself, likely an imperfect copy of the original. Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages touching the discoverie of America, and the Ilands adjacent unto the same, made first of all by our Englishmen, and afterward by the Frenchmen and Britons: and certain notes of advertisements for observations, necessarie for such as shall hereafter make the like attempt, with two mappes annexed hereunto for the plainer understanding of the whole matter*, (1582), facsimile edition (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1981), 29-33. See also BL Lansdown MS 100 f. 77; BL Cotton Vitellius C VII f. 342.

⁷⁹⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. 8, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁹¹ Frisk, 17; Quotes from Morison, 233, 234. The idea that Thorne inspired Rut's voyage is also asserted by Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 218.

established for when Henry received the letter, some have argued that it could not have been the true inspiration for the voyage. James Williamson believes that Thorne's letter was likely written after his memorial to Dr. Lee in the late summer or fall of 1527. He further points out that Rut sailed west, not north, from England as Thorne's letter proposes.⁷⁹² While Morison argues that Henry's advisors were most likely responsible for Rut's expedition heading west before going north, it should be pointed out that previous voyages in search of a northerly route to Cathay operated under the assumption that one could sail west to Newfoundland, replenish the ship's stores, and then sail north.⁷⁹³

E. G. R. Taylor and Heather Dalton both point out that Thorne's book to Dr. Lee, discussed below, was roughly written and lacks eloquence and structure. However, the letter to Henry VIII was well written with crisp, clear verbiage, and well organized. Both point out that this letter bears a striking resemblance to Barlow's plea at the end of his book, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, in which he urges Henry to send an expedition to the north. Taylor deduces that it is possible that the letter to Henry was not written by Thorne, but prepared by Barlow.⁷⁹⁴ Dalton thinks that it is possible the two men joined forces after Barlow returned to Spain in 1528 from Cabot's 1526 expedition and together wrote the letter to Henry.⁷⁹⁵ The argument that Barlow and Thorne joined forces to write the formal letter to the King has its merit. The two men were close associates and friends, they shared a common desire to see a northern voyage and they both invested in Cabot's expedition of 1526, showing that they shared a similar passion for

⁷⁹² Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 266; Williamson also makes the argument that Rut's voyage is obviously not inspired by Thorne because he sailed west not north in his book *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 257-8.

⁷⁹³ Morison, 234.

⁷⁹⁴ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 50-51; Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, Xliii-xliv.

⁷⁹⁵ Heather Dalton, *Merchants & Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, & Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 134.

exploration. The formality of the letter could be due to the fact that it was written for the King and not a dignitary, as is the book for Dr. Lee. The grammatical similarities are striking and do lend towards the idea of co-authorship. The argument of co-authorship is impossible to prove at this point, however, it adds to the argument that Thorne's letter was not written in time for it to inspire Rut's voyage.

The issue of whether or not Rut's voyage can be attributed to Robert Thorne's letter is further complicated by a letter written to Cardinal Wolsey in 1527. This letter by Edmund Howard, the third son of the Duke of Norfolk, requests that Wolsey allow Howard to join with the expedition planned for the New World.⁷⁹⁶

Syr I am enformyd ther shalbe a vyage made in to an newfounde land with dyvers shypps and cappetayns and sogears in them; and I am informyd the vyage shalbe honorable and profitable to the Kyngs Grace and all hys reame. Syr if your Grace think my poore karkes any thing meet to serve the Kyngs Grace in the sayde vyage, for the byttyr passion of Kryst by youe my good lord ether in, for now I doo leyff as wretchyd a lyffe as ever dyd jentyman being a tru man, and nothing I have to leyff on, nor to fynd me my wyffe and my chylderne met or drynke; and glad I wolde be to ventyr my lyffe to doo the Kyng servysse, and if I be put ther onto I dowt not but I shall doo sotche servysse as shalbe exceptale and redownd to his Grace honowre.⁷⁹⁷

This letter, which is the first known reference to Rut's voyage, reveals several things. First, it reveals that Wolsey was believed to be involved in the planning of the voyage. Howard began his letter by describing his immense debt and reminding Wolsey of his previous service to the King. In the war against the Scots in 1522, he commanded of a ship of 220 tons, a likely insinuation that he would be a good candidate to command one of the "dyvers shypps"⁷⁹⁸ This

⁷⁹⁶ An interesting side note to Edmund Howard is that in 1524 the Earl of Surrey, who was linked to Rastell's voyage and might have sabotaged it, was made the Duke of Norfolk. Thus, Edmund Howard's father was linked to Rastell's voyage. Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 172.

⁷⁹⁷ TNA SP 1/46 f. 13.

⁷⁹⁸ H.P. Biggar, "An English Expedition to America in 1527" *Mélanges D'Histoire offerts a M. Charles Bémont*, (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcon, 1913), 464.

letter also reveals that this voyage was sponsored by the crown, as he requested permission to “serve the King’s Grace in the said voyage.”

This voyage also appears to have been more than simply an expedition in search of a northwest passage. Howard had heard that the voyage was setting out for the new found land. He did not mention anything about sailing north to parts unknown or a search for the Spice Islands or Cathay. Howard had also heard that the voyage included a number of soldiers. An expedition with the purpose of exploring a northern route to Cathay, as suggested by Thorne, did not require a large party of soldiers. For Howard to have indicated that the voyage he heard of was setting sail with “divers ships” with soldiers in them, suggests there were a significant number of soldiers involved, at least enough for the rumors of the voyage to have made note of the fact. This point is further illustrated by the Imperial ambassador in London.

On June 4, 1527, six days before Rut’s ship is recorded as leaving Plymouth, Don Iñigo de Mendoza, the Imperial Ambassador in England, wrote to the Emperor informing him of certain preparations being made for a voyage to the Spice Islands. It appears that there is much misinformation circulating regarding this voyage. At first, he writes that

for the last few days active preparations have been going on, repairing and fitting up certain vessels that were lying almost forgotten in the dockyards of this kingdom, and drawing besides into the royal service two large ships that were intended for the spice trade. There has also been a great inspection of the artillery of those vessels, and of their supply of ammunition.⁷⁹⁹

He continues to state that the French galleons in the English ports are said to be preparing to join the ships the King had caused to be prepared for sea. This indicated that Henry was preparing for a joint venture to the Spice Islands with the French and that he expected the ships to meet

⁷⁹⁹ Pascual De Gayangos, ed. *Calendar of Letters, Dispatches, and State Papers: Relating to the Negotiations Between England and Spain Preserved in the Archives at Simancas and Elsewhere*, vol. III, part II, Henry VIII 1527-1529, (London: Longman & Co., 1877), Doc. 83, p. 229.

some resistance, as great attention was being paid to the artillery of the vessels. However, later in the letter *Mendoça* amended this account by stating that he had just been informed that, “the ships now being fitted out for sea do not amount to more than six or seven, and are merely intended to escort the Legate in his passage to France,” and that the two ships which he had mentioned as having been pressed into service were now being allowed to continue with their former duties.⁸⁰⁰ Hence, there was a wide range of misinformation regarding the preparation of the ships. Taken with Howard’s letter, these two accounts indicate that rumors regarding the voyage to North America ranged from a few ships to a sizeable fleet which would be well armed and perhaps part of a joint venture with France.

For Wolsey to have received Howard’s letter before the final preparations of the voyage, Howard would have had to have heard about the voyage in the early spring of 1527. This implies that rumors of the voyage were already spreading by March or April, as it left London in May. If Thorne’s letter really did inspire Rut’s voyage, then Henry would have had to have received the letter early enough in the year for Rut’s voyage to be organized and outfitted, in time for rumors to spread in the early spring. While this is possible, it leaves a narrow window of time for Henry to have received the letter. This slim possibility is made all but impossible when the letter is paired with Thorne’s book to Dr. Lee.

Dr. Lee, Henry VIII’s almoner and in 1531 Archbishop of York, had been sent to Spain in December 1525 for the purpose, among other things, of collecting a sizable debt Charles V owed Henry.⁸⁰¹ Lee was charged with receiving payments for several debts including; forty thousand angeles “of the most Serene King of famous memory, his father, as is shown by a bond

⁸⁰⁰ Gayangos, Doc. 83, pp. 229-30.

⁸⁰¹ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 49.

in writing,” a second debt of thirty-five thousand florins, a third from June 20, 1522, which was to have been paid within a year of the date for one hundred and fifty thousand crowns of gold, and finally for “the bond of indemnity by which His Imperial Majesty engages himself to pay annually to His most Serene Highness the King, one hundred and thirty-three thousand, three hundred and five crowns,” a sum which was more than three years past due.⁸⁰² This was no small task and Lee faced roadblocks and excuses at every turn.

On April 15, 1526, while in Seville for the Emperor’s marriage to the Portuguese Princess, Lee wrote Wolsey a long letter describing the trouble he faced simply getting an audience with the Emperor. While most of the letter is written in a very despairing tone, the addendum is more positive. While attempting to gain an audience, Lee met “ii merchants heer (the toone called Briges the aldrmans brothr the tooder A right toward young man as ny hythe beliongeth to England called throne).”⁸⁰³ With these two merchants Lee felt sure that he had been able to “devise sufficient Wayns” to gain the owed sum. The merchants had shown themselves “in all thinge rede to doo the kinge highness suvice and bee hare of greatcredence.”⁸⁰⁴ This was the fateful meeting between Lee and Robert Thorne that led to Thorne’s book and his letter to the king. Unfortunately, Thorne and Bridges do not seem to have been able to help obtain the money owed to Henry VIII, as Don Iñigo de Mendoza wrote repeatedly in 1527 and into 1528 that the English refused to consider Charles’ proposals until the debt was paid.⁸⁰⁵

Despite their inability to help Lee, Thorne remained Lee’s source for information on the New World. At some point near the New Year of 1527, Lee was approached by a secret agent

⁸⁰² Gayangos, Doc. 2, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁰³ BL Cotton MS Vespasian C/III f. 2332. This section appears to be an addendum to the letter as it comes after a coded section and then contains an additional coded section after the account of Thorne and Bridges.

⁸⁰⁴ BL Cotton MS Vespasian C/III f. 2332.

⁸⁰⁵ Gayangos, Docs. 69, 83, 224, 340.

who suggested that the English king purchase the Emperor's claims to the Spice Islands, rights which the Emperor was currently in negotiations to sell to the Portuguese.⁸⁰⁶ Wanting to send his sovereign an informed account, Lee reached out to Thorne, putting before him a series of questions ranging from the general geography of the world to specifics regarding the New World and the Spice Islands, their latitude, and which sovereign actually held true claim to the islands according to the Treaty of Tordesillas. In response to these questions, Thorne wrote his manuscript book, which is often read as a proposal to the King but is in reality a brief lesson in geography for Lee and a push for English rights to North America by right of first discovery, as well as his own plan for an English expedition over the North Pole to the Spice Islands.⁸⁰⁷

Thorne presents a strong case for English claim over North America, for the English had been the first to find the new-found lands which had been discovered by Bristol merchants during the reign of Henry VII. Thorne discussed the various ways to encompass the globe, coming to the conclusion that God had intended the English to sail to the north, as England lay further north than Spain or Portugal and could more easily reach the northern passage over the Pole. Thorne promised riches in both precious metals and stones as well as in spices, food and raw materials. Thorne included a small map, rudely drawn, and colored in a way to indicate where the continents lay. He used this map to prove that the northern route lay open and waiting for the English to make use of it.⁸⁰⁸ As mentioned in chapter 3, Richard Hakluyt published the only known copy of Thorne's map. Unfortunately, in each of the different publications in which Hakluyt included this map, the map is slightly different, and none of the maps include a

⁸⁰⁶ Dr. Lee appears to have first written to Wolsey regarding the proposal on January 20, 1527. BL Cotton Vespasian C/IV, f. 3.

⁸⁰⁷ BL Lansdown MS 100 f. 77; Cotton Vitellius C VII f. 342.

⁸⁰⁸ BL Lansdown MS 100 f. 78; BL Cotton Vitellius C VII f. 329.

numerical key that matches Thorne's discussion of the world. In addition to this, the maps include place names which are not mentioned in Thorne's book.⁸⁰⁹ Thus, while this is the only surviving representation of Thorne's map, it is an imperfect one and must be considered with this in mind.

A shorter version of Thorne's discussion was included in his undated letter to the King. This voyage would be easy, for the English were near the North Pole, from which they could sail south to the equinoctial where they would, undoubtedly, find islands rich in spices, precious metals and all other things of value which were known to reside near the equinoctial line. He reassured the King that the northern route was the best for the English as it would shorten their journey "by more then 2000" leagues, and as it was well known that "nothing is voyde or utterly fruteles in all Nature. So I judge there is no land unhaitable nore Sea unnavigabit."⁸¹⁰ Not to mention the added advantage of constant daylight, as there would be almost no night during the summer in the far north and the sailors would not have to feel their way forward in the dark.⁸¹¹ This last piece of information likely came from his friendship with Sebastian Cabot, who commented on the long days in his accounts of his discovery of the mouth of the northwest passage (likely Hudson's Strait). Thorne's northern route was clearly illustrated on his map, according to his book and his letter to the king, and the map which Hakluyt presented as Thorne's also included a very wide, clear northern route over the pole which would lead to the Spice Islands.

⁸⁰⁹ See fig. 1. As Taylor points out, the longitudes on the map printed by Hakluyt are wrongly numbered and the note attached to the map reference Ophir and Tharsis which Thorne does not mention anywhere in his work. Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 48.

⁸¹⁰ BL Cotton Vitellius C/VII, f. 339.

⁸¹¹ BL Cotton Vitellius C/VII, f. 343.

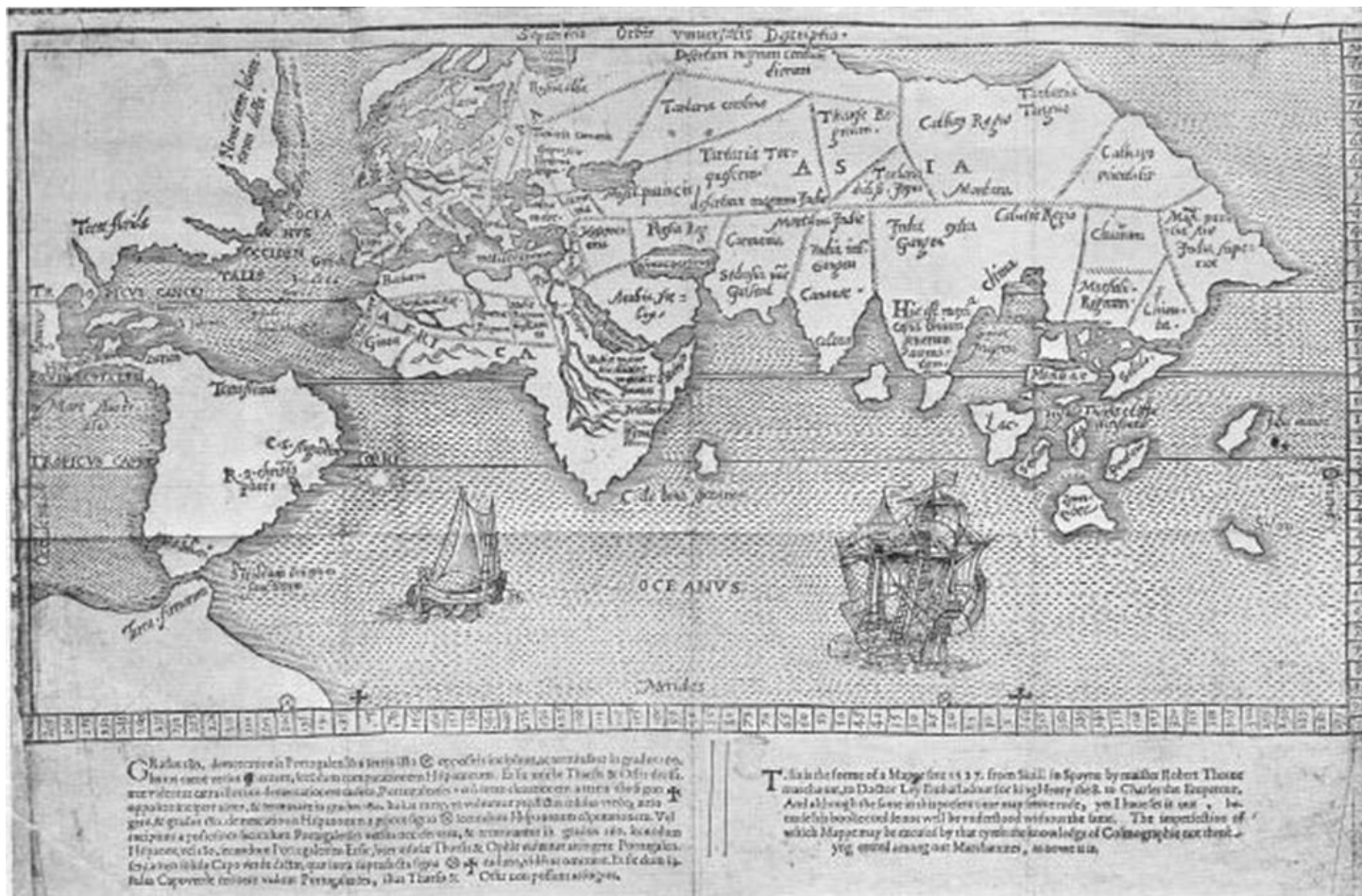


Figure 5-1 Robert Thorne's *Orbis Universalis Descriptio* from Richard Hakluyt, *Diverse Voyages*, (1582).

Image taken from the British Library, "Lines in the Ice: top five highlights" Maps and views blog, accessed 6/1/2018.
<http://blogs.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/2015/04/lines-in-the-ice-top-six-highlights.html>

Thorne's letter to the King is undated, though his book to Lee can be dated through internal evidence to early 1527. In his conclusion to his book, Thorne requested that Lee keep his proposals secret. He wrote,

Also this Carte and that I wryt touching the difference betweene thempour and the king of Portingall is not to be shewed or comoned there wc manye of that counre, for thoughe there is withnig in it prindiciall to the Emperour it maye be a cause of payne to the mater, aswell for that mone maye take this carte but certene appointed & allowed for Masters, as for that padventure it wolde not sounde well to them that Straunger shoulde knowe or discover their Sercrate and woulde appear e woorste of all, yf they understand that I wryte touching the shorte waye to the Spycerie by our Seas.⁸¹²

There are a couple of things here that are worth taking the time to note. First, as demonstrated throughout Thorne's book, he was well educated with a firm grasp on the most current debates and knowledge of geography. This likely stemmed from his close friendship with Cabot, to be discussed in the following chapter. Thorne's concern that things might not go well for him if news reached Spain or the Holy Roman Empire regarding his letter, reveals that this geographical knowledge was indeed considered a state secret just as the historiography has argued. Thorne's danger was increased by the fact that he had drawn his own map and included it in the manuscript book. As Thorne pointed out, the practice of cartography was becoming closely guarded, and to draw a map such as this required special licensing and permission from the Casa de la Contratación. So not only had Thorne broken the law, but he was sending this cartographic knowledge to a foreign nation. The fact that Thorne had access to the information to draw the map indicates that he had access to such knowledge himself, either through publications or that he had seen Spanish maps while in Seville. Thus, Thorne's book and map is a clear example of the smuggling of cartographic knowledge across international lines.

⁸¹² BL Lansdowne 100, f. 76.

After giving this warning, Thorne drove home his desire that the information be kept a secret for now. He promised that he would come to England, and when he did, he would be able to reveal further reason and proof of his ideas. Until that time, he wrote, “I beseche yor wrship let it be put to silence and in the meane season it may please god to send our two mighthe men that are gon to the Spycerie wch maye also bring more plaine declaraton of that in this cace might be desired.”⁸¹³ Thorne was referencing Roger Barlow and Henry Patmer, who had joined Cabot’s expedition to the Spice Islands which instead explored the Rio de la Plata. Thorne requested that Lee keep his proposals secret until after his friends returned, either because he hoped to have better knowledge of the Spice Islands and their locations before proposing a northern expedition or for the safety of his friends.⁸¹⁴ While Thorne’s book to Lee is dated 1527, his letter to Henry is not. It is generally assumed that it was also written in 1527; however, this last part of his correspondence to Lee would indicate that Thorne waited before writing the King in hopes of receiving new information from his friends.⁸¹⁵

As neither Howard’s letter, nor Thorne’s letter to Henry bears a date, it is impossible to establish a firm timeline that would prove whether or not Henry received the letter in time. However, given the evidence discussed above, it is very unlikely, if not impossible, that Thorne’s letter inspired Rut’s westward voyage. It is much more likely that Rut’s voyage was in response to the new information presented to the court by Verrazzano’s map and globe. As Henry had already shown interest in exploring North America, and as he and Wolsey had tried to plan a

⁸¹³ BL Lansdowne 100 f. 76.

⁸¹⁴ Taylor makes a similar argument asserting that “there can be no doubt that the direct address to Henry VIII was not written at the same time as this letter,” and that this can be determined because of his request that Lee keep the matter a secret as “he would obviously await Barlow’s homecoming with the expected fresh information from the Moluccas, and this did not take place until October 1528.” Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 50.

⁸¹⁵ E.G.R. Taylor has put forth the argument that the letter was not written in 1527 at all, and might not have even been written by Thorne, but rather was written by Barlow at roughly the same time that he presented his geography to Henry VIII. Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 50-52.

voyage to North America in 1521, it is more probable that Henry and Wolsey had already decided to put together a voyage that would depart in 1527 for North America and that Thorne's book simply happens to have been written the same year.

The Voyage of 1527

John Rut's expedition set sail from London on May 20, and made its final departure from Plymouth on June 10, 1527. Little is known about John Rut. The first known reference to him is from December 1512 when he was appointed Master of a Genoese carrack of 800 tons called the *Maria de Loreto*, subsequently christened the *Gabriel Royal*, which had been taken for use in the war against France.⁸¹⁶ This fact establishes Rut's service in the King's navy and his apparent skill as a mariner to be assigned to such a significant vessel. He again appears on several lists of the Royal Navy, beginning in 1513, as master of various ships.⁸¹⁷ In 1514, Rut is listed as a founding member of the Trinity House at Deptford, indicating that he had, by this point, reached a level of success as a pilot or ship's master.⁸¹⁸ Trinity House was described by contemporaries as "a Company of the chiefest and moost expert Maysters and Governours of Shippes."⁸¹⁹ Rut continued to serve in the King's Navy, as he is listed as the master of the *Mary Guildford* in 1526.⁸²⁰ This ship is listed among the king's ships as 160 tons and built in 1524.⁸²¹ The *Mary Guildford* made a yearly trip to Bordeaux to pick up a shipment of wine for the King. In 1526 Rut took the *Mary Guildford*, along with the *Mignon*, to Bordeaux in the fall and returned sometime between November 16, and November 23, 1526. This appears to have been the first

⁸¹⁶Biggar, "An English Expedition," 462.

⁸¹⁷TNA, SP 1/3 f. 182; SP Hen. VIII 3 f. 181; Exch. Accts., 62/17/ R.O.

⁸¹⁸Pepys Library, Missilariam of Matters Historical and Naval Vol. 1 (2869), f. 6.

⁸¹⁹Quote taken from Ruddock, "Trintiy House," 472.

⁸²⁰Biggar, "An English Expedition," 462.

⁸²¹Ellis, *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, 2nd series, vol. I, (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1827), 219.

time that Rut served as her master.⁸²² Rut is listed as a yeoman of the Crown from Ratcliff on a notation of an annuity of £10 that he was to receive in two installments in 1527.⁸²³ This annuity is likely payment for the voyage he led in 1527. All of this information paints a hazy picture of a man of common birth who worked his way up through the ranks of the King's navy to become the master of, what David B. Quinn calls, the most important English expedition to North America during the reign of Henry VIII.⁸²⁴

Even less evidence survives on Rut after the voyage. He made it back to England safely, and became the master of the *Mary Guildford* once again in December 1528.⁸²⁵ There are two surviving wills in England that refer to a John Rut and match the timeframe for the John Rut in question.⁸²⁶ The first will is of Joan Rutt, widow of John Rutt.⁸²⁷ This 1551 will offers no insight into the life of John Rutt her husband, other than the fact that he must have done well for himself and his family as his widow left several valuable bequests to her sisters and other relatives. There is also the will of a John Rutte or Rutt, mariner of Boston, dated July 8, 1553, processed on March 21, 1554. This John Rutt also did well for himself, leaving behind a shipping business that consisted of a ship called *Mary of Boston*, which he left to his son Robert with the condition that Robert use the ship to provide for his mother, a ferry boat left to his wife Agnes, and a "crayercocke" left to Robert with no strings attached.⁸²⁸ The size of the *Mary of Boston* is not given, however, the "crayercocke" which he left to Robert was likely a seagoing

⁸²² Biggar, "An English Expedition," 463.

⁸²³ L&P vol. IV, # 3213, 1464.

⁸²⁴ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 171.

⁸²⁵ Brewer, vol 4, part II, Doc. 5082, p. 2214.

⁸²⁶ The London Metropolitan Archives list two wills, one for John Rut (DL/C/666/021 Will of John Rutte of Stepnly 8 July 1551) and one for Joan Rut, (PC/C/0356/001/067v Will of Joan Rutte 1551) however both references refer to the same document, Joan Rut's will.

⁸²⁷ See previous footnote.

⁸²⁸ TNA PROB 11/36/378. Rutt placed several restrictions on Robert's inheritance of the *Mary of Boston* to ensure that his wife Agnes would be taken care of for the rest of her life.

vessel of thirty to fifty tons.⁸²⁹ Rutt left behind his wife Agnus, son Robert and three daughters; Agnes, Margaret, and Johann, all of whom received bequests. Boston is located in Lincolnshire near the east coast of England. It would not be all that surprising if John Rut, a successful ships master, worked his way up to becoming a ship owner and retired from the king's service to work for himself.

Both of the English chroniclers, Edward Hall and Richard Grafton, record the departure of Rut's expedition in almost identical manner stating that on May 20, 1527, the King sent two fair ships "well manned and vitayled," having in them "divers cunning men" to seek "strange Regions."⁸³⁰ Rut commanded the *Mary Guildford*, while the second ship, the *Sampson*, sailed under the supervision of a master Grube. The fact that both ships have been identified as being owned by the King and that both English chroniclers state that the King sent the two ships suggests that this was a royal venture, not one sponsored by independent investors or a group of merchants.⁸³¹ Furthermore, Rut's letter, published by Samuel Purchas, is directly addressed to King Henry and updated him on the voyage's progress. The fact that Rut would write the letter directly to the king and not to a third party, such as Wolsey, to be relayed to the king, is indicative that Henry had personal interest in the voyage.

According to Rut, the expedition had fair sailing until July 1, at which point they ran into "a marvailous great storme, and much foule weather."⁸³² The two ships became separated and the *Sampson* was lost, never to be heard from again. Two days later, Rut reached 53°N, at which

⁸²⁹ Dorothy Burwash, *English Merchant Shipping 1460-1540*, (1947), (London: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 120.

⁸³⁰ Richard Grafton, *Grafton's Chronicle: or, History of England* vol. II, (London: Printed for J. Johnson; F.C. and J. Rivington, 1809), 395; Hall, *Hall's Chronicle*, 724.

⁸³¹ Morison has argued that the *Sampson* was also a royal ship. 234. Most historians agree with his argument.

⁸³² Samuel Purchas, *His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and others* vol. 14 (1613), (New York: AMS Press Inc. 1965), 304.

point he ran into large islands of ice and deep water. Not being able to find any soundings, and finding the ice too dangerous to continue further northward, Rut turned his ship to the south. Bernard Hoffman argues that this encounter with large icebergs was most likely in the East Greenland or Labrador ice flows.⁸³³ Four days later the *Mary Guildford* reached 52°N and took soundings of 160 fathoms as it “fell with the mayne Land, and within ten leagues of the mayne Land we met with a great Iland of Ice” in deep water. From there Rut made his way to Cape de Bas, “a good Harbor, and many small ilands, and a great fresh river going up farre into the mayne Land.”⁸³⁴ Rut described the area as all wilderness and heavily wooded mountains. They explored roughly ten leagues and found no signs of inhabitants, but in the woods, they found signs of “divers great beasts.” After spending ten days at Cap de Bas, watering and replenishing their stores with fish, Rut took his ship south in search of the *Sampson*.⁸³⁵

Rut had made arrangements with Grube that, should they become separated, they would go to “Cape de Sper” where they would “tarry the space of sixe weeks one for another.”⁸³⁶ The choice of Cape de Sper was logical. It was well known to English mariners at the time, who used the island and the bays to the south of the Cape Spear, as far as Ferryland Head, for fishing. In addition, the inshore fishery at St. John’s was well established at this point.⁸³⁷ Rut made his way to St. John’s on August 3, where he found fishing “eleven saile of Normans, and one

⁸³³ Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier: Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America 1497-1550*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961, reprint 1968), 120.

⁸³⁴ Purchas, 304; There has been much debate and disagreement over where Rut landed. H.P. Biggar has argued that Cape de Bas is St. Lewis Inlet, and that the river is the St. Lewis River, Biggar, “An English Expedition,” 465. Morison, on the other hand, has argued that Cape de Bas must have been north of Cape Bauld, Newfoundland, probably somewhere near Battle Harbor Labrador, which is a more logical location given Rut’s description, Morison, 234.

⁸³⁵ Purchas, 304.

⁸³⁶ Purchas, 304.

⁸³⁷ Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, 353. By 1522 the English fishing expeditions to this region can be referred to as a fleet. L&P, vol. 3 part II, 1521-23, # 2419, 1021.

Brittaine, and two Portugall Barkes.”⁸³⁸ After exploring the area, and having found no sign of Grube, Rut planned to set out with all diligence “toward parts to that Ilands that we are commanded by the grace of God, as we were commanded at our departing.”⁸³⁹ Rut then gave his letter for the king, along with a letter from his pilot, Albert de Prato to Cardinal Wolsey, to one of the fishing vessels in the area which was headed to England. He proceeded to the islands he had been commanded to explore. At this point Rut’s expedition becomes shrouded in mystery.

Purchas’s copy of Rut’s letter is an imperfect source. Purchas received his copy from Richard Hakluyt, who had obtained it between the publication of the second edition of *Principle Navigations and Voyages* in 1600, and 1613, when he showed it to Purchas, who included it in his publication in 1614.⁸⁴⁰ Purchas also received a letter written by Albert de Prato to Cardinal Wolsey. Purchas includes the salutation but not the body of Prato’s letter, stating that it is too similar to Rut’s letter to warrant publication.⁸⁴¹ Purchas thus robbed history of a vital source regarding this voyage. Purchas also stated that Rut’s letter was written “in bad English and worse Writing.”⁸⁴² This is, as T. E. Armstrong asserts, “a rare example of an editorial outburst by Purchas” and speaks to the legibility and condition of the letter at the time.⁸⁴³ This rough condition explains the few blanks in Purchas’s transcription and leaves one to wonder whether he misread anything in the letter.

⁸³⁸ Purchas, 305.

⁸³⁹ Purchas, 305.

⁸⁴⁰ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 11-12; L. E. Pennington, “Samuel Purchas; His reputation and the uses of his works,” L. E. Pennington, ed. *The Purchase Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997), pp. 3-120, 27.

⁸⁴¹ Purchas, 305.

⁸⁴² Purchas, 304.

⁸⁴³ T. E. Armstrong, “The Northern Passages,” L. E. Pennington, “Samuel Purchas; His reputation and the uses of his works,” L. E. Pennington, ed. *The Purchase Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1997), 292-300, 298.

On November 19, 1527, Gines Navarro was loading a caravel with cassava on Mona Island in the Caribbean when an English vessel appeared on the coast. Navarro would later state in his deposition with the Spanish authorities that it was a vessel of 250 tons with three main-tops.⁸⁴⁴ Navarro noted that the ship dispatched a pinnace with 25-30 men manning her and as many as 25 men in the boat with the captain of the ship in command. All of the men were supposedly armed “with corselets, bows and arrows and some cross-bows; and in the bow were two lombards, the matches of which were alight.”⁸⁴⁵ They stated they were Englishmen sent by the King to find the land of the Great Khan. They proceeded to tell Navarro a story similar to Rut’s expedition.

They had encountered a storm, during which they lost sight of their consort and had never seen her again. They held on their course and reached the frozen sea where they met large islands of ice. Being unable to pass that way, they altered their course but ran into a sea as hot as water in a boiler. For fear lest that water should melt the pitch of their vessel, they turned about and explored Newfoundland, where they found some 50 Spanish, French and Portuguese fishing-vessels. They desired to land there in order to have tidings of the Indians, but on reaching the shore the Indians killed the pilot, who they said was a Piedmontese by birth. They made their way for some 400 leagues and more along the coast of the new land where Ayllon took his colony. Then they crossed over to the Caribbean and explored the island of San Juan.⁸⁴⁶

When Navarro asked the Englishmen what they were doing in the Spanish islands, they told him they “wished to examine them in order to give the king of England an account thereof;

⁸⁴⁴ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁴⁵ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁴⁶ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

when they had explored them, they would take a load of brazilwood and return home.”⁸⁴⁷ They then asked Navarro the way to Santo Domingo and details about its harbor. Navarro must have remained cordial with the English, perhaps even giving them the information, for the English captain invited Navarro aboard the ship.⁸⁴⁸

Navarro stated that when he boarded the English vessel, he was allowed to see the entire ship, which “had only wine, flour and provisions, with some clothes, linen goods and other articles for barter, and much good artillery. There were also carpenters and smiths and a forge, other artisans, tools to build more vessels in case of necessity and an oven for baking bread.”⁸⁴⁹ Navarro was asked if he could read Spanish or Latin, being told that the captain was in possession of letters from the King of England commissioning him to explore and trade. As Navarro could not read, he was not shown the letters. The captain and some of his men returned to shore with Navarro and remained on Mona Island until the following day, at which point the English set sail for Santo Domingo.⁸⁵⁰ The English vessel, which Navarro never names, nor does he name the captain of the ship, arrived off the mouth of the river leading into the harbor of Santa Domingo on Monday, November 25, 1527.⁸⁵¹

In the depositions taken at Santo Domingo, dated November 26 to December 9, 1527, the account of the unnamed English ship arriving in the Spanish colonies is recounted. After anchoring off shore, the master of the ship and ten to twelve men landed and met with town officials. As they had done with Navarro, the English stated that their ship belonged to the King

⁸⁴⁷ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁴⁸ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁴⁹ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁵⁰ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, pp. 192, 193.

⁸⁵¹ Irene A. Wright, *Spanish Documents Concerning English Voyages to the Caribbean, 1527-1568*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1929), Doc. 1, p. 29.

of England and then they offered a slightly different narrative, stating they had been commissioned to “make a certain exploration toward the north, between Labrador and Newfoundland, in the belief that in that region there was a strait through which to pass to Tartary.”⁸⁵² They had sailed as far north as “fifty and some degrees, where certain persons died of cold; the pilot had died, and one of the said vessels was lost.”⁸⁵³ They sailed to Santo Domingo to take in water and subsistence and other things which they needed. The English requested, and received, permission to enter the port. However, due to a strong north wind they could not bring their ship into the harbor. Diego Mendez, the high sheriff of the island, along with two pilots, Antonio Martina and Pedro Montiel, were sent out to the ship to guide it in. It was nearly dark, and they could not bring it in, so the ship remained anchored until the next morning.

On the morning of the 26th, as the crew sat down to eat a meal brought to them from the town, a shot was fired just over the poop of the ship from the fort guarding the harbor.⁸⁵⁴ Francisco de Tapia, the warden of his majesty’s fortress, who had been bedridden with an unnamed illness, had heard that an English ship was trying to enter the harbor and sent a messenger to the town to request information and discover the intent of the vessel. The messenger returned and told Tapia that the Licentiate Zuazo and Lebron had not yet had a chance to consult together regarding the English ship, but that once they had determined a course of action, they would let him know. They could not reach a decision. Tapia learned that all the judges and many other citizens of the city had assembled together to discuss the matter, and he sent a second messenger to inquire what he should do. This messenger was also told that a

⁸⁵² Wright, *Spanish Documents*, Doc. 1, p. 29.

⁸⁵³ Wright, *Spanish Documents*, Doc. 1, p. 29.

⁸⁵⁴ Wright, *Spanish Documents*, Doc. 1, p. 30.

decision had not yet been reached. Tapia sent a third messenger to Licentiate Lebron several hours later asking what the intent of the English vessel was and how he should handle its arrival. He was again told that a decision had not yet been reached. The next day, seeing that the ship was still anchored at the mouth of the river, and he had not received any news, Tapia, “being desirous to fulfil orders received from his majesty which bade him take cognizance of all vessels entering, in order to learn whence they came, deponent [Tapia] did, to this end, fire a small loaded cannon, but not aimed at the ship, which stone fell more than twenty fathoms to one side of it.”⁸⁵⁵ The English captain, thinking that the shot was part of a plot to betray him, weighed anchor and set sail, despite the assurances of Mendez, Montiel, and Martina that no plot existed.

The English sailed in the direction of San Juan, where, according to Oviedo’s account, “having entered into the bay of San Germán they had speech with the people of that town and begged for provisions, complaining of the people of [Santo Domingo] saying that they came not to annoy but to treat with their money and merchandise, if they would receive them.”⁸⁵⁶ They received provisions, for which they paid with pewter and other things. After fully provisioning the ship without any apparent hostility, the English departed for home. Oviedo assumed that the ship never arrived in England because “no news was ever had of this ship again.”⁸⁵⁷

The identity of this unnamed English ship has been hotly contested by historians for decades. In his article, “The First Recorded English Voyage to the West Indies,” which is one of the first discussions of Navarro’s account of the mysterious English ship, F. A. Kirkpatrick makes the argument that it is unlikely that the ship seen in the Spanish islands was the *Mary*

⁸⁵⁵ Wright, *Spanish Documents*, Doc. 1, p. 33-34.

⁸⁵⁶ Fernandez de Oviedo Y Valdés, *Historia General Y Natural de las Indias, Islas y Tierra-firme del mar Océano*, D. José Amador de los Ríos, ed. (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), Primera Parte, P. 611. Oviedo, who was the official historian of the Indies published his account in 1535.

⁸⁵⁷ Oviedo, 611.

Guildford.⁸⁵⁸ Kirkpatrick points out that the dates offered by Hakluyt's account of the voyage and the dates of the Spanish depositions do not match. Hakluyt stated that Rut returned to England in October, therefore, Kirkpatrick argues, Rut could not have been in the Caribbean in November.⁸⁵⁹ Irene Wright also points out the problems with the dates. Rut could not have "reached England, since he was off Haiti in November, by the presumed date of Rut's return (October?)"⁸⁶⁰ Wright's use of the phrase, "presumed date" is telling, for Hakluyt is the only source to put Rut in England in October, and Hakluyt's account of Rut's voyage is sketchy at best. Hakluyt stated that he made "great inquirie" to discover information about Rut's voyage and only found information through third hand accounts. Hakluyt stated he was told by "Martine Frobisher, and M. Richard Allen, a knight of the Sepulchre," about the events of Rut's voyage.⁸⁶¹ This was close to sixty years after the fact, and includes key mistakes. For example, the only ship that Hakluyt named was the *Dominus Vobiscum*, a name which has not been directly linked with either the *Mary of Guildford* or the *Sampson*. Hakluyt's description of the voyage was very short and he concluded by stating "and thus much (by reason of the great negligence of the writers of those times, who should have used more care in preserving the memories of the worthy actes of our nation,) is all that hitherto I can learne, or finde out of this voyage."⁸⁶² It should also be pointed out that Hakluyt had included Oviedo's account of the English ship in the Caribbean in the 1589 edition of *Principal Navigations*, only he had the date wrong, stating that the voyage took place in 1517, not 1527. Hakluyt does not appear to have recognized the error,

⁸⁵⁸ F.A. Kirkpatrick and Diego Caballo, "The First Recorded English Voyage to the West Indies" *The English Heritage Review* vol. 20 (Jan., 1905), pp. 115-124.

⁸⁵⁹ Kirkpatrick and Caballo, 1115-124.

⁸⁶⁰ Wright, 2.

⁸⁶¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. 8, p. 1.

⁸⁶² Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. 8, p. 1.

connecting this voyage to the supposed voyage of Spert and Cabot in 1517 and not to Rut.⁸⁶³

Thus, it would not be surprising if Hakluyt's information regarding Rut's return to England was wrong.

Kirkpatrick also argues that since the English captain described a voyage similar to Rut's description of his voyage, then it must have been the *Sampson* which made it to Mona Island, since the *Sampson* was never heard from again by the English and Oviedo states that the English ship never made it home.⁸⁶⁴ Wright points out that Rut is not known to have reported on the Spanish islands, of which the master of the English ship is said to have taken written notes.⁸⁶⁵ However, there are no known records of what Rut reported. Quinn has argued that the only reason Rut's return did not spark interest or debate at Henry's court is that Rut must have been concentrating on finding Verrazzanos' isthmus or a Northwest Passage in the temperate latitudes, and was uninterested in the potential for trade or settlement along the coast from Newfoundland to Florida.⁸⁶⁶ This argument, however, rests on the assumption that Rut was focused solely on finding a passage through North America. If Rut was focused on finding a passage, then it stands to reason that he would have spent more time exploring the rivers and inlets along the coast, such as the St. Lawrence River, which he seems to mention in his letter to Henry but does not explore, or Chesapeake Bay.

A point that should be taken into consideration is England's tenuous political relations with the Holy Roman Empire, and thus with Spain. Don Inigo de Mendoza's letters to Charles V throughout 1527 reveal that tensions between the Emperor and the English King were rising.

⁸⁶³ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. 10, pp. 4-6; Taylor, *The Original Writings*, 385-87.

⁸⁶⁴ Kirkpatrick, 123.

⁸⁶⁵ Wright, 2.

⁸⁶⁶ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 181.

Charles' debt soured relations. The English refused to discuss a defensive alliance against France until the debts were repaid. Then there was the matter of Princess Mary. Charles had been in negotiations to wed the English Princess until he suddenly decided to wed the Portuguese princess in 1526. Henry moved into negotiations with France to marry his daughter to one of the French princes. This would place Henry on the side of France in the current European power struggles, especially as it would give Henry a vested interest in seeing to the French princes' liberation from their Spanish prison.⁸⁶⁷ Hall also records in his *Chronicle* the increasing friendship between France and England. In the summer of 1527 rumors arose in Spain that the Emperor "would have war with kyng of England, wherof hearing thenglishe merchants, whiche lay in Spain at diverse portes, cocluded to send to doctor Edward Lee Ambassador for the kyng of England in theperors court to knowe y certentie."⁸⁶⁸ There must have been some grain of truth to these rumors for the English merchants in Spain to feel the need to reach out to Dr. Lee regarding the matter. Henry ordered Mendoc̃a's arrest on February 10, 1528.⁸⁶⁹ Thus, when Rut returned to Europe, England and the Holy Roman Empire had declared open hostilities, and Henry VIII would not have wanted to publicize any reports that could implicate England in infringing upon Spain's New World territories, especially if Henry was directly connected with the voyage. It seems more likely that Rut's voyage was kept quiet prevent further escalation of hostilities with Spain. It must also be remembered that 1527 is the year in which Henry made up his mind to divorce Catherine of Aragon, Charles' aunt, and marry Anne Boleyn. It is a well-established fact that by late summer 1527, "the King's Great Matter," consumed Henry's

⁸⁶⁷ Gayangos, Doc. 69, p. 187.

⁸⁶⁸ Hall, 718.

⁸⁶⁹ Gayangos, Doc. 340, p. 587.

attention and distracted him from the vast majority of his duties. The return of a lone ship from the Americas meant little to the King at this crucial time.

The description given to Navarro that the English had sailed along the land where Ayllón took his colony could explain why there was no stir in England. Lucas de Ayllón took his colonizing expedition to North America, probably landing somewhere in the vicinity of South Carolina, in the autumn of 1526.⁸⁷⁰ After coming ashore Ayllón took his colonizing party of some six hundred persons plus one hundred horses and an assortment of farm animals south, some by land, the weakest by boat, until they reached Sapelo Sound, Georgia, where they established a settlement named San Miguel de Gualdape.⁸⁷¹ The colony did not last long. Winter came early and the colonists were ill prepared for the weather or to provide themselves with enough food, believing that they would be able to barter for what they needed with the Native Americans. Thus, when Ayllón became ill and died in October, 1526, the colony dissolved and was abandoned by mid-November.⁸⁷²

The fact that the English ship master mentioned the “new land where Ayllón took his colony” indicates that he was able to see signs of the colony during his voyage along the eastern seaboard of North America. Since the colony had been abandoned for the better part of a year by

⁸⁷⁰ Lamb, 105-6. Paul Hoffman states that “there is no doubt that they were in the Santee-Winyah area.” Paul E. Hoffman, *A New Andalusia and a Way to the Orient: The American Southeast During the Sixteenth Century*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 67. There has been much debate over the exact location of Ayllón’s landing and the eventual location of his short-lived colony. Some have put it as far north as Chesapeake Bay and others as far south as the Pedee River in Florida. I have chosen to go with Hoffman’s location for the colony as it is the most logical given the primary and cartographic sources. For further discussion of this debate see also Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements; Within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513-1561, with maps*, (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1959), 153-167, 447-452; Paul E. Hoffman, “Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón’s Discovery and Colony,” Charles M. Hudson, Carmen Chaves Tesser, eds., *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, (London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 36-49; Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 179.

⁸⁷¹ Paul Hoffman, *A New Andalusia*, 71-73.

⁸⁷² Hoffman, 74-82.

the time the English arrived, they would have been coasting close to the coast and might even have gone ashore to determine the extent of the Spanish presence. If Rut returned to England and reported to Henry VIII that the Spanish were establishing colonies as far north as Georgia, and that the colony had been abandoned so quickly, then it would not be surprising that such a report would not leave much of an impression on Henry's court, for instead of bringing Henry news of a rich and fertile land open for the taking, it would have confirmed fears that colonizing enterprises were risky financial investments.

Word of Ayllón's colony spread quickly, and it is possible that the English heard of Ayllón's license which had been granted on June 12, 1523, almost exactly four years before Rut's expedition left English shores. The colonial attempt was well known in Western Europe, enough that Ribeiro included it in his map of 1529, with a legend discussing the colony.

Ribeiro's legend reads,

Here went the licentiate Ayllon to settle the country, for which he sailed from S. Domingo, or Puerto de Plata, where his men were taken on board. They took with them very little provisions, and the natives fled into the interior from fear. So that when winter set in many of them died of cold and hunger ... They determined to return to Hispaniola.⁸⁷³

It is possible that the English knew beforehand that they might run into a Spanish colony along the North American eastern seaboard. It is even possible that locating this colony and reporting on it was part of their mission. However, this is simply speculation. All that is known definitively is that the ship's master told the Spanish that he had sailed along the coastline "where Ayllón took his colony."⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷³ Translation of the text taken from http://cartographic-images.net/Cartographic_Images/346_Ribero.html accessed 8/13/2018.

⁸⁷⁴ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.



Figure 5-2 Ribero map, 1529: from Nordenskiöld, *Periplus*: original in Vatican Library. Images taken from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/74/Map_Diego_Ribero_1529.jpg accessed 12/23/2017.

Another point in the account that has caused historians to debate whether or not the English ship was the *Mary Guildford* is the reported size of the vessel seen by the Spanish. Wright points out that the witnesses seem to be describing a much larger warship, not the *Mary Guildford*.⁸⁷⁵ Bernard Hoffman also makes this argument, pointing to the fact that Gines Navarro reported that the English ship was a vessel of 250 tons with three main-tops. However, the Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII lists a *Mary of Gwylford* as being 160 tons. He then states that “if this was the same Mary of Guildford which took part in the 1527 voyages, it could not have been the ship seen at Haiti. The question is confused by the fact that a ship is known named the ‘Mary of Gwylford’ which seems to have been laying in the Thames from June 7 to September 1.”⁸⁷⁶ Thus the question becomes, were there two ships of similar name in Henry’s Navy? Was the recording of wages paid for the upkeep of the *Mary of Gwylford* during the summer of 1527 simply a clerical error? Another question that should be asked is whether or not Navarro accurately reported the tonnage of the ship.

Quinn addressed these issues in regards to the issue of whether or not the accounts of the *Mary Guildford* refer to the same ship, the only plausible explanation is that the crew was paid their standard amount for the upkeep of the ship even though the ship was at sea.⁸⁷⁷ While this certainly could be the case, there is a notation in Henry’s accounts that in the 17th year of Henry’s reign the *Mary of Guildford* and the *Myneon* “be not yet comen form Burdeux, wherefore the charges in keyping of theym is not here put.”⁸⁷⁸ It seems unlikely that the accountants would not pay the crew one summer due to the fact that the ship was not in port, and

⁸⁷⁵ Wright, 2.

⁸⁷⁶ Hoffman, 121. According to Henry’s privy purse records, the crew of the *Mary of Gwylford* was paid for her upkeep while in harbor from June 7 to September 1, 1527.

⁸⁷⁷ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 175.

⁸⁷⁸ Ellis, 2nd series, 220.

would record their pay two summers later when the ship was again not in port. As to the issue of the differences in recorded tonnage, Quinn stated that “in view of differing standards of measurement and the vagueness of estimates made by eye, [it] should not be taken as a serious objection.”⁸⁷⁹ It should also be noted that Navarro’s testimony was taken in a deposition for presentation to Charles V, and the main issue seems to have been why the English vessel was given information and allowed to freely sail through Spanish waters. It would not be surprising to find that Navarro, and those who described the vessel as a war ship, made the vessel out to be larger and more heavily armed than it really was in an attempt to defend themselves. If it was a small ship, then the question would immediately be why it was not apprehended.

One detail that has led historians to argue whether it was Rut who made it to Mona Island and Santo Domingo is the mention of a Piedmontese pilot. The Spanish documents state that the English claimed they had set sail with a Piedmontese pilot, who had been killed at some point by natives along the eastern seaboard of North America.⁸⁸⁰ Purchas records the salutation of a letter written by an Italian, Albert de Prato, a member of Rut’s crew, stating that his letter was essentially the same in content as Rut’s letter to Henry.⁸⁸¹ The importance of this salutation is that it proves there was an Italian onboard the *Mary Guildford*. H. P. Biggar states that this is most likely the same Albert de Prato who was recently in England and owed a debt to Raphael Maruffo.⁸⁸² The debt to was paid off by Sir Henry Wyatt, treasurer, on May 15, 1527, one week before Rut set sail, indicating that he was of great enough importance to the expedition to either have his debt paid for him, or to have received an advance on his wages which he had forwarded

⁸⁷⁹ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 175.

⁸⁸⁰ Quinn, *NAW*, Doc. 145, p. 192.

⁸⁸¹ Purchase, 305.

⁸⁸² Biggar, “An English Expedition,” 467.

to Maruffo.⁸⁸³ Williamson identifies Albert de Prato as a Piedmontese.⁸⁸⁴ Quinn makes the argument that the presence of a Piedmontese pilot in both accounts makes it very likely that it was Rut's vessel at Santo Domingo.⁸⁸⁵

Despite the inconsistencies and contradictions in the accounts, Quinn stated that “the chances that the vessel which made the voyage to America in 1527-8 was the king's wine ship seem so high that the identification appears fully acceptable.”⁸⁸⁶ Quinn is not alone in his assertion that Rut captained the unnamed ship in the Caribbean. H.P. Biggar, James Williamson, Kenneth Andrews, Herold Lamb, and Michael Foss, all agree that it was most likely Rut and the *Mary Guildford* that appeared at Santa Domingo, and was the first English led expedition to sail the length of North America's eastern seaboard.⁸⁸⁷ Despite this distinction, Morison stated that “it must be admitted that his voyage was a complete failure compared with the French voyages which preceded and followed his. Rut found nothing new, and left no trace on the nomenclature of the New World.”⁸⁸⁸ On a similar note, Williamson stated that Rut's voyage amounted to “little more than a pleasure cruise to the West Indies.”⁸⁸⁹

Whether or not it was Rut who made it to the Caribbean cannot be concretely determined without the discovery of new source material. The next known reference to Rut is in a document dated December 31, 1528, detailing Henry's wine purchases for the year. The *Mary Guildford*, with John Rut as her master, is listed as receiving Gascon wine that fall.⁸⁹⁰ It is possible for Rut

⁸⁸³ Brewer, vol., IV, Doc. 3121, p.1421.

⁸⁸⁴ Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 261.

⁸⁸⁵ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 180.

⁸⁸⁶ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 180.

⁸⁸⁷ See Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 261; Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 55; Morison, 237; Foss, 45; and Biggar, “An English Expedition,” 469.

⁸⁸⁸ Morison, 237.

⁸⁸⁹ Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 261.

⁸⁹⁰ Brewer, vol. IV, Doc. 5082, pp. 2214-15.

to have made it back in plenty of time to make the wine run. The Spanish deposition documents were finalized in early December and officially received in Madrid on March 11, 1528.⁸⁹¹ Assuming that Rut left the Caribbean in mid to late November, he would have been able to make it back to England by early to mid-March, leaving him plenty of time to be in Bordeaux by November. As Rut's trip to Bordeaux in 1526 demonstrates, the wine run to Bordeaux did not take long. If it can be proven that Rut was the first Englishman to sail into the Spanish Caribbean, this would certainly add to his prestige as an explorer, although, many will still claim that his voyage accomplished, "nothing new." Relegating Rut's voyage to the realm of a novelty would be to miss its true significance, both in relation to what it reveals about Henry's interest in exploration and Spain's developing transatlantic policies.

The presence of an English ship suddenly in the heart of the Spanish New World created political turmoil in Spain and its Caribbean colonies. This was an obvious violation of their God given rights over the New World, yet there was no law against English penetration of their waters. Thus, the colonists responded to the presence of the English with confusion and hesitation. Navarro greeted the English in a friendly manner and offered them information. The colonists in Puerto Rico also welcomed the English, and traded freely with them. On the other hand, as Tapia's depositions reveal, the colonial officials in Santo Domingo did not know what to do about the English ship. Should they allow it to enter the harbor and trade or seize the vessel? Tapia, because of the confusion and uncertainty, fired a shot at the vessel that scared the English away from the harbor. Santo Domingo chose not to offer the English a warm welcome, and later faced severe questioning and reprimand for allowing the English to leave. When news

⁸⁹¹ Quinn, *NAW*, 192.

of the English presence reached Spain, Charles V responded with a letter to the judges of the Audencia of Santo Domingo chastising them for allowing the English to leave. He stated that

it would have been well had you learned what voyage the ship was making and what she carried, and had not let the master and men of said ship go (as go they did), after they had landed and visited the city, and seen how it lies, and its harbor, inasmuch as they were from a foreign kingdom, and this was a thing not heretofore experienced in those parts.⁸⁹²

The witnesses in Tapia's deposition, which Charles had received, stated the ship's supposed voyage, and gave an account of the contents. However, Charles does not seem to have believed or accepted these statements. Furthermore, he was concerned the English had been sent to spy and were allowed to see the layout of the city and harbor. He continued by suggesting that the city officials should have known better than to allow the English to sail unmolested in the Caribbean, stating that, "Nor can you exonerate yourselves in the matter, for there was great carelessness and negligence."⁸⁹³

The Licentiate of Santo Domingo responded to the King's letter on March 30, 1528, stating they had gathered a council of both "secular and ecclesiastic" representatives and concluded:

This English ship and captain and crew carried home a report on everything here, and visited and explored all this land and its ports and learned its present military condition; inasmuch as they think and are informed that from these parts proceeds a great quantity of the gold which supports your majesty in the war; and have seen how poorly protected this island is, great fear is felt here lest, since they have seen it, they may send against this land, to do it all the damage they may be able, and destroy everything here and bring it all to confusion.⁸⁹⁴

The English ship brought to light the very real possibility that the English might try to rob Spain of her New World treasures, and revealed how poorly protected the colonies were. The crown

⁸⁹² Wright, Doc. 2, p. 57.

⁸⁹³ Wright, Doc. 2, p. 57.

⁸⁹⁴ Wright, Doc. 3, p. 59.

also realized the colonies needed clear directives on how to deal with such incursions. When the English returned to Santo Domingo and the Caribbean twenty years later, the Audiencia was able to quote laws to warrant their arrest and laws which clearly allowed for the seizure of their goods, which were liable to confiscation because they infringed on Seville's economic monopoly of the Indies.⁸⁹⁵

Rut's voyage revealed a critical flaw in the Spanish empire at the time, and had a dramatic impact on the empire, both in policy and in memory. While there is little evidence of Rut's voyage in the English archives, there are several records of it in Spanish documents. As with most Spanish court cases from the sixteenth century, there is a wealth of information left behind in the paperwork which followed the arrival of the English vessel in the Caribbean. In addition to this, both Oviedo (1535) and Herrera (1601) record the incident in detail in their histories of the New World.⁸⁹⁶

Some have argued that the true importance of Rut's voyage is that it effectively ended Henry VIII's interest, and by extent, England's interest in Atlantic expeditions. Quinn argued that the English would not return to the Caribbean for some time, stating that "the hostility with which the ship was received at Santo Domingo may have helped to deter further English interlopers."⁸⁹⁷ It has also been argued that Rut's voyage was a "complete failure" and that after Rut's reports of impassible ice fields north of 53° Henry gave up the idea of finding a passage to Cathay via the north.⁸⁹⁸ Despite Thorne's arguments that a northerly route was possible, and the subsequent arguments that Henry should listen to Thorne and send out an expedition, he did not

⁸⁹⁵ Wright, 8-9.

⁸⁹⁶ Michael Foss argues that this shows how significant an impression this voyage made on the Spanish. Foss, 45; Oviedo, 611.

⁸⁹⁷ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 182.

⁸⁹⁸ Morison, 237.

sponsor another expedition in search of a Northwest Passage. Thus, Quinn argues that “royal participation in a search for the Northwest Passage began and ended in 1527.”⁸⁹⁹ However, this was not the last time Henry considered a westward voyage. The English did not avoid the Caribbean, nor did they give up on the idea of northern voyages.

Rut returned home to a nation on the brink of war with the Holy Roman Empire and a King consumed with his divorce.⁹⁰⁰ Even just a cursory look at the State Papers for the end of 1527 through the next several years reveals that Henry was consumed, first with the question of his divorce from Catherine of Aragon and marriage to Anne Boleyn, and then with the separation of the English church from the Catholic church of Rome.⁹⁰¹ Like Rastell and so many others in his court, and in circles of education and power, Henry focused almost exclusively on his divorce, questions of the reformation, and how this effected his relationship with Europe. For many years Henry did not even find time to renew his lifelong obsession with winning glory on the battle field in France.

This does not mean that Henry lost all interest in the Americas. He turned once again towards westward expeditions late in life, after having solidified England’s split with Rome, and after he had a legitimate male heir. In 1541 rumors circulated that Henry and his Privy Council were thinking of putting together another expedition to search for the North West Passage.⁹⁰² On

⁸⁹⁹ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 181.

⁹⁰⁰ England would officially declare war on the Emperor on January 21, 1528.

⁹⁰¹ The vast majority of the letters and State Papers for the latter half of 1527 and 1528 concern Wolsey and Henry’s attempts to obtain the divorce or are concerned with the war with Spain and growing hostilities with France. Brewer, vol. IV.

⁹⁰² Scarisbrick, 124. Henry may, or may not, have been involved in the voyage of 1536, as will be discussed in the following chapter. As there is no real evidence that he invested in this voyage I have chosen to limit the discussion of the voyage to the following chapter.

May 26, 1541 the Imperial Ambassador, Eustace Chapuys wrote to Charles V's sister Mary, the Queen of Hungary:

About two months ago, there was a deliberation in the Privy Council as to the expediency of sending two ships to the Northern Seas for the purpose of discovering a passage between Island and Engronland for the Northern Regions where it was thought that owing to the extreme cold English woolen cloths would be very acceptable and sell at a good price. To this end the king has retained for some time a pilot from Seville well versed in the affairs of the sea, though in the end the undertaking has been abandoned, all owing to the king not choosing to agree to the pilot's terms.⁹⁰³

The pilot in question was likely Sebastian Cabot, who attempted to gain permission to return to England, however he does not seem to have been able to come to a satisfactory agreement with Henry, as he did not gain the needed permission until 1547, just after Henry's death. These rumors came as Henry and the Privy Council were showing signs of returning to an interest in exploration and navigation. In 1541 a request was made by the Privy Council that Englishmen be allowed to accompany the next Portuguese voyage to Calicut to buy spices for English consumption.⁹⁰⁴ This was understandably denied due to suspicions that the English wanted to learn more about the location of the Spice Islands and navigation.

In the early 1540s the English navy was seeing more activity than it had in fifteen years. The English court also began welcoming the French cartographers discussed in chapter three. Incidentally, in 1541 Roger Barlow gifted Henry with his work, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, a translation of Martin Fernàndez de Enciso's *Suma de geographia*, with additions from his voyage to South America with Cabot. Barlow, his work, and the likelihood that it inspired this rumored discussion, will be discussed further in the next chapter. For now, it is important that Barlow picked up Robert Thorne's argument that the English should find a northern passage to

⁹⁰³ Brewer, vol XVI, Doc. 864, p. 410.

⁹⁰⁴ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 269.

the Spice Islands.⁹⁰⁵ The introduction of men such as Jean Rotz and Nicolas de Nicolay to the English court in the early 1540s not only served to inspire greater interest and knowledge in the Atlantic world, but was also the product of already growing interest. John Dudley, the Lord Lisle, became Vice Admiral in 1537 and continued to gain influence in Henry's court becoming Master of the Horse for both Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard, and then a member of Parliament, first in the House of Commons and later in the House of Lords when he became Viscount Lisle in 1542. He then obtained the position of the Lord High Admiral, a position he held for the rest of Henry's reign. Lisle possessed a deep interest in naval affairs and a deeper interest in the Atlantic world.⁹⁰⁶ He is often credited with having some influence in bringing many of the French cartographers to court, in addition to a significant number of French sailors, shipbuilders, and craftsmen, and with eventually bringing Sebastian Cabot back to England.⁹⁰⁷ In addition to bringing these men into Henry's circle, he also served as an active patron of Jean Ribault and Nicolas de Nicolay during the 1540s.

While rumors abounded of a planned voyage, nothing came of them. Once again Henry found himself distracted by warfare and women. In 1542 Henry executed his wife, Catherine Howard, and married his final wife, Katherine Parr. In 1543 England returned to war with France. This time the navy did play a critical and active role as England faced off against a

⁹⁰⁵ BL 18 B XXVIII: 1535-1543; Roger Barlow's work was transcribed and printed by E. G. R. Taylor for the Hakluyt Society in 1932.

⁹⁰⁶ James Evans, *Tudor Adventurers: An Arctic Voyage of Discovery: The Hunt for the Northeast Passage*, (New York: Pegasus Books, 2014), 34; For a discussion of Lisle's role in the navy see Loades, *Tudor Navy*; David Loades, *The Making of the Elizabethan Navy 1514-1590: From the Solent to the Armada*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009).

⁹⁰⁷ Alison Sandman and Eric H. Ash, "Trading Expertise: Sebastian Cabot between Spain and England," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 57 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 813-846, p. 830; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 59-61; Evans, *Tudor Adventurers*, 34-7; E. G. R. Taylor, ed. *A Brief Summe of Geographie by Roger Barlow*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1932), lii-iii.

united French and Scottish front.⁹⁰⁸ This was complicated by the rising tensions between Henry and Charles over the deprivations of English privateers who were not only scourging the seas around Europe, but finding their way into the Caribbean and, had managed to take one of Charles' treasure ships returning from the Caribbean. This activity distracted not only the administration but also the seafarers who would have joined exploratory expeditions. For example, William Hawkins abandoned his lucrative yearly trade with Brazil to focus his ships on the more lucrative practice of privateering during the war.⁹⁰⁹

Henry VIII was a complicated man with an even more complicated reign. During his lifetime he saw the known world expand to include two new continents and saw European vessels encompass the world. As king, he spent the majority of his reign at war with one or the other of the two most powerful monarchs in Europe. He brought the Reformation to England on an unprecedented, and previously unimaginable scale by breaking away from the Pope and the Catholic Church to establish the Church of England, all so that he could divorce his wife to marry Anne Boleyn, who would be followed by four more wives. Henry is best remembered, and studied, for his relationship with his wives, his role in the English Reformation, and for his ego driven wars with France. But in the midst of all of these distractions, Henry returned repetitively to the topic of exploration. While he might have been more interested in the distractions of his wives, or of the continent, this does not preclude interest in exploration. Henry's granting of Rastell's patent, his efforts to send out an expedition in 1521, Rut's voyage

⁹⁰⁸ David Loades discusses the heightened activity of the navy during this war, arguing that it was the most activity the navy had seen since 1525 and that this activity consumed most of England's maritime activity that was not devoted to privateering at the time. Loades, *Tudor Navy*, 120-135.

⁹⁰⁹ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 270-72.

of 1527, and the rumored voyage of 1541 demonstrate this fact. Whenever life allowed, Henry's interest in exploration began to show.

Chapter 6

English Merchants in Seville and the Atlantic World

While the intellectual circles around More and Rastell and Henry and his court dreamed of the possible potentials of the New World, colonization, and exploration, English merchants, particularly the Bristolian merchants, were taking a much more conservative and pragmatic approach to the Atlantic world. Having seen the expense and risk of exploration during the reign of Henry VII, many of Bristol's leading merchant families decided to take a safer, more economically feasible route to access the burgeoning transatlantic trade. These men decided to use their connections in Spain to participate in the opening of Spanish New World trade, and thus were present at the dawn of the Spanish Empire. They actively participated in the opening of transatlantic trade, accumulating significant wealth while allowing Spanish actors to take most of the financial risk associated with transoceanic trade. In doing so, they gathered intelligence and practical knowledge of the Atlantic needed by those who came next and opened the door for the British Atlantic. By analyzing the activities of these English merchants, the transnational nature of the Atlantic world during Europe's first contact with the New World is revealed.

In 1954, Gordon Connell-Smith published his groundbreaking research on the English merchants based in Spain. Calling his book *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English trade with Spain in the early Tudor Period*, Connell-Smith demonstrated that Sir Francis Drake and John Hawkins were not the first Englishmen to see profits of the Atlantic world.⁹¹⁰ Using the Spanish archives, he revealed that English merchants were successfully trading in the Atlantic through their trade networks in Spain. Connell-Smith argued against the perception that the Spanish

⁹¹⁰ Gordon Connell-Smith, *Forerunners of Drake: A Study of English trade with Spain in the early Tudor period*, published for the Royal Empire Society (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954).

deliberately excluded the English from the transatlantic trade and that the English could only trade through smuggling. While his work was not completely forgotten, research into the English merchants in Spain operating in the transatlantic trade during the first half of the sixteenth century would not be revisited in an English publication until Gustav Ungar's book, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, received an English translation in 2008.⁹¹¹ Although this book gives a limited discussion of the Atlantic, it shows the active participation of English merchants in the slave trade in the Canaries and Iberia. Heather Dalton is the first historian of the English-speaking world to take up where Connell-Smith left off and investigate further the trade networks established by English merchants interested in the Atlantic world. In her book, *Merchants and Explorers* (2016), Dalton draws on the notarial records at the Archivo General de Protocolos de Sevilla.⁹¹² She argues that the merchant networks formed by English merchants in Spain revealed the entangled nature of the Atlantic world in its infancy. The research conducted by Connell-Smith and Dalton is in-depth and carefully thought-out, however, for the narrative of this dissertation it is essential that these merchant networks be revisited to show the consistent activity of the English in the Atlantic world. This dissertation carries the arguments of Connell-Smith and Dalton one step further, arguing that, not only do these merchants demonstrate an early English presence in the Atlantic and highlight the entangled nature of transatlantic commerce, but that these English merchants laid the foundation for the British Atlantic. They prepared the way for those who would follow, establishing a precedence

⁹¹¹ Gustav Unger, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*, (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2008). The subject of English merchants in Spain is touched on by several historians who look at Anglo-Spanish commerce during this period, however, they do not give serious attention to the significance of the English participating in the transatlantic trade. See for example; Clarence Henry Haring, *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the time of the Hapsburgs*, (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964).

⁹¹² Heather Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers: Roger Barlow, Sebastian Cabot, and Networks of Atlantic Exchange 1500-1560*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

for English merchants in the Atlantic, and bringing back their vast experience and knowledge, which benefitted the next generation's expansion into the Atlantic world.

English merchants had long traded in and out of the major port cities of Spain, and Bristolian merchants were no exception. Bristol's location made trade to the Low Countries difficult and many of the wealthy merchants in Bristol appear to have focused much on the Iberian ports.⁹¹³ Windy Childs has demonstrated that, of the 222 merchants who make up the "wealthy core" of Bristol's merchants, roughly 59% traded with Iberia in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, and of the top sixty-eight merchants of the city, 80% had a strong economic interest in Iberia.⁹¹⁴ Bristol was the key port of trade between England and the Spanish market at the turn of the century. England's trade with Spain expanded when the English gained the right to trade throughout the Spanish dominions, including the Canary Islands, through the Treaty of Medina del Campo in 1489. These trade rights were expanded in 1505 when King Ferdinand granted English and other foreigners who had resided in Andalusia for fifteen to twenty years, owned real estate and had a family, the right to participate in the overseas trading opportunities of the New World.⁹¹⁵ When Charles V assumed the throne in 1516, he decided against a nationalistic trade policy in Spain, creating instead an atmosphere with greater tolerance for foreign merchants, which increased the prosperity of the English in Spain, especially those operating in Andalusia. As long as Charles needed English support against the French, the

⁹¹³ Connell-Smith, 9-10.

⁹¹⁴ Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian Trade in the later Middle Ages*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 204. Unfortunately for those who enjoy statistics, Childs does not define what this interest in Iberian trade consists of.

⁹¹⁵ Unger, 54. While much of the merchant activity had been spread throughout Spain with San Lucar De Barrameda being a particularly important port in the Anglo-Iberian trade, the focus appears to have shifted to Seville once Seville became to center of New World trade. Connell-Smith, 9; Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 60.

English merchants' positions were relatively secure.⁹¹⁶ This prosperity can be seen in the wealth and power accumulated by some of the leading merchants, such as Bridges, Thorne, and Howell.⁹¹⁷

The Bristol merchants in Spain, who made up the core of the merchant networks in which Thorne and Barlow operated during their time in Spain, had close links with the urban elites of both Seville and San Lúcar de Barrameda. Dalton proves the interconnectedness not only of these important merchant families, but also their connections with the leading families of exploration and Atlantic trade in Spain.⁹¹⁸ Gustave Unger argued that this network allowed men like Thorne to take advantage of the transatlantic trade at such an early stage. Unger uses Robert Thorne to prove that some English merchants gained high esteem among Spain's political and commercial circles, allowing them to secure access to those at the forefront of Spanish exploration, and to leading cosmographic knowledge.⁹¹⁹ Using their wealth, influence, and knowledge of the Spanish trade systems, these merchants joined the transatlantic trade during its infancy.

This trade was just beginning in 1509 as Henry assumed the throne and Cabot sailed home. In 1508, the same year Cabot is believed to have embarked on his voyage, Nicholas Arnold left Spain for Santo Domingo, becoming the first Englishman to trade and settle in the

⁹¹⁶Connell-Smith, 59; Childes, 65. An example of this favorable treatment is that in 1538 Charles granted merchants from Bristol the right to trade directly with the Canary Islands. Haring, 19.

⁹¹⁷ Howell's ledger contains the years 1517-28 and detail his profitable business which centered in large part around Spain. Robert Thorne's various wills, as well as Roger Barlow's early will, which was made out before his departure on Cabot's voyage, reveal the wealth these men had achieved. For discussions of Bridge's wealth and success see, Unger, 41, 61; Connell-Smith, 75; Dalton, 28.

⁹¹⁸ Dalton's book, *Merchants and Explorers*, picks up where Connell-Smith left off with his work. Gustav Unger has also been able to prove the interconnectedness of this group of merchants through his research into the early trade in enslaved Africans. Unger, 17.

⁹¹⁹ Unger, 22.

New World. Meeting all of the requirements of the treaty of 1505, having lived in Spain since the early 1480s and owning some property, Arnold traded in Brazil wood through Cadiz in 1508 and left for Santo Domingo in 1508 where he took up residency and set up a lucrative business.⁹²⁰ After Arnold, Thomas Malliard established a successful trade with Santo Domingo by 1509.⁹²¹ These two men were followed by their fellow Englishmen in Spain, with 1509 representing the breakthrough year for English trade and investment in the New World. This was done both through direct trade with the colonies, mostly through Spanish factors at first, and through investments and loaning money to colonizing ventures.⁹²² Unger classified this economic participation in the opening of the New World a “kind of colonialism on a private basis.”⁹²³

The core of the merchants operating out of Spain into the Atlantic world were from Bristol. The most prominent members of the group, both in wealth and influence, were Thomas Malliard, Thomas Bridges, Thomas Howell, Robert Thorne (the younger), Roger Barlow, and to a lesser extent, Henry Patmer. All of these men had business in London and extensive dealings in Bristol. Other merchants who gained a foothold in this trade during the time period under study, and who would become influential merchants in their own right, were Thomas Tison and Emmanuel Lucar.⁹²⁴ These men offer a glimpse into the possibilities that Spanish trade in the Atlantic held for opportunistic Europeans in the early sixteenth century. Through their

⁹²⁰ Unger, 54-57.

⁹²¹ Dalton, 33; Connell-Smith, 70; Unger, 19-20.

⁹²² Jean Vanes, ed. *Documents Illustrating the Overseas trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Bristol Record Society's Publications Vol. XXXI, 1979, 21.

⁹²³ Unger, 61.

⁹²⁴ These particular men are the key players with the most documentary evidence remaining of their actions and have been identified by the historiography as being among the most prominent and influential of the merchants operating out of Spain. Unger, 15-17; Dalton, 24-26; Connell-Smith, 69-74; Jean Vanes adds William Pepwell, William Ostriche and Hugh Tipton to this list, Vanes, 22.

participation in the Atlantic, they helped shape England's knowledge of, and future in, the Atlantic world.

Malliard was quick to invest his own merchandise in the New World, setting up trade through Santo Domingo as early as 1509, trading English cloth, Spanish soap, and wine. He also loaned money to several Spanish entrepreneurs who wished to buy goods to sell in Santo Domingo. Additionally, Malliard leased, along with his Genoese business partner, Francesco Spinola, a sugar plantation at the Rio de los Sauces in La Palma in the Canaries.⁹²⁵ This introduced him to the process of colonizing and sugar plantations, placing him at the birth of the transatlantic slave trade. In 1521, Malliard obtained two asientos from the Casa de la Contratación to ship two enslaved Africans to Santo Domingo, making him the first Englishman to participate in the transatlantic slave trade.⁹²⁶ Alfonso Franco Silva has identified Malliard as one of a group of merchants who were particularly active in the slave trade.⁹²⁷ It is significant to note that his asientos were obtained only four years after the first African slaves had been officially transported to the New World. Malliard appears to have received a second asiento in 1523 as he sent additional slaves to America that year.⁹²⁸ Silva identified fourteen other Anglo-Saxon merchants living in Seville during the early part of the sixteenth century who were involved in slave trading. The list included Roger Barlow, Thomas Bridges, Martin Pollard, and Robert Thorne.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁵ Unger, 19-20, 61.

⁹²⁶ Unger, 28.

⁹²⁷ Alfonso Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Sevilla Y Su Tierra A Fines De La Edad Media*, (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1979), 80-81; Alfonso Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Andalucía: 1450-1550*, (Grandada: Universidad de Granada, 1992), 60, 77, 176. Dalton, 48-9.

⁹²⁸ Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Sevilla*, 80-81.

⁹²⁹ Franco Silva identifies these three men as being particularly active in the slave trade and states that Thomas Bridges was "well-known person in the slave trade between the years 1514 and 1516." Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Sevilla*, 80; Dalton, 48-49; Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Andalucía*, 60, 76-77, 176.

Malliard was well connected among the English merchants operating in Spain. It is through Malliard that Barlow was introduced to the Canary Islands and the sugar industry. The sections of Barlow's *A Brief Summe of Geographie* that touched on the Canary Islands indicate his firsthand experience of the Islands and place him in the Canaries roughly around 1522.⁹³⁰ Barlow resided in Malliard's house on April 22, 1522 when he prepared a will that he never signed. Dalton has put forth the idea that Barlow might have worked as Malliard's factor in the Canaries for a time.⁹³¹ Unger pointed out that it was Malliard who introduced William Hawkins to the business of selling enslaved Africans to the Spanish colonies.⁹³² Malliard also proved instrumental in Thorne's efforts to expand his trade networks, agreeing to sell cloth for Thorne in Cadiz in May 1517.

The brothers, Thomas and John Bridges, both had lucrative businesses in Spain. Thomas was a Merchant Taylor, John a Draper, giving the brothers broad access to the English cloth trade. Both men were involved from the early 1490s in Atlantic trade with Iberian, Genoese, Bristolian, and London merchants. Among their contacts were Juan Tristán and the Genoese Bernardo Pinelli, connecting the Bridges with the west coast of Africa. Tristán partnered with the Bristol merchant, William de la Founte and played a role in the introduction of the African slave trade to Seville, while Pinelli played an important role in introducing African slaves to Hispaniola.⁹³³ When John moved back to London and became sheriff in 1513-14 (and mayor in 1520), Thomas stayed in Seville for the rest of his life and firmly established his family in the Atlantic trade networks. As early as 1513, Thomas participated in the transatlantic trade both by

⁹³⁰ BL 18 B XXVIII, f. 54r-55v.

⁹³¹ Dalton, 33.

⁹³² Unger, 28.

⁹³³ Unger identifies William de la Founte as being the first recorded Englishman to deal in enslaved Africans. He points out that England had long traded white slaves, but this is the first known instance in which an Englishman trades in black slaves. Unger, 41; Dalton, 28.

loaning money to Spanish merchants so they could ship cargos to Santo Domingo, and through direct trade with the West Indies.⁹³⁴ In August 1528, Thomas received the right to trade directly with the West Indies without using a Spanish factor or Castilian partner, at roughly the same time that his son John became a naturalized citizen of Castile. John Bridges, the younger, actively participated in the transatlantic trade, and in August 1532 he obtained an asiento to sell enslaved Africans to the Indies. He continued to trade in human flesh, receiving a second license in December 1548. John also traveled across the Atlantic, venturing to Peru in March 1534.⁹³⁵ Despite his naturalized status in Spain, John Bridges kept a house in London where he married Margaret Fernández, the only child of Peter Fernández, a Spanish physician who had married Joan, the widow of Thomas Pemberton, a draper. Fernández also traded in woolen cloth and maintained links in Spain, moving in the same circles as the Bridges.⁹³⁶ The Bridges were an integral part of the community of English merchants in Seville throughout the reign of Henry VIII. Thomas Bridges served as an executor of Malliard and is mentioned, along with Robert Thorne, in Dr. Lee's letter to Wolsey in 1527 in which he states that, while attempting to gain an audience with Charles V, he met "ii merchants heer (the toone called Briges the aldrmans brothr the tooder A right toward young man as ny hythe beliongeth to England called throne)."⁹³⁷

The merchant, Thomas Howell's career also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the merchants operating out of Seville. At one point he served under Hugh Elliot of Bristol, as he lists him as his former master in his ledger.⁹³⁸ Howell maintained some contact with his former master, and Elliot is listed as owing him forty pounds sterling in 1522.⁹³⁹ Howell lived in Seville

⁹³⁴ Unger, 61; Connell-Smith, 75.

⁹³⁵ Dalton, 121.

⁹³⁶ Dalton, 121.

⁹³⁷ BL Cotton MS Vespasian C/III f. 232; Connell-Smith, 75.

⁹³⁸ Drapers' Library, Howell's Ledger, f. 31v.

⁹³⁹ Drapers' Library, Howell's Ledger, f. 4v.

and had agents working for him in England, northern Spain, and the New World.⁹⁴⁰ His ledger is the earliest English document to record English trade with the New World. An entry from August 20, 1527 sites his trade to Santo Domingo through his factor John de Morsyns.⁹⁴¹ Connell-Smith stated that there are “numerous references to Howell’s transactions” in the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla and that many of these mention his trade to the New World.⁹⁴² The ledger also lists the Hawkins family and Malliard, who served as Howell’s factor in Cadiz. While Nicholas Thorne, Robert Thorne the younger’s brother, does not appear in the ledger, the two men apparently knew each other well, for Thomas Howell left Nicholas a significant sum. When Nicholas wrote his will he made provisions for how the remaining funds should be used, setting them aside, along with the bequest of his brother Robert, for the purpose of “making and of helping of young men inhabitants within the said citie of Bristol.”⁹⁴³ Howell’s will indicates the significance of his connections in Spain as he listed among his executors Pedro and Antonio Espinosa, members of the prominent Spanish banking family.⁹⁴⁴

Thomas Tison was made famous by Richard Hakluyt when he published his account of Tison’s time in the Caribbean as “a secret factor for some English marchants.”⁹⁴⁵ In his account, which he claimed to have taken from an old ledger belonging to Nicholas Thorne, he stated that Nicholas was writing to his factor, Thomas Midnall, and to his servant, William Ballard, in San Lucar and mentioned that Tison had departed at some time before 1527 for the West Indies, where he had taken up residence. Hakluyt stated that as far as he could ascertain, Tison “may

⁹⁴⁰ Connell-Smith, 20.

⁹⁴¹ Drapers’ Library, Howell’s Ledger, f. 65v.

⁹⁴² Connell-Smith, 24.

⁹⁴³ BRO FCo13 1/11.

⁹⁴⁴ Drapers’ Library, Howell’s Ledger; Connell-Smith, 76.

⁹⁴⁵ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyaes Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation Made by Sea or Over-land to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeeres*, (1600), in 12 volumes, (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1903), vol. X, pp. 6-7.

seeme to have bene some secret factour for M. Thorne and other English marchants in those remote partes; whereby it is probably that some of our marchants had a kinde of trade to the West Indies even in those ancient times.”⁹⁴⁶ This statement led generations of historians to assume that Tison served secretly, almost as a spy, for the English while in the Caribbean. However, due to their in-depth and detailed studies of the Spanish archives, Connell-Smith and Dalton both proved that Tison served in the Caribbean as a completely legitimate factor for the Thorne brothers and other merchants. Connell-Smith showed that Tison appears in the official records as an agent of English merchants in San Domingo and that several of his transactions were recorded in the registers of Francisco de Castellanos and can now be found in the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla.⁹⁴⁷ The exact date in which Tison arrived in the Caribbean is unknown. He was in Seville in February 1525 and San Domingo in November 1526. Robert Thorne gave power of attorney to Tison and Francisco Núñez in San Domingo to take over his and Barlow’s business interests from Juan de Murcia.⁹⁴⁸ Other than this brief mention, not much is known of Thomas Tison. He is in Robert Thorne’s will as a beneficiary and appears in the Thornes’ wills as their servant. He also appears in Thomas Smyth’s ledger as a merchant in his own right, indicating that he went on to gain some level of success.⁹⁴⁹ In a customs evasion note for the port of Bristol he was listed as a “merchant of Bristol,” and on the petition against Candlemas Fair, 1543, he is again listed as a merchant of Bristol.⁹⁵⁰ Tison was not the only Englishman

⁹⁴⁶ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. X, p. 7.

⁹⁴⁷ Connell-Smith, xv; Dalton, 50; Kenneth Andrews also asserts that Tison served as an official factor for the Thornes, Andrews, 61.

⁹⁴⁸ Connell-Smith, xv, 74; Dalton, 50, 110.

⁹⁴⁹ BRO JOr 1/11; JOr 1/1; AC/B/63; Ledger of John Smyth, Merchant, 1534-1550.

⁹⁵⁰ Vanes, Doc. 20, p. 41; Doc. 2, p. 31. Tison is also seen trading on the *Primrose* of Bristol in 1536 and Vanes, Doc. 72, p. 83.

residing in the New World at this time. Both Nicholas Arnote and John Martin lived there for a time.⁹⁵¹

There are very few details known of Emmanuel Lucar. He served as Robert Thorne's apprentice and factor, and was entrusted with overseeing the final transfer of Thorne's investment in a soap factory when Thorne left Spain. Lucar went on to become a successful merchant, trading out of both Spain and England. He returned to London by 1537, where he became an active member of the Merchant Taylors Company (MTC), eventually rising to the position of Master of the guild.⁹⁵² As a leading member of the MTC, he served as a signatory to the blueprint for succession drawn up by John Dudley, duke of Northumberland for Edward VI. Lucar sent his eldest son, Cyprian, to Oxford and then Lincoln's Inn. Emmanuel Lucar the younger later sailed with Francis Drake. Lucar remained close to Robert Thorne until his death and was a beneficiary of Thorne's will. John Dee first came in contact with Thorne's papers through Cyprian Lucar, who inherited them from his father. Dee then shared Thorne's proposal and his copy of Thorne's book and letter with Richard Hakluyt.⁹⁵³

Henry Patmer operated in Spain early in the sixteenth century, and by 1514 he enjoyed enough success to loan money to Spanish entrepreneurs for merchant ventures to Santo Domingo.⁹⁵⁴ Unlike his compatriots, Patmer did not come from Bristol, describing himself as

⁹⁵¹ Connell-Smith, 75.

⁹⁵² Charles M. Clode, *Memorials of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist, in the City of London; and of its associated charities and institutions*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1875), 560.

⁹⁵³ Unger, 17; Dalton, 120, 202-4; Taylor, *Tudor Geography, 1485-1583*, first published, 1930, (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 46; BRO, JOr/1/11; BL Cotton MS, Vitellus C. VII, f. 344.

⁹⁵⁴ Unger, 61. Henry Patmer, or Patimer, is the Henry Latimer referred to by Taylor and HARRISSE. Henry HARRISSE, *John Cabot, the Discoverer of North America and Sebastian his son: A Chapter of the Maritime History of England under the Tudors*, (London: B. F. Stevens, 1896), 194, 225, 257; Taylor, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, xxx, xxxiv, xlii; E. G. R. Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 10-11, 46, 50; Heather Dalton also makes the assertion that Patmer and Latimer are one and the same, Dalton, 26.

being born in 1488 of parents who were natives of Colchester.⁹⁵⁵ He completed his apprenticeship under the Worshipful Company of Drapers in 1515, and while his uncle, who was also a member of the Draper's guild, retained ties to Colchester, Henry traded mostly through London, Bristol, Southampton and several ports in Spain.⁹⁵⁶ Patmer's connection to Barlow went back a generation, as his father, John Patmer, joined John Barlow in trading cloth for skins in the Low Countries in the fifteenth century. Henry Patmer and Roger Barlow continued to work together, operating in the same trading circles in Spain, and embarked on the 1526 voyage to the Moluccas with Sebastian Cabot.

In addition to his close association with Barlow, Robert Thorne, and Thomas Bridges, Patmer had a close working relationship with Cabot. When called to give an account of Cabot's voyage in 1530, Patmer stated that he had known Cabot, "since he arrived in Spain."⁹⁵⁷ He joined Cabot's expedition to the Moluccas in 1526 as both a pilot and an investing merchant. Patmer contributed 29,700 maravedís (roughly 79 ducats) in merchandise and initially joined the expedition as a sailor, with the condition that if he served as a pilot, his salary would increase.⁹⁵⁸ Patmer quickly proved himself an able pilot and in several of the testimonies given to the Spanish courts after the expedition, Patmer was referred to as the "English pilot."⁹⁵⁹ After Cabot returned to Spain in 1530, Francisco de Rojas brought charges against him, in part for

⁹⁵⁵ "Enrique Patimer en su declaracion prestada en 1530," in Jose Toribio Medina, *El Veneciano Sebastian Caboto al servicio de Espana*, (Santiago de Chile, 1908), vol. 1, 276; Dalton, 26.

⁹⁵⁶ A.H. Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), vol. 2, 27; Connell-Smith, 10, 64-5; Dalton, 26-7.

⁹⁵⁷ Medina, vol. 1, 276.

⁹⁵⁸ Madina, Doc. V, p. 433; States that he is to receive "a salary of two hundred maravedís per month as a sailor, with the condition that if on the way he gives enough account as a pilot he is paid the salary of a pilot." As a common sailor would receive 200 maravedís per month on the expedition, Patmer's contribution amounts to well over twelve years' wages for the common sailor.

⁹⁵⁹ Madina, Doc. V, p. 433; Doc. IX, p. 459. See also Medina, 277, 85, 194, 211-12; HARRISSE, *John Cabot*, 194, 225, 257.

abandoning some of the crew at Cape Santa Maria, in what is today Uruguay. Rojas demanded Cabot provide what was necessary for a voyage to rescue the abandoned men, including funding the use of the English pilot Henry Patmer for the rescue mission.⁹⁶⁰ Patmer is the only known English pilot to participate in a Spanish exploration expedition, and he gained much of his practical training aboard Spanish ships during the 1526 voyage, as indicated by this provisional salary as a common sailor at the start of the voyage.

Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow were chief among the English merchants in Seville to trade with the New World. Both men appear repeatedly in the Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla as merchants trading in the New World. They traded a variety of goods including large cargos of wine, tallow candles, white soap, cloth, wrought tin, iron goods, esparto, flour, and other foodstuffs.⁹⁶¹ As mentioned previously, Thorne gave power of attorney to Tison in 1526 to take over his business interests in Santo Domingo, and while Thorne did have some direct trade to Santo Domingo through Tison, he also employed agents to purchase commodities on his behalf for transportation to the Indies. Some of these goods Thorne purchased as raw materials and had processed before shipping them across the Atlantic. For example, on December 11, 1525 Thorne authorized Bartolomé Sánchez to purchase 150 fanegas of wheat, take the wheat to Marchenilla to be ground into flour, and then to Seville for transportation to the Indies.⁹⁶²

Thorne was in the center of discussions of westward voyages. He was well-read on matters of cosmography and eloquently argued for English exploration to the north, presenting Dr. Lee with his own book of cosmography and the known geography of the world.⁹⁶³ Much of

⁹⁶⁰ HARRISSE, *John Cabot*, 225.

⁹⁶¹ CONNELL-SMITH, 71-74; UNGER, 28; DALTON, 34.

⁹⁶² 150 fanegas is equivalent to approximately 240 bushels. CONNELL-SMITH, 74.

⁹⁶³ See discussion on Thorne in chapters 3 and 5.

this information he likely received through his friendship with Cabot. As discussed in the following pages, Thorne actively participated in the planning of Cabot's 1526 expedition and made the second largest investment in the voyage. His brother Nicholas also traded with the New World, mostly in cloths.⁹⁶⁴ From Robert Thorne's will it can be seen that he maintained his trade connections through Seville with the New World even after he returned to England in 1531.⁹⁶⁵

Similar to Thorne and most of the other merchants discussed thus far, Roger Barlow identified himself as a merchant of Bristol and of London at various times in his life and operated out of both ports. Barlow was a merchant in his own right in Seville by October 1515, when he canceled a debt of 355 ducats for English cloth owed to Robert Thorne by Antón Rodriguez Cabezo, a linen merchant, and his son Alonso Núñez.⁹⁶⁶ This reveals that as early as 1515 Barlow and Thorne worked closely together, that Barlow was already of age, as he was able to sign legal documents, and that he was fluent in Spanish and able to converse with the notary.⁹⁶⁷ Barlow and Thorne were on close enough terms that when Barlow wrote his will just before leaving with Cabot in 1526, he named Robert Thorne his sole heir.⁹⁶⁸ Early in his life Barlow had become familiar with the Mediterranean trade in olive oil, sugar cane, and grapes. This familiarity with the trade deepened after he spent time in São Tomé and at a Portuguese settlement at the fort of Santo Cruz do Cabo de Gué, which is now the port of Agadir in

⁹⁶⁴ Connell-Smith offers an example of this in which Nicholas traded 22,318 maravedís worth of cloth to the port of Cubagua in the island of Las Perlas in 1527. P. 75.

⁹⁶⁵ TNA PROB 11/24/243; BRO JOr 1/11.

⁹⁶⁶ Dalton, 22.

⁹⁶⁷ Dalton points out that the legal age to sign such a document is twenty-five years of age and that as there is no translator mentioned in the document there could not have been one present at the signing of the document. Dalton states that by 1515 Barlow was trading with and on behalf of Robert Thorne in Seville regularly. Dalton, 22-3.

⁹⁶⁸ Dalton, 22, 82.

Morocco.⁹⁶⁹ As mentioned earlier, Barlow also spent some time in the Canary Islands overseeing Malliard's sugar plantation and appears to have spent time in the Azores, as he described the destruction of Villa Franca, which occurred roughly in 1522, as happening three or four years prior to his visit.⁹⁷⁰ Barlow also traded with the New World by at least 1522, when he entered into an alliance with the Castilian merchant Luis Fernández de Alfaro. The two men then contracted Diego Rodríguez Pepino, to export wine and other goods to Santo Domingo.⁹⁷¹ Not only does this demonstrate that Barlow traded with the New World, but, as Dalton points out, this places Barlow among the people who “really mattered in Seville.”⁹⁷² Both Pepino and Alfaro were key players in the Atlantic trade and exploration of the New World. Alfaro had been a close associate of Hernán Cortés since 1506, at which point he had already obtained a company of ships trading to the New World.⁹⁷³ By 1526 Barlow was a well-established merchant in Seville with friends and associates who gave him powerful connections.

These English merchants operating in the transatlantic trade had access to some of the most influential merchant circles in Seville. They were in close proximity, if not direct contact with those at the forefront of Spanish exploration in the Atlantic world, as well as those with the finances to back exploratory expeditions. During these early decades of the transatlantic trade,

⁹⁶⁹ Barlow gives an eye witness account of a skirmish at Cape Agadir in his geography that reveals he personally spent time in the region. Barlow also offers detailed descriptions of the medicinal properties to be found in various plants in the Canary Islands and the process by which to gather the plant, indicating that he spent enough time there to observe these practices. BL 18 B XXVIII, f. 54r-55v; Dalton, 23; Taylor points out that Barlow was likely in Agadir to purchase sugar, for which the region around Agadir was famous, *Brief Summe*, xxiii-iv.

⁹⁷⁰ BL 18 B XXVIII, Barlow's *Geographia*, f. 55v-56r. Taylor identifies the destruction as taking place in 1522 and argues that Barlow's description of the community puts him there either in the winter of 1525 or early in 1526, before he set sail with Cabot. Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, 103.

⁹⁷¹ Dalton, 40.

⁹⁷² Dalton, 41.

⁹⁷³ Dalton, 41; Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Cortes, Montezuma, and the Fall of Old Mexico*, (1993), (London: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 129-30; _____, *Rivers of Gold: The Rise of the Spanish Empire, from Columbus to Magellan*, (2003), (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 379.

Seville took on what Ruth Pike termed a “boom-town atmosphere,” and what had always been a cosmopolitan city became an even greater destination for international commerce as it became the center of Atlantic trade.⁹⁷⁴ This “boom-town” mindset created dual mobility for the residents of Seville. It created greater geographical mobility as merchants from across Iberia and Europe came to Seville. It created greater social mobility as the aristocracy saw fit to lower themselves to marry into rich merchant families or to partake in merchant activities themselves, and as merchants gained the ability to connect their families to the nobility and climb the social ladder.⁹⁷⁵ An excellent example of this social mobility was Luis Fernández de Alfaro. Alfaro was a converso and master of the *San Juan*, bound for the New World in 1504, when he borrowed 32,000 maravedís and made his start. In 1506 he was part or full owner of several ships and by 1511 he owned a small company of ships that regularly traversed the Atlantic as part of the New World trade. In 1512 he established a mercantile company with Gaspar de Villadiego and Fernando de Carrión with the capital of 1.6 million maravedís. By 1513 Alfaro operated as a banker and money changer, and by 1517 he partnered with the silversmith Juan de Córdoba and served as one of the major suppliers for Cortés’ army. Throughout this time, Alfaro centered all of his activities around the growing transatlantic trade.⁹⁷⁶ Alfaro is illustrative of kind of social mobility that allowed foreign merchants, particularly those with a history in Seville, to gain access to members of the Court and high society as never before.

As with Spain’s trade with the Mediterranean, many of the influential families in the transatlantic trade were not Spanish by birth. Some of them were the same families who

⁹⁷⁴ Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 31-7; Pérez-Mallaína, Pablo E. *Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Carla Rahn Phillips, (First published, 1992), (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1-8.

⁹⁷⁵ J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492-1650*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 74-5.

⁹⁷⁶ Thomas, *Rivers of Gold*, 379.

possessed great influence in the Mediterranean trade. For example, Genoese trading families such as the Spinolas, Centurians, and the Cattaneo (or Cataño as they were known in Spain) all held influence in the Mediterranean trade and were instrumental in the opening of Atlantic trade. All three of these families retained representatives in London and Bristol, among other cities, and had representatives in Seville. Many of the English merchants mentioned above would have doubtless known members of these families as they operated in the same circles. The Thornes in particular were especially close to the Cattaneo family. They traded with them for at least three generations, and Robert Thorne left his son Vincent in the care of Leonardo Cattaneo and his brother Carlo when he returned to England.⁹⁷⁷ This was an important connection for Thorne's, and eventually Barlow's, efforts in the Atlantic, for the Cattaneo family were active in the Atlantic trade from the very beginning. Rafael Cattaneo went to San Domingo in 1492 with Columbus and stayed there as his factor. Rafael's brother Juan joined him there in 1503, placing the family at the birth of transatlantic trade, giving them an inside track, as well as insider knowledge of the discoveries taking place in the New World.⁹⁷⁸

In addition to the connections these merchants had to the opening of the Atlantic world through fellow merchants and investors, they also had insider access through their connection with Sebastian Cabot, who was well connected to early Spanish explorers and became the gatekeeper of New World information as Pilot Major of the Casa de la Contratación. A notary document dated June 22, 1523 names Cabot as the guardian of Catalina Barba, the daughter of Pedro Barba and Catalina de Medrano. Pedro Barba served as the lieutenant governor for the

⁹⁷⁷ TNA PROB 11/24/243; Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure: The Genoese in Seville and the Opening of the New World*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 2, 64, 66, 71-74, 80, 99; Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Andalucia*, 76; Franco Silva, *La Esclavitud en Sevilla*, 80.

⁹⁷⁸ Dalton, 32-33; Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure: The Genoese in Seville and the Opening of the New World*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 2, 64, 71, 80.

port of Havana, which was already becoming important to the Caribbean, and in 1518 served as acting governor for the then absent governor Diego Velázquez. Barba was a close associate of Cortés' and was referred to many times as Cortés' "old friend Barba."⁹⁷⁹ Barba died in June 1521 while with Cortés during the conquest of Tenochtitlán. Barba's uncle was Amerigo Vespucci. His mother was Catalina Cerezo, the sister of Vespucci's widow Maria Cerezo. After Barba died at Tenochtitlan, Cabot married his widow, Catalina de Medrano. They were married by July 1523, at which point she was referred to as Cabot's esposa, his legal wife.⁹⁸⁰ These familial connections place Cabot within the innermost circles of the leading explorers of the New World.

Cabot became Pilot Major of the Casa de la Contratación on February 5, 1518. This was Charles V's first appointment of such magnitude in Spain. The Casa was originally formed to control and regulate trade to the New World in 1503. In 1508 the Casa's responsibilities expanded to include the Hydrographic Bureau and School of Navigation, which controlled the flow of all navigational and cartographic information. The Pilot Major, the first of whom was Amerigo Vespucci, oversaw this new aspect of the Casa.⁹⁸¹ Cabot was apparently very good at his job, for despite his many legal entanglements, including the failure to pay Vespucci's widow her pension, his borderline treasonous acts when he communicated with Wolsey and the Italians regarding a voyage in 1521, his failed voyage to the Moluccas in 1526, and subsequent waste of time and royal funds along the Rio de la Plata, for which he received a sentence of banishment for four years, Charles kept Cabot as his Pilot Major until 1548 when he returned to England.

⁹⁷⁹ Dalton, 64; Alejandro de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 4.

⁹⁸⁰ Dalton, 65.

⁹⁸¹ Haring, 21-37.

Even then, Charles tried repeatedly to get Cabot to return and did not appoint a new Pilot Major until 1552.⁹⁸²

Throughout his time in Seville, Cabot maintained close association and friendship with a number of London and Bristol based merchants, chief among whom were the Thorne brothers, Barlow, Patmer, and William Ostrich.⁹⁸³ It is quite possible that Cabot's friendship with the Thorne brothers reached back to their childhood, as Cabot is said to have grown up in Bristol, and Robert Thorne Sr. appears to have either worked directly with John Cabot or been in close association with him during the early voyages of exploration. Both Thorne brothers and Sebastian Cabot were in Seville at approximately the same time, attempting to start their own fortunes there, where access to the New World was easiest to obtain. All three succeeded in making their fortunes in the new transatlantic trade, the Thorne brothers through trade with the New World, and Cabot through his position as Pilot Major. Finally, all three returned to England and pushed for English voyages of exploration to the North and Northwest. Clearly these men shared common aspirations, goals, and desires as well as a mutual circle of acquaintances and business partners. This, combined with their shared past in Bristol, would have fostered friendships between them. To this mix must be added Barlow, who was a steadfast friend of the Thorne brothers, who traveled with Cabot to the New World in 1526, and who appears to have remained an associate of Cabot until Cabot's death.⁹⁸⁴

The Expedition of 1526

⁹⁸² Haring, 37; Dalton, 67-69, 115-119; James Evans, *Tudor Adventurers: An Arctic Voyage of Discovery: The Hunt for the Northeast Passage*. (New York: Pegasus Books, 2014), 38-9.

⁹⁸³ Sandman and Ash identify the Thorne brothers, Barlow and Ostrich as being the key players in Cabot's circle of English friends. Alison Sandman and Eric H. Ash, "Trading Expertise: Sebastian Cabot between Spain and England," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 57 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 813-846, 829-30; Ostrich would remain closely connected to Cabot through his brother Henry who became Cabot's son-in-law.

⁹⁸⁴ Heather Dalton proves this friendship in her book.

This close association between Cabot and the English merchants who were most interested in the trade opportunities represented by the widening Atlantic world culminated in the proposition of a voyage in the 1520s. As Dalton points out, 1521 was a noteworthy year for this group.⁹⁸⁵ Both Robert Thorne and Martin Pollard, an English merchant in Seville with strong ties to Thorne's Iberian trade networks, inherited considerable sums of money and property. Thorne inherited his father's estate, and his legacy of Atlantic exploration.⁹⁸⁶ In 1521 Cabot failed to embark on an English expedition. With his English prospects for exploration once again crushed, Cabot had to turn to friends in Seville to help fund and organize an expedition. Thorne's connections to Genoese merchants who were at the forefront of New World trade and exploration, as well as his connections to English merchants interested in expanding their options in the New World proved significant.

Historians have often stumbled over the fact that Cabot was commissioned by Charles V in 1526 to sail to the Moluccas Islands and carefully chart their location to prove that they fell within the Spanish sphere of trade and not the Portuguese sphere. However, Cabot never made it past the Rio de la Plata, spending years exploring its many islands and branches. Why would he take the time to explore South America when his mission was to explore the Moluccas? This question has led some to argue that he was incompetent or irresponsible. However, there might be an alternative answer, one that predates Charles V's involvement in the voyage. Dalton discovered evidence that on December 2, 1524 Robert Thorne and his Genoese colleague,

⁹⁸⁵ Dalton, 39-40.

⁹⁸⁶ Not only did Robert inherit much of his father's estate and claim to inherit his father's taste for adventure and exploration, but both Nicholas and Robert would be concerned with upholding their father's legacy in Bristol and seeing to his desires that a grammar school be started there and that provisions for the poor be made. BRO, 00569/27c; TNA PROB 11/19/263; PROB 11/24/243, C1/911/27-9. Robert Thorne the younger states in his 1527 letter to Dr. Lee that "this Inclynation or desire of [disco]vering I inherited of my father." BL Cotton MS Vitellius E vij, ff. 329-45.

Leonardo Cattaneo signed a *compania*, (partnership agreement) with Cabot, Leonardo's son, Angel Cattaneo and three other Genoese merchants: Francisco Leardo, Pedro Benito Basinana, and Pedro Juan de Riberol. In this agreement, the seven men pledged to raise the funds needed to prepare a fleet for the Moluccas and Terra Firma, and to draft an agreement to present for royal approval for such an expedition.⁹⁸⁷ This document is extraordinary not only for the fact that it shows these men planning a voyage before Charles V and the Spanish government become involved, but also because all of the cosigners of the document were foreigners. While it was not unusual to see foreigners, especially Genoese merchants, contributing significant funds to expeditions sent out by the Spanish Crown, as Dalton points out, this is the earliest evidence of the Genoese merchants investing as a group in a company specifically organized for exploration and conquest, and the only example known of an Englishman being so closely involved in the conception of such a project.⁹⁸⁸ The reference to the Moluccas proves that this group was ultimately interested in trade, specifically trade in spices, however, the inclusion of Terra Firma in the project's mission reveals that they also desired to explore South America, likely to gain a better grasp on the trade opportunities there. The intended purpose of this voyage then, from its earliest conceptions, was to stop in South America on the way to the Moluccas, explore the area, and then continue on to trade in the Spice Islands to ensure a profit for the costly enterprise.

Such an undertaking seems unrealistically ambitious to the modern reader with a good grasp of the actual size of the earth. However, the timing of this project must be considered with

⁹⁸⁷ Dalton, 73.

⁹⁸⁸ Dalton, 73. She goes on to state that this significant document has likely been overlooked for so long by historians who have studied Cabot's time in Spain due to the fact that the document has been stored in the notary archives and not in the Archivo General de Indias where most of the previous Cabot research has taken place. 73. Ruth Pike argues that the Genoese were actually interested in finding a shorter route through the Americas to the Spice Islands. She infers that Cabot's exploration of the Plata region was due to this interest and not interest in the New World. Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure: The Genoese in Seville and the Opening of the New World*, (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 103-4.

the geographical knowledge available to the organizers. Martín Fernández de Enciso had recently published his geography, *Suma de geographia que trata de todas las partidas en prouincias del mundo* (1519). Not only did Enciso's work place the western meridian at the mouth of the Ganges and thus give further credence to Spain's argument that they held the rights to the Moluccas, but he also had the earth's circumference considerably smaller than it actually is, and placed the Moluccas just a few days sailing from the Mexican coast.⁹⁸⁹ This information came at just the right moment for Spain to challenge Portugal's legal claim to the islands, creating the immediate need for Charles to send ships to verify their location.⁹⁹⁰

Enciso's book was a monumental one in Spanish cartographic and geographic publication history. His was the first scientific description of the geography of the New World printed in Spain, offering a systematic description of America with the intent to educate both the elite reader, such as Charles V, to whom it was dedicated, and to serve as a guide to pilots and navigators.⁹⁹¹ It also offered first-hand knowledge of the New World, as Enciso had served as a lieutenant on Anthony de Fogeda's exploratory expedition which left Spain in 1508. Enciso started his New World experience in Cartagena, then traveled to Uraba in Darien where he briefly assumed control of the settlement until he came into conflict with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. From Uraba, he took a circuitous route through the Caribbean before returning to Spain

⁹⁸⁹ Enciso, Martín Fernández de, *Suma de geographia que trata de todas las partidaas en prouincias del mundo, en especial de las Indias y trata largamente del arte de navegar, conjuntamente con la espera en romance, con el regimiento del sol del norte nuevamente hecha*, (Seville: Jacobo Cronberger, 1519).

⁹⁹⁰ Sandman and Ash, 818. It should also be noted that Magellan's ship, the *Victoria*, returned to Spain in May 1522, proving that it was possible to reach the Spice Islands by sailing west. This information would have encouraged potential investors to lay claim to a potentially shorter route to the west. While Portugal had already failed to prove possession of the islands in 1524, Charles V sought to sell the rights to the islands in 1536. To do this he had to be able to verify their exact location to assure that he had the right to sell them. This is a focal point in Thorne's communications with Dr. Lee.

⁹⁹¹ Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, xiii-xvi; Andrés Prieto, "Alexander and the Geographer's Eye: Allegories of Knowledge in Martín Fernández de Enciso's *Suma de geographía* (1519)," *Hispanic Review*, vol. 78, (Spring 2010), 169-188, 170.

in 1511. Enciso was welcomed at court where he had almost daily conversations with Peter Martyr, the renowned Milanese historian who became the most well-known historian of New World exploration of the early sixteenth century. Enciso also had regular contact with Gonzales Fernandez de Oviedo.⁹⁹² Enciso was thus at the very heart of New World exploration, and his work offered the most current information available. The organizers of Cabot's voyage were familiar with this work, and Roger Barlow possessed a copy.⁹⁹³

According to Peter Martyr, Cabot told the Council of the Indies that he had partners in Seville willing to provide him with 10,000 ducats to prepare a fleet for the Indies. The council approved and sanctioned the expedition on March 4, 1525, with the government providing him an additional 4,000 ducats and Charles granting permission for merchants and foreigners to invest in the voyage without restriction.⁹⁹⁴ Robert Thorne invested the second largest sum, contributing over 1,359 and a half ducats in partnership with Leonardo Cattaneo, who also invested over 1,087 and a half ducats in his own name.⁹⁹⁵ Barlow is described as a ship-owner, contributing 206,250 maravedís, or roughly 550 ducats.⁹⁹⁶ Patmer also contributed a sizable amount which came to roughly 79 ducats.⁹⁹⁷ In addition to the original group of merchants who signed the agreement with Cabot, a large group of Genoese merchants as well as merchants from Florence, Germany, and Seville invested in the expedition. Peter Martyr was among the investors.⁹⁹⁸ From his recounting of the proposal and preparations for the expedition, it appears

⁹⁹² Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, xiii.

⁹⁹³ Barlow based his *A Breif Summe of Geography*, off of Enciso's work, with many sections being a direct translation of Enciso.

⁹⁹⁴ Peter Martyr, *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D'Anghera*, translated from the Latin with Notes and Introduction by Francis Augustus MacNutt, vol. II (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 88.

⁹⁹⁵ Dalton, 77; Quinn converts this to a sum of over 300 pounds. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 148.

⁹⁹⁶ Medina, 181; Dalton converted the sum into ducats, Dalton, 77; Quin converts the sum to just over 100 pounds. Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 148.

⁹⁹⁷ Dalton, 77.

⁹⁹⁸ Dalton, 77.

that Martyr was present, or close to those who were, when Cabot made his proposal to the Council and prepared for the voyage. Martyr's account was full of first-person pronouns as he discussed Cabot's plans, making statements such as "we sent Cabot back so that he might settle his business."⁹⁹⁹ He did the same in his discussion of the hoped-for returns, profits, and expectations of what will be brought back and when, giving the impression that he knew the inside details of this voyage.¹⁰⁰⁰

Barlow and Patmer accompanied Cabot on the voyage, making them two of the first Englishmen to step foot in what is today Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. This could have been an early condition of the voyage, as Thorne was a significant contributor to the expedition and part of the planning from the earliest stages. Why Thorne did not join the expedition is unclear. Some assumed he might have been in poor health, however, in 1526 Dr. Lee described him as fit and healthy.¹⁰⁰¹ Whatever the reason, Thorne stayed behind and oversaw his business affairs in Seville while Barlow and Patmer departed to gain knowledge of the New World and the Spice Islands.¹⁰⁰² Cabot placed Barlow on the flagship, the *Santa Maria del la Concepcion*, as the Contador (supercargo) for the expedition, making him instrumental in provisioning the fleet as well as responsible for selling cargoes and acquiring goods throughout the voyage.¹⁰⁰³ Barlow was in the prime spot for evaluating the potential markets in Terra Nova and the Moluccas. While it appears that Barlow observed the pilot taking measurements throughout the voyage, there is no evidence that he ever served as pilot or navigator in any

⁹⁹⁹ Martyr, 88.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Martyr, 88.

¹⁰⁰¹ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 49; BL Cotton MS Vespasian C. III, f. 237. Heather Dalton suggests that Thorne decided to stay behind due to business reasons, pointing out that the war with France had a disastrous effect on England's cloth industry with lost cargoes and rising transportation costs. Dalton, 81.

¹⁰⁰² BL Lansdowne 100 f. 76.

¹⁰⁰³ In official documents for the voyage Barlow is described as "accountant to his majesty," Dalton, 73, 80.

official capacity, despite what some have claimed.¹⁰⁰⁴ However, his position as contador meant that he served a crucial role in the expedition and was not simply on the expedition to gain knowledge for his English business partners.¹⁰⁰⁵ The voyage was internationally funded, not a state funded expedition, and manned by an international crew, nearly half of whom were not Castilian.¹⁰⁰⁶ Dalton has identified four other Englishmen who served on the flagship: Ben Williams, Christopher Barbusley, David “ingles” and “Tomas Terman.”¹⁰⁰⁷ The high ratio of international members on the crew was due in large part to the “boom-town atmosphere” in Seville, as merchants, sailors, and laborers came from across Iberia and Europe to seek their fortune in the gateway to the Atlantic.¹⁰⁰⁸ Barlow participated fully in the voyage, having a stake in its success.

Patmer also served a crucial role in this expedition. Like Barlow, he invested in the expedition beforehand and then joined as an official part of the crew. Quickly proving himself a capable pilot, he was chosen to be the navigator for the second largest ship of the fleet, the *Santa Maria de l’Espinar*. As Patmer and Cabot shared mutual friends, and as there was a shortage of capable navigators in Seville at this time due to the sudden rise in Atlantic voyages, it is likely

¹⁰⁰⁴ Thorne mentioned that Barlow was “somewhat learned in Cosmographie” which has led some to assume that he was a navigator, BL Lansdowne 100 f. 67; Cotton MS Vespasian C. III, f. 237. See Sandman and Ash, 830; Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 149.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Taylor argues that Thorne’s financial contribution had been made with the purpose of placing his two friends aboard one of the ships so that they could carry out their “secret” mission to study navigation and the navigating charts of the Far Eastern waters and to inquire into the waters north and north east of the Moluccas. Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 46.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Cabot had been given permission to include foreigners up to one-fifth of the crew. Due to the absolute shortage of sailors and skilled mariners in Seville at the time, this ratio was increased to a third of the crew. In the end, the expedition was made up of almost 50% foreigners and 50% Castilian sailors and mariners. The shortage of Castilian sailors allowed Cabot to sail with a truly international crew. Pérez-Mallaína, 55-6; Dalton, 84; Medina, 105-6, 226.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Dalton, 84; Pérez-Mallaína, 230-2.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ruth Pike terms Seville a “boom-town” at this time, *Aristocrats and Traders*, 31-7; Pérez-Mallaína, 1-8; J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New*, 74-5.

that Patmer was certified as a navigator by the Casa through his relationship with Cabot.¹⁰⁰⁹ However, he had to spend at least six years at sea to be officially licensed. Placing Patmer aboard the second largest ship shows not only Cabot's trust in Patmer, but his skills as a navigator.

The voyage of 1526 did not go as Charles V had hoped, nor the way his investors foresaw. While some might point to this as a sign of Cabot's recklessness or irresponsibility in carrying out the royal mission for the expedition, it should be remembered that this was more than simply an expedition sent out by the Spanish Crown for royal purposes. This voyage resists attempts to fit it into a nationally driven narrative. Although crown sanctioned, it had been initiated, and mostly funded, by Genoese and English merchants and manned by a truly international crew. As Dalton points out, this expedition is "a prime example of just how entangled Atlantic history can be."¹⁰¹⁰ With this in mind, it is not surprising that Cabot made it his mission to explore the prospects of Terra Firme before sailing to the Moluccas.

Scheduled to depart in August 1525, disputes over the chain of command delayed the fleet.¹⁰¹¹ This dispute proved disastrous as Cabot was forced to accept Martín Méndez, a survivor of the Magellan expedition, as his second in command. Cabot never trusted Méndez, and Méndez never liked Cabot and conspired against him with Francisco de Rojas, Miguel de Rodas, Octaviano de Brine, and Alonso de Santa Cruz, all of whom held positions of authority

¹⁰⁰⁹ Dalton, 81.

¹⁰¹⁰ Dalton, 108.

¹⁰¹¹ Cabot wanted his friend Miguel Rifos to be made second in command. The Genoese sponsors insisted on having Martín Méndez, a survivor of the Magellan expedition, made second in command. The dispute had to be settled by Charles V and the Bishop of Osma who served as the president of the Council of the Indies. Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 106-7.

on the voyage and had influential friends in Seville. The dispute delayed the departure until April of 1526.

Once at sea, the resentment between Méndez and Cabot grew, adding fuel to the conspiracy against Cabot. When the fleet was delayed in the Canaries, and again in Pernambuco along the Brazilian coast, Méndez's co-conspirators met together frequently. Contrary winds delayed the fleet at Pernambuco for three months, during which time Cabot visited several times with two residents of Pernambuco who told him of two Spanish survivors of the Juan Díaz de Solís expedition, living with the Native Americans on the island of Patos. Their expedition had begun to explore the Plata region in 1515.¹⁰¹² They also told Cabot tales of great riches to be found to the south.¹⁰¹³ Cabot then told his officers of his plans to sail south along the coast to attain great riches without the risks a voyage to the Moluccas represented. Not only would they be able to rescue members of Solís' crew, but these men would then be able to lead them to the riches within the continent. Cabot and Méndez's conflict came to a head, and Cabot ordered the arrest of first Rojas, then Méndez and Brine.¹⁰¹⁴

Having asserted his authority by arresting those perceived to be his greatest threats, and having placed Rifos as second in command, Cabot sailed south to the Bay of Saint Catherine where the flagship struck a bank and was lost, along with half of their supplies and equipment.

¹⁰¹² Juan Díaz de Solís led an expedition of three ships with seventy men in 1515 to explore the Plata region. In 1516, while exploring the east bank of the Uruguay River, he and his landing party were attacked by the Charrúa Indians and all but one was killed and eaten in sight of the remaining crewmen onboard the ship. Francisco del Puerto, who survived the attack only to be made a prisoner by the Charrúa, is one of the men who gave information to Cabot. "Juan Díaz de Solís" *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juan-Diaz-de-Solis> accessed 12/21/2018.

¹⁰¹³ Medina, 122-6; HARRISSE, 236-38.

¹⁰¹⁴ Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 109-110, 199 footnote 37; Dalton, 90-93; Medina, 122-6; Francesco Tarducci, *John and Sebastian Cabot, Biographical Notice with Documents*, translated by Henry F. Brownson, (Detroit: H. F. Brownson, Publisher, 1892), 172-6; Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 274-75.

The expedition never fully recovered, and circumstances worsened for Cabot. The expedition spent three and a half months at the Bay of Saint Catherine attempting to salvage the situation by building a galliot (a small rowing galley) to replace the lost ship. While the fleet waited, nearly the entire expedition became ill, and a large number of men died, including Brine.¹⁰¹⁵ However, they encountered one of the survivors of Solis's expedition, Henrique Montez, who told them they could fill their ships with gold and silver if they sailed up the Rio de Solis. If Cabot had not already decided to redirect the expedition, this news surely decided the matter for him. Unable to convince Rojas and Méndez of the wisdom of such a redirection, Cabot tried them for conspiracy to commit mutiny. Finding them, along with Miguel de Rodas guilty, he ordered them left behind on the island of Tierra de los Patos when the fleet sailed south.¹⁰¹⁶ While this might seem like harsh treatment to the modern reader, it was not only considered normal at the time to deal severely with mutineers, but Cabot was given explicit instructions that he should punish mutinous sailors by leaving them "in the lands of the infidels or lands that were yet to be conquered," with the promise that, should they learn the local language and still be alive when another Spanish ship passed by, they would receive a pardon and be allowed to serve as interpreters on future voyages.¹⁰¹⁷

Cabot explored the Plata region for well over a year. He and his men encountered a wide range of wild life at which to marvel, new fruits and vegetation, and Native Americans whose practices so fascinated Barlow that he recorded them in detail. Barlow's account demonstrates the wonder with which he and his fellow explorers viewed many of the new animals and the Native Americans they encountered. However, Cabot found little gold or silver to justify his

¹⁰¹⁵ HARRISSE, 236-8; PIKE, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 111.

¹⁰¹⁶ DALTON, 92-3; PIKE, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 111; TARDUCCI, 172-6; HARRISSE, 239.

¹⁰¹⁷ Quote from the instructions given to Sebastian Cabot, September 20, 1525. As found in PÉREZ-MALLAÍNA, 208.

exploration of the region. Upon the arrival of Diego Garcia, who had been sent to officially explore the region, and with the condition of his own party turning dire due to illness and shortages of food and supplies, Cabot sent a delegation to Spain to request additional support.¹⁰¹⁸

Knowing that he was overdue to return to Spain, and perhaps a little fearful that news would soon reach Spain of the fate of Rojas, Mendez, and Rodas, Cabot sent Barlow to Spain in 1528. He sent him with a report justifying his exploration of South America, failure to make it to the Spice Islands, and his actions against his enemies. Cabot also wrote a letter for Barlow to present to Charles V requesting additional supplies and men so that he could “settle the region and take advantage of the great wealth it offered.”¹⁰¹⁹ Despite the desperate situation, Cabot was determined to present his decision to explore the Rio de la Plata, rather than going to the Moluccas, as a brilliant opportunity for both the Crown and for his investors. Sadly, he had little precious metals to show for his efforts, and no spices with which his investors could recoup their investments.

Barlow arrived in San Lucar on November 1, 1528 to a changing world.¹⁰²⁰ Charles V was entering negotiations with the king of Portugal to sell the rights to the Spice Islands, and tensions were running high between the English Crown and the Holy Roman Empire. Henry VIII was consumed with the issue of his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Complicating matters, Charles had recently reprimanded the Licentiate of Santo Domingo for allowing Rut’s ship to sail freely through the Caribbean and trade openly in Spanish ports without an official license. This heightened Spanish concerns regarding the security of their New World holdings

¹⁰¹⁸ Dalton, 93-109, 115; Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 112.

¹⁰¹⁹ Medina, 178; Dalton, 107; HARRISSE, 219.

¹⁰²⁰ Barlow left San Salvador with Hernando Calderon, who is identified as Charles V’s treasurer, aboard the *Trinidad* with around fifty men on July 8, 1528. Dalton, 107; Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 275-6.

and their ability to control trade in and out of the Caribbean.¹⁰²¹ Barlow had to negotiate carefully to deal with the shifting focus and politics of 1528, and placate his fellow investors who feared that Cabot's expedition would not be as profitable as thought.¹⁰²²

Barlow and Hernando Calderon arrived at Charles V's Court at Toledo in November 1528. They presented Charles with Cabot's letter and the novelties they had brought back from the New World, mostly pelts, dried plants, a few animals, including a stuffed humming bird that had not survived the journey, and a few samples of precious metals to prove Cabot's claim of treasure in the region.¹⁰²³ Charles was intrigued by the proposition of a colony in the region, but, the Spanish government did not have an abundance of wealth for such a venture. Barlow was told to go instead to the original backers of the voyage to see if he could convince them to fund the expedition further. The merchants were unwilling to discuss investing more money until they were threatened by the Council of Indies to do so. Even then, they only agreed to lend money to the Emperor himself, on the condition that they be guaranteed a reimbursement of their original investments, as they had invested in a trading expedition, not an expedition of conquest and settlement.¹⁰²⁴

The merchants' response to Barlow's request reveals one of the greatest dilemmas for merchant investors in the early Atlantic world. They had originally invested in an expedition of discovery to lay claim to viable trade routes to known commodities. Then they found themselves caught between the imperial ambitions of the Crown, the desires of the expedition's leader for

¹⁰²¹ See section on the voyage of 1527 in chapter 5.

¹⁰²² Lawsuits would follow Cabot's return to Spain as investors, particularly Ponce, Naples and Caesar attempted to get back a portion of their investments. See Medina, 276-7, 194, 211-12.

¹⁰²³ Barlow was apparently taken with the Hummingbirds he encountered and spends some time remarking on the small beautiful birds in his geography. BL 18 B XXVIII, f. 88v; Dalton, 111.

¹⁰²⁴ See Medina, chapter 10; Dalton, 112; Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 112.

fame and glory, and their own desires for trade profits.¹⁰²⁵ The merchants desperately wished to see exploration of the Atlantic funded, but did not want to become entangled in colonization, which would surely bring profit to the Crown, but risk to their own investments. However, in the Spanish Atlantic at least, it was through these royally sponsored ventures that the New World was opened.

Upon hearing that the merchants would only contribute additional funds by loaning the money to the Crown, Charles agreed to fund the entire cost himself, ordering the expedition outfitted. However, the financial difficulties of the Spanish government slowed the process so that preparations for the voyage did not begin until 1529, at which point Francisco Pizarro returned to Spain with tales of wealth beyond anything Barlow could hope to allude in the Rio de la Plata. Pizarro's arrival at court in Valladolid in the summer of 1529 sufficiently ended Barlow's hopes to obtain funds from the Crown for a significant relief fleet, as the Crown focused its attention and wealth on the known treasures of Peru.¹⁰²⁶ By April, 1530, Barlow had managed to scrape together enough funds to outfit and man one relief ship. However, Cabot returned to Seville on July 22, 1530, before the ship was fully outfitted.¹⁰²⁷

Returning to England

Before leaving on the expedition, Barlow arranged for Robert Thorne to oversee all of his affairs while he was away. During this time, Thorne appointed Thomas Tison and Francisco Nunez to take over as their factors in San Domingo. Before this, both Thorne and Barlow had

¹⁰²⁵ Dalton makes a similar argument, 112.

¹⁰²⁶ Dalton points out that Enciso had Pizarro, whom he had held a grudge against since 1510, arrested when he arrived in Seville and that this is the reason it took him some time to reach Valladolid. In fact, Pizarro only gained his freedom after Enciso's sudden death. Dalton argues that it is possible that Enciso acted purposely to give Barlow more time to obtain the promised funds, 113.

¹⁰²⁷ Dalton, 114-15; Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure*, 113.

employed Juan de Murcia to manage their trading in Hispaniola. However, Thorne had come to doubt Murcia's abilities and arranged for his replacement.¹⁰²⁸ Barlow spent nine months after his return advocating for Cabot, and while he personally arranged for a relief ship in April 1530, there is no evidence of Barlow being in Seville after this point. It is known, through a letter written by James Clyffe to Dr. Boner, Cardinal Wolsey's chaplain, that he was back in England by at least May 29, 1530, as Clyffe states that "young Barley is lately come from beyond sea."¹⁰²⁹ Thorne remained in Seville for a brief period after Barlow left. He exported English cloth to Santo Domingo in August 1530, but by early 1531 began to tie up any loose ends in Seville in preparation for his return to England. One of Thorne's largest investments in Spain was a controlling interest in a white soap factory that he and many English merchants held shares in. By the spring of 1531, Thorne and Cattaneo began transferring their shares in the soap factory to the Welsers. Thorne entrusted his apprentice and factor, Emanuel Lucar, to oversee the final transfer.¹⁰³⁰

Why these men decided to return to England is a mystery. Conventional wisdom is that the situation in Seville was deteriorating for English merchants due to the Reformation.¹⁰³¹

While there is evidence that some English merchants faced hostility in Seville in the 1530s due

¹⁰²⁸ Dalton, 110.

¹⁰²⁹ TNA SP 1/57 f. 30. While it is possible that the letter references John Barlow who is known to have served abroad in semi-diplomatic positions, the timing suggests that it is in reference to Roger who had apparently left Seville at this point. The fact that Martin Pollard, an associate of Barlow's had returned to Bristol from Seville at this time lends to the idea that the two men left Seville together. TNA C 1/921/37; Dalton, 120.

¹⁰³⁰ Unger, 17; Dalton, 120.

¹⁰³¹ Williamson states that there was a "regular epidemic of persecution" of English merchants in Spain by the end of the 1530s due to Henry's break with Rome. Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 143, 220-25. While Kenneth Andrews takes a more balanced approach to the tension between English merchants in Spain and Spanish authorities, he does argue that this tension caused many to lose everything and led to an increasing level of anti-Spanish, anti-Catholic sentiment in England's southwest ports. Andrews, 61. The persecution of the English merchants would not really become an issue until the late 1530s through the 1540s. Even then, many well connected merchants remained virtually unaffected. Douglas R. Bisson, *The Merchant Adventurers of England: The Company and the Crown, 1474-1564*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 85-88; Connell-Smith, 91-97.

to Henry's break with Rome, there is also plenty of evidence that English merchants continued to prosper in Seville for quite some time and that their lives did not truly become difficult until relations between Elizabeth I and Philip II brought the two countries to the brink of war. Patmer remained in Spain and continued to prosper. In a letter dated November 21, 1534, William Pepwel, the leading petitioner to Henry VIII for the formation of the Andalusian Company, wrote to Thomas Cromwell that twelve ships were being readied for a voyage to the "spicery" and that the pilot of one of the ships was to be Henry Patmer.¹⁰³² In reality, Patmer was returning to the Rio de la Plata with Pedro de Mendoza's expedition of 1535. This was the largest fleet to leave Seville for America during the sixteenth century, having between eleven and fourteen ships and carrying twelve to sixteen hundred men and women. Apparently, Charles had listened to Barlow's pleas and Cabot's arguments for colonization of the Plata region after all, for this is exactly what the fleet intended to do. There are no further records of Patmer after 1537, when a judge recorded that he was said to be in Trebujena in Andalusia. However, it is more likely that after he left for the New World in 1535, he never returned.¹⁰³³

Other English merchants who established themselves in Spain during the early 1520s also remained and prospered. For example, William Ostriche was well established in San Lucar by 1523. He remained in Spain for most of his life and served as the governor of the English nation in Andalusia in 1538.¹⁰³⁴ Richard Cooper, who had served as Thorne's factor in Cadiz in 1523, also stayed and prospered. He served as consul of the English nation in San Lucar in 1529 and was made the governor of the English nation in Andalusia in 1530.¹⁰³⁵ Thomas Harrison was

¹⁰³² BL Cotton MS, Vespasian, CVII, f. 62.

¹⁰³³ Dalton states that the lack of documents indicates that Patmer either died at sea or in South America, 122-23.

¹⁰³⁴ Connell-Smith, 90, 94.

¹⁰³⁵ Connell-Smith, 90-94.

one of the most successful English merchants in Spain at this time. He traded extensively with the Indies and was part owner of the *Trinidad*, which made voyages to the New World, more often than not carrying Harrison's cargo back and forth across the Atlantic.¹⁰³⁶ Harrison's business with the New World was lucrative and when Robert Reneger of Southampton waylaid the *San Salvador* off the Cape of St. Vincent in March, 1545, Harrison lost a significant sum of gold that he was shipping to Spain from the New World.¹⁰³⁷ Despite the rising tensions between Charles and Henry, a vibrant English merchant community remained in Spain.

It is certainly possible that, as Thorne and Barlow watched the politics of 1530 unfold, and the tensions over the Reformation increased, they thought it prudent to return to England. However, if this was the case, it would be odd for Thorne to leave his son Vincent, his illegitimate nephews Robert and Nicholas, as well as his household and household slaves in Seville. While Thorne had made arrangements for Vincent to be left in his mother's care and under the guardianship of the Cattaneo family, he had not made long-term provisions for his family, nor did he settle all of his affairs in Seville.¹⁰³⁸ Given the circumstances, it appears much more likely that, after Barlow spent so much time petitioning Charles on behalf of Cabot, and after having invested such a large amount in Cabot's voyage, both men returned to England to pursue an English voyage of exploration. This interpretation of the events gains greater credence

¹⁰³⁶ Connell-Smith, 97.

¹⁰³⁷ Reneger's piratical act is a monumental point in England's Atlantic history and will be discussed in greater detail later. Connell-Smith, 97; L&P vol 20 part I 1545 pp. 193, 278, 454-5, 604; Hume, *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers*, Doc. 46, p. 93; Doc. 62, pp. 117-19; Doc. 97, pp. 175-77; TNA SP 1/203.

¹⁰³⁸ The "Inventory of Thorne's Goods" reveal that he still had active business in Seville at the time of his death and that while he had concluded his business with the soap factory, which required greater effort on his part to oversee, he had not concluded any of his overseas trading efforts. TNA SP 1/40, f. 216.

from the fact that Nicholas Thorne stated in a petition to Henry that Robert planned to return to England to “ask the King’s aid in the discovery of new countries.”¹⁰³⁹

Thorne returned to England aboard his newly purchased ship, the *Savior*, a Bristol ship of 250 tons that he purchased in Andalusia. In a letter from Nicholas Thorne to Thomas Cromwell from 1532, it is revealed that Robert had purchased the ship because he did not want the Spaniards to think that Bristol was so “decayed” that its best ship was now for sale. Nicholas also stated that Robert had planned to build a fleet with the *Savior* as the flagship, with the King’s help, “to discover and sougyt new contrys.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Upon arriving in Bristol, Thorne registered the ship and began working to put together an expedition for the north.¹⁰⁴¹ It is a distinct possibility that at this point, Thorne wrote his famous letter to Henry VIII arguing for a voyage over the north pole to the Spice Islands. As Taylor and Dalton point out, Thorne’s letter to Lee is rough, however, the letter to Henry VIII is well constructed and carefully worded. In many places the wording is strikingly similar to Barlow’s geography. It is probable that Thorne and Barlow worked together on this proposal, carefully presenting their case for the King and his council that God had set apart the English nation and prepared for them a northerly route to the Spice Islands. By taking advantage of this route, which made geographical sense for the English, England would be able to compete with Spain and Portugal, and gain all of the riches and wealth that came with trade to the Orient.¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰³⁹ TNA SP 1/238 f. 5.

¹⁰⁴⁰ TNA SP 1/238, f. 5. As Dalton points out, there are no extant customs accounts for Bristol from 1526-1542 so it is impossible to establish exactly when the ship made it to Bristol, and as the letter does not have an exact date it can only be said with certainty that this occurred at some point in 1531. See Dalton, 120-21; Flavin and Jones, *Bristol’s Trade with Ireland and the Continent*, 1503-1601.

¹⁰⁴¹ Dalton, 133; TNA SP 1/238, f. 5.

¹⁰⁴² Taylor argues that Barlow is the likeliest author of this letter in collaboration with Thorne and that the letter was never actually presented to Henry as Barlow makes an almost identical argument in his book and Henry appears to have acted upon the suggestion for a northerly voyage after receiving Barlow’s gift in 1541. Taylor,

The purchase of the *Savyor* showed that Robert's interest in exploration was much more than that of an arm-chair observer. His partnership with Barlow made perfect sense, as the two men had a long history of working well together, and Barlow had both the experience of participating in exploration and experience as Cabot's supercargo (Contador), which made him the ideal man to help Thorne supply the expedition. The fact that Robert docked the *Savyor* in Bristol, where Barlow and his brother resided, and then spent the rest of his time in London, indicates that he intended Barlow and Nicholas to see to the actual outfitting of the ships while he sought the financial assistance.¹⁰⁴³ Unfortunately, while in London, Robert fell sick and died, cutting short the efforts to put together a fleet.

Robert had not begun to raise funds for his planned fleet when he died, and his will, dated May 17, 1532 directed a significant portion of his wealth to the city of Bristol and to the poor in London, leaving little with which to fund the expedition.¹⁰⁴⁴ Nicholas was apparently unable or unwilling to go through with the plans without his brother, and in his petition to the King he begged for a respite from customs payments on merchandise carried on the *Savyor*. He argued it was too large a vessel to conduct trade with Bordeaux or "most of Andolesya and Spain" where most of his trade was, and he was now burdened with this large ship due to his brother's desire to uphold Bristol's international reputation and to serve the king through exploration. He expressed his desire to build Bristol's trade by using the ship to open trade with the Levant.¹⁰⁴⁵ While

Brief Summe, xli-xlii; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 51-2. Dalton also argues that the letter was likely written by the two men after Barlow returned to Seville in November 1528, Dalton, 134. The possibility that the letter was submitted to Court remains, as there is an entry in Cromwell's Remembrances 1534 which references "supplications in paper" of Robert Thorne. It is possible that Robert submitted his proposal to Cromwell and that it remained among Cromwell's papers. L&P vol. 7; #923, p. 338. While it cannot be determined whether or not the letter ever reached Henry, as the original copy has since been lost to history, it is the opinion of this author that the collaboration between the two men is the most likely scenario for the creation of this well-crafted proposal.

¹⁰⁴³ Dalton, 136.

¹⁰⁴⁴ TNA SP 1/238 f. 3; SP 1/40, f. 216; PROB 11/24/243; BRO JOr 1/11.

¹⁰⁴⁵ TNA SP 1/238 f. 5.

Nicholas continued to trade with the New World through Spain, and maintained his business there until his death, he does not appear to have engaged in any plans for a voyage of exploration after his brother's death.

Barlow shelved his interests in exploration for a time, focusing instead on building his own wealth and finding himself caught up in his brothers' efforts to take advantage of the political turmoil in England that came with the Reformation. In 1532, Barlow married Julyan Dawyes, daughter of a close associate of the Thorne family, and through the Dawyes connection gained entrance into the powerful and closely guarded world of Bristol trading guilds, as well as the considerable wealth that Julyan brought to the marriage.¹⁰⁴⁶ Roger's brothers, John, William, and Thomas, all became clerics, and John is listed as a "master in the arts clerk," indicating that the brothers all had some form of higher education.¹⁰⁴⁷ Through his brothers, specifically through John's and William's connections to Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell, Roger was provided with opportunities for advancement.¹⁰⁴⁸ John served as the rector for the Boleyn's home parish of Hever in Kent and became Anne Boleyn's chaplain. He then became a trusted member of her household and often carried personal letters for her. In November 1527 he remained "on call" to serve Anne, acting as personal letter carrier for her and her family.¹⁰⁴⁹ He also carried letters between Henry VIII and William Knight in Rome.¹⁰⁵⁰ The Boleyn family appreciated John's service, for in August 1528 Anne's brother wrote to Wolsey to obtain the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Dalton, 132-33.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Dalton, 19.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Roger Barlow's decedents would later claim that his advancement came because he had met Anne's father Thomas Boleyn in Seville. While it is entirely possible that the two met in Seville, and indeed they were at Charles' court at roughly the same time, a stronger connection can be made between Roger's brothers. See Dalton's discussion of the influence of his brothers and their effectiveness of working together for each other's promotions, 137.

¹⁰⁴⁹ TNA SP 1/56 f. 195; SP 1/68 f. 51; SP 1/71 f. 70.

¹⁰⁵⁰ For various examples of this see BL Cotton MS Vitellius B/X ff. 4, 34; Add MS 24120, ff. 37, 38, 39; Harleian MS 419, f. 110b; TNA SP 1/45; 1/46 f.84; Dalton 137-8.

living of Sunbridge in Kent for John. Wolsey countered by offering Tonbridge instead, at which point Anne personally wrote to Wolsey and obtained Sunbridge for John.¹⁰⁵¹ After Wolsey died John's status in the Royal household rose along with Anne's, and from March 1531 he served as one of Henry VIII's chaplains.¹⁰⁵²

As a trusted member of the Boleyn household, a skilled negotiator, and a close ally of Nicholas Thorne, John Barlow quickly caught the eye of Thomas Cromwell who came to regard him as a valuable asset. It must be remembered that as a young man Cromwell worked as a cloth merchant in both England and the Low Countries, and that he had contacts with English merchants who traded in Antwerp and Bruges. By 1520 he was firmly established in the same mercantile and legal circles where Thorne and other members of Roger Barlow's network were established. In the 1530s Nicholas Thorne's ship the *Savyor* sailed under Cromwell's flag, indicating that they maintained close connections.¹⁰⁵³ John's connections with Cromwell, and the fact that William Barlow had secured a clerical appointment in Pembrokeshire, allowed Roger Barlow to serve the King in Wales for the latter part of his life.¹⁰⁵⁴ By 1535 it appears that Roger Barlow was working with Cromwell in Harolston in Pembrokeshire, as he sent a bill to Cromwell on July 20 regarding timber for shipbuilding, suggesting that he oversaw the building of a number of ships. This also demonstrates that he had found a way to align his personal interests with royal interests, working alongside Sir Thomas Johns of Abermarlais, the deputy vice admiral of the district, who cosigned the bill with Barlow.¹⁰⁵⁵

¹⁰⁵¹ BL Cotton MS Vespasian F/III, f. 34; TNA SP 1/50 f. 1; Dalton, 138.

¹⁰⁵² Dalton, 139.

¹⁰⁵³ TNA SP 1/150 f. 110; SP 1/153 f. 99; Dalton, 140.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Dalton, 140.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Dalton, 141.

Roger's brother William also found favor with the Court and specifically with Cromwell in the 1530s. William was sent in 1534, 1535, and again in 1536 to Scotland as an ambassador for Henry to James V of Scotland.¹⁰⁵⁶ In 1535 the Privy Council appointed William to Pembrokeshire, to curb the rampant piracy and smuggling in the area. William proved quite capable in his new job and was in regular contact with Cromwell, who was pleased with his progress in curbing the smuggling, if perhaps a bit concerned with the animosity William created with his reforming zeal.¹⁰⁵⁷ Late in 1535 William had to request special permission from Cromwell to leave the heavily Catholic region for his own safety. John also interceded on William's behalf with Anne Boleyn at this point.¹⁰⁵⁸ Throughout the 1530s the Barlow brothers worked closely together, forming a united front in Pembrokeshire to promote the Crown's agenda for the region, while at the same time advancing each other's careers.¹⁰⁵⁹

The Voyage of 1536

While Roger Barlow focused on building his own personal fortune and negotiating the rapidly changing power structures that came with the marriage of Anne Boleyn, the death of Wolsey, and the rise of Cromwell, it would almost seem that voyages of exploration were forgotten. And indeed, the most outspoken advocates of exploration do seem to have all laid aside the topic for a time, as they each became consumed with the Reformation and politics. Nicholas Thorne focused on serving Cromwell, as did Roger Barlow. John Rastell also found himself serving Cromwell while focusing all of his energies on promoting the Reformation.

¹⁰⁵⁶ TNA SP 49/4 ff. 70, 72, 74; SP 6/9 f. 121; SP 1/98 f. 134; SP 49/4 ff. 123, 125; BL Cotton MS Caligula B/III f. 195; Cotton MS Titus B/I f. 433; Cotton MS Cleopatra E/IV f. 259.

¹⁰⁵⁷ TNA SP 1/116 ff. 195, 220; SP 1/137 f. 201; SP 1/140 ff. 112, 114; SP 1/153 f. 58; BL Cotton MS Cleopatra E/IV f. 316.

¹⁰⁵⁸ BL Cotton MS E/IV f. 128; Dalton, 143.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Dalton does a masterful job proving this point in her book, 130-150.

However, exploration was not completely forgotten. There was a younger generation in London coming of age who had an interest in seeing what was on the other side of the Atlantic. These young men, thirty of whom were classified as gentlemen, many of them lawyers and members of the Inns of Court, joined a fleet of two ships and 120 men under the command of Richard Hore and, supposedly with the King's consent, set sail in 1536 for the Newfoundland region.

The purpose and details of Hore's voyage have been contested by historians. Some argued that Hore set out to finish what Cabot started and find the Northwest Passage. Others proposed that Hore was uninterested in exploration at all, but intended to show Cartier's track of 1534 into the Strait of Belle Island to a number of English merchants in an attempt to encourage further exploration.¹⁰⁶⁰ It has also been argued that this was nothing more than a fishing voyage that sought to increase its profits by doubling as a pleasure trip to the New World.¹⁰⁶¹ The facts of the voyage are also contested by historians who claim that the horrors described by Hakluyt are too fantastical and extreme to be true.¹⁰⁶² Richard Hakluyt, the elder, was the first to gather information on the voyage, having obtained parts of the story from Oliver Dawbeny, who, Taylor pointed out, "spent his life in humdrum Civil Service appointments at the Irish Mint and the London Customs House." The rest of the story was gathered by Richard Hakluyt, the younger,

¹⁰⁶⁰ Henry Harrisse has stated that Hore's expedition was "doubtless prompted by the news of Cartier's first successful results" and was thus in search of the Northwest passage. Henry Harrisse, *The Discovery of North America: A Critical, Documentary, and Historic Investigation*, (1892), (Amsterdam: N. Israel (Publishing Department) 1961), 34. David Quinn has argued that Hore was simply following Cartier's voyage to show it off to English gentlemen. Quinn, *North America From Earliest Discovery*, 355.

¹⁰⁶¹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: Northern Voyages A.D. 500-1600*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 237; E. G. Taylor argues that it was nothing more than an ordinary fishing voyage, E. G. Taylor, *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, vol. II, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), 390.

¹⁰⁶² Bernard Hoffman states that the "exaggerated and coloured narrative given to Hakluyt undoubtedly reflects the shock caused the courtly and gentlemanly tourists by the vicissitudes of an ordinary Newfoundland fishing trip." Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier: Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America 1497-1550*, (University of Toronto Press, 1961, reprint 1968), 188.

from Thomas Butts, son of one of the Royal Physicians. Taylor stated that Butts “must have been at least seventy years old when Hakluyt visited him to obtain material for his collection of voyages, and he was recalling events of half a century earlier.” Therefore, she argued, “the stories of both would thus in all probability be highly colored and inaccurate in detail.”¹⁰⁶³ It is partly due to this that historians have questioned Hakluyt’s account of what happened. It is also due to the incredible nature of the latter half of the expedition that some historians write off this voyage as a tale of fiction.

In 1536 Richard Hore, a leather seller of London, who was said to be well versed in cosmography, contracted the *William* from William Dolphyn, a draper of London and owner of the vessel.¹⁰⁶⁴ Hore set sail on April 1, 1536 aboard the *William*, which was inaccurately named the *Minion* in Hakluyt’s account, with a second ship identified as the *Trinity*. Aboard the *William* was Alain Moyne, a Breton who was contracted by Dolphyn to serve as both carpenter and pilot.¹⁰⁶⁵ Hakluyt stated that Hore set out with “divers Gentlemen and others, being assisted by the kings favour and good countenance, to accompany him in a voyage of discoverie upon the Northwest parts of America.”¹⁰⁶⁶ If this statement is true, and there does not seem to be any evidence to contradict it, then it indicated that Hore’s voyage had some notion of exploration, and that Henry VIII was either directly or indirectly involved in the preparation of the voyage. The diverse gentlemen who joined the expedition were listed as being “gentlemen of the Innes of

¹⁰⁶³ E.G.R. Taylor, “Master Hore’s Voyage of 1536” *The Geographical Journal* vol. 77, (May, 1931), pp. 469-70, 469.

¹⁰⁶⁴ TNA SP 1/124 f. 172; NAW, Doc. 149, p. 209. These two documents disprove Bourne’s claim that Hore was a lawyer. H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Seamen under the Tudors*, vol. I, (1868), (Cranbury N.J.: The Scholar’s Bookshelf, 2006), 87. Richard Hakluyt, the elder, describes Hore as being “given to the studie of Cosmographie,” Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 3.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Quinn surmises that since Alain Moyne was a Breton and a pilot he might have known about Cartier’s voyages and Hore might have then decided to modify his fishing plans to include a sight-seeing excursion into the Gulf of St. Lawrence for a group of London gentlemen to increase his profits. Quinn, *English Discovery*, 185; Quinn, NAW, Doc. 150, p. 210.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 3.

court, and of the Chancerie, and divers others of good worship, desirous to see the strange things of the world.” These included: “M. Weekes a gentleman of the West country of five hundred markes by the yeere living. M. Tucke a gentleman of Kent. M. Tuckfield. M. Thomas Butts the sonne of Sir William Butts knight, of Norfolke ... M. Hardie, m. Biron, M. Carter, M. Wright, M. Rastall Serjeant Rastals brother, M. Ridley, and divers other” aboard the *Trinity*. Aboard the *William*, were the “learned and virtuous gentleman one M. Armigil Wade now Clerke of the privie Councill, M. Oliver Dawbeney merchant of London, M. Joy afterward gentleman of the Kings Chappel, with divers other of good account.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Altogether the two ships had roughly “sixe score persons, whereof thirty were gentlemen, which all were mustered in warlike maner at Gravesend.”¹⁰⁶⁸

It is important to note that some of these men either were, or would become, well connected. Thomas Butts was the son of Sir William Butts, knight of Norfolk, who served as chief physician to Henry VIII.¹⁰⁶⁹ Armigel Wade later served as a government official for both Henry VIII and Edward VI, as Clark to the Privy Council and his son William Wade was clerk to the Privy Council when Hakluyt published the account.¹⁰⁷⁰ Oliver Daubney was a merchant and became very successful in London over the course of his life. He engaged in the new Barbary trade during the early years of Elizabeth’s reign and became a friend of Richard Hakluyt the elder.¹⁰⁷¹ Perhaps the most significant member of this venture was John Rastell, the son of John Rastell. Young Rastell’s presence on this voyage indicates his family’s continued interest in the

¹⁰⁶⁷ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 3.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 3.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 409; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 10; Taylor, “Master Hore’s Voyage,” 469; Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 263.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 3-7; Taylor, “Master Hore’s Voyage,” 470; Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 268; Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 263.

¹⁰⁷¹ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 10; Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 268.

New World. His presence also offers the interesting possibility that some of the young gentlemen might have accompanied the expedition to scout out possible sites for colonization or trade. This suggests that the voyage was more than simply a tourist expedition to amuse privileged young men. The presence of so many of London's up and coming young men might also suggest that London's elite were beginning to develop interest in the possibilities offered by the New World. If this were the case, then the catastrophe that followed certainly explains the reluctance of the London merchants to invest in North America.

Hore's voyage is notorious for its many problems. Leaving English waters by the end of April, the two ships did not meet with any storms, but traveled slowly through rough seas, taking over two months to reach Cape Briton.¹⁰⁷² From Cape Briton they made their way northeast to Penguin Island, which David Quinn identified as modern day Funk Island off Cape Fogo, where they found a great number of large birds, that were easily killed, and a large number of eggs to supplement their supplies.¹⁰⁷³ At Penguin Island, they saw numerous bears, both black and white, some of which they killed for food.¹⁰⁷⁴ At some point, perhaps at Penguin Island, the two ships separated, with Hore placing all of the gentlemen aboard the *Trinity* to continue sightseeing, while he took the *William* to fish off the southeastern coast of Newfoundland.

According to Dawbeny's account, the gentlemen explored the area and sighted a group of natives sailing into the bay. Dawbeny called to his fellows below deck to "come up if they would see the natural people of the country, that they had so long and so much desired to

¹⁰⁷² In the case against Alan Moyne before the High Court of Admiralty, it is mentioned that the ships were damaged by rough seas, but there is no mention of storms Document no. 150, Quinn, *NAW*, 210-11.

¹⁰⁷³ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 184.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 4.

see.”¹⁰⁷⁵ The gentlemen attempted to “meet them and to take them” but the natives, having spied the English activity “fled into an Island that lay up in the Bay or river there.”¹⁰⁷⁶ The gentlemen followed the natives to the island but found only an abandoned campsite, with a fire and a large piece of bear on a roasting spit, as well as “a boote of leather garnished on the outward side of the calfe with certaine brave trailes, as it were of rawe silke, and also found a certaine great warme mitten.”¹⁰⁷⁷ Finding nothing else of interest on the island other than fir and pine trees, the men took the boot and mitten, and returned to their ship.

At this point Dawbeny’s story becomes controversial. He stated that they lay at anchor for so long they ran out of food and resorted to eating raw herbs and plants, but finding this insufficient, “to satisfie their insatiable hunger,” one of their number “killed his mate while he stooped to take up a roote for his reliefe, and cutting out pieces of his bodie whom he had murdered, broiled the same on the coles and greedily devoured them.”¹⁰⁷⁸ The act of cannibalism apparently spread among the men, for he stated that “by this meane the company decreased, and the officers knew not what was become of them.”¹⁰⁷⁹ When the captain finally discovered the cannibalism, he “stood up and made a notable Oration, containing, However much these dealings offended the Almighty, and vouched the Scriptures from first to last, what God had in cases of distresse done for them that called upon him.”¹⁰⁸⁰ He reminded them of God’s great power, concluding that it would have been better for them to have died than to have

¹⁰⁷⁵ Dawbeny does not offer any insights into where this occurred, only describing the area as rocky and heavily wooded. Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 4.

¹⁰⁷⁶Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 4-5. David Quinn argues that the natives were most likely Eskimos who were often encountered during the summer in the area around northern Newfoundland and southern Labrador, though if the group were exploring closer to Newfoundland it is also possible that they encountered the Beothuk, who frequented the area around Newfoundland. Quinn, *English Discovery*, 185.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 5.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 5.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 5.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 6.

defiled their bodies in such a way and thus condemn themselves. The exhortations of the ship's captain appears to have had limited effect on the men, for the famine increased and the men agreed among themselves to cast lots to see who would be killed next. They were saved from following through with their plans by the arrival of a French ship that they seized.¹⁰⁸¹

This account of Cannibalism is the reason this expedition is so hotly contested among historians. Some historians, such as Taylor, have argued that this account of cannibalism must be nothing more than a fantastical tale, pure fiction, asserting it does not make sense if the English were in the rich fishing grounds of Newfoundland.¹⁰⁸² However, Dawbeny's tale does not mention Richard Hore, who abandoned the *Trinity* to fish elsewhere. If Hore had intended to leave the group of gentlemen with the *Trinity* to explore the surrounding area while he fished, he most likely left the *Trinity* with a skeletal crew, so that he could take the rest of the mariners with him to help in the catching and curing of the fish. This would have allowed him to maximize his profits. Dawbeny described the region where cannibalism took place as barren, just fields and deserts. David Beers Quinn pointed out that this description does not fit the majority of the area around the Grand Banks, but does fit Labrador. If the men had been stranded along the southern coast of Labrador, the coast Cartier described as being "the land God gave to Cain," then they would have had limited options, as the terrain is inhospitable and the fishing sparse.¹⁰⁸³ The *Trinity* apparently had become unseaworthy, for the English sailed home as soon as they seized the French ship, demonstrating that they had the knowledge and ability to sail, but could not

¹⁰⁸¹ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 6.

¹⁰⁸² Taylor, "Master Hore's Voyage," 470; Williamson also argued that the story of cannibalism is fiction, "My own suspicion is that the thing is an artifice to conceal an unwelcome tale of the difficulties of the North West. Hakluyt was a propagandist for the discovery of the Passage, and it was inexpedient to publish discouraging reports." Williamson, *The Voyages of the Cabots*, 270. However, one must wonder what could be more discouraging than a tale of sophisticated gentlemen from London succumbing to cannibalism?

¹⁰⁸³ Quinn, *England and the Discovery*, 185.

leave on the *Trinity*. However, Quinn also questioned the legitimacy of the tale, pointing out the advanced ages of Butts and Dawbeny when their versions of the expedition were recorded.¹⁰⁸⁴ Dalton argues that it seems odd, if cannibalism really did occur on the expedition, that it is not referenced in the subsequent court case against Hore.¹⁰⁸⁵ However, the Admiralty case brought against Hore by William Dolphyn, does not mention the second ship or the plight of the gentlemen aboard it. It should be pointed out that this was not the only tale of cannibalism to come from English adventurers in the New World.¹⁰⁸⁶ Additionally, it seems unlikely that Hakluyt would have printed a story implicating prominent families in London, including the clerk to the Privy Council, with cannibalism if he had any reason to suspect that the tale was fabricated.

Hakluyt continued the account with what appears to be Butt's story, stating that after stealing a passing French ship, the English abandoned the French crew and sailed home through waters riddled with mountains of ice, arriving at St. Ives in Cornwall, where they disembarked, about the end of October. Thomas Butts, John Rastell and some of the other gentlemen were welcomed at the castle of Sir John Luttrell where they were "friendly entertained" and stayed for a time.¹⁰⁸⁷ The fact that they went first to Luttrell's house and did not make their way immediately to London, suggests that they not only knew him, but that he likely had invested in the expedition. This certainly fits with what is known of Luttrell, for in the 1550s he joined forces with Cabot and Cabot's son-in-law, Henry Ostrich, in promoting northern voyages of

¹⁰⁸⁴ Quinn, *English Discovery*, 185.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Dalton, 171.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Perhaps the most famous account of cannibalism among Englishmen in North America are the accounts from Jamestown during the winter of 1609.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 7.

exploration.¹⁰⁸⁸ A fact worth noting is that Butts' father was close friends with John Cheke, who served as tutor to Edward VI and had a profound impact on the education of John Dee.¹⁰⁸⁹ After spending some time at Luttrell's, they continued to London by way of Bath, where they stayed with the Earle of Bath, and then stopped at Bristol before finally making it to London.¹⁰⁹⁰ Butts concluded the dramatic tale by stating that when he arrived home, he "was so changed in the voage with hunger and miserie, that sir William his father and my Lady his mother knew him not to be their sonne, until they found a secret marke which was a wart upon one of his knees."¹⁰⁹¹ Such a specific detail lends credibility to the story.

Hakluyt ended the tale by stating that some months after the gentlemen returned to London, the Frenchmen whom they had robbed arrived and lodged a complaint with the King, demanding compensation for their lost goods and stolen ship. They had apparently been able to patch up the *Trinity* and limp back across the Atlantic. Hakluyt stated that Henry investigated the matter and after hearing of the great distress of his subjects and the reasons for their treatment of the Frenchmen, he "was so moved with pitie, that he punished not his subjects, but of his own purse made full and royall recompence unto the French."¹⁰⁹² The arrival of the French seems to verify the stories of Dawbeny and Butts. The fact that Hakluyt claimed that Henry repaid the French out of his own purse also lends credibility to the tale, as this is a fact that he would have been able to verify. This also strengthens the idea that Henry was somehow involved in the voyage, as his willingness to cover the damages suffered by the French suggests

¹⁰⁸⁸ Dalton highlights this connection, 171; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 92. Hakluyt's account of Wyndham's voyage to Africa states that both Luttrell and Ostrich came down with the sweating sickness just before their departure and died. Upon their deaths command of the expedition passed to Wyndham. Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VI, 137.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Strype, 7.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 7.

¹⁰⁹¹ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 7.

¹⁰⁹² Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VIII, 7.

that he felt some level of responsibility for the actions taken by the English. Otherwise, he would have held either Richard Hore or the gentlemen involved responsible to some degree.

Hore returned to London in early September, roughly a month before his gentlemen passengers made it to England. After his return, Dolphyn filed charges against Hore and Alan Moyne, the ship's carpenter, accusing them of several misdemeanors arising out of incidents which occurred on the voyage, such as the alleged lack of care of the ship and refusal to pay money owed Dolphyn for the use of the *William*. The charges stated that he had traveled safely to Newfoundland, where he "took fish and salted them in pipes according to the way they are taken," and then "came from the New Found Lande to the port of London where he remained safely in the months of September and October." Dolphyn claimed that Hore owed £160 for the use of the ship, that he had not returned the ship and its equipment, and that he further owed the worth of the freight valued at £100.¹⁰⁹³ Dolphyn asked the court to impound the fish and other goods in Hore's possession until he fulfilled his obligations.

The charges against Moyne stated that he neglected his duties, refused to act as ship's carpenter when the ship needed repair, spending his time instead ashore with a group of Bretons drinking and bowling while in Newfoundland. Though the court records do not confirm whether or not Moyne was derelict in his duties, this accusation of negligence could explain why the *Trinity* was unable to sail home under the command of the English gentlemen. If Moyne and Hore were unconcerned with the maintenance of their own ship, it is doubtful they would have been concerned about the second ship. In addition to negligence, Moyne was charged with embezzlement of the ship's stores.¹⁰⁹⁴ He was found guilty of embezzling, but the court's ruling

¹⁰⁹³ Quinn, *NAW*, Document no. 149, p. 210.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Quinn, *NAW*, Document no. 150, 151, pp. 210-214.

on the charges of dereliction of duties is unknown. How the court ruled in the case against Hore is also unknown, although it would seem that he reached some sort of settlement, as he was once again at sea in 1537.¹⁰⁹⁵ There is no mention of the *Trinity* in this court case, and Hore does not seem to have been concerned about the welfare of the gentlemen he left aboard, as he returned to England in September, and they did not make it to England until late October. While this case does not offer any evidence that would confirm or deny the story told to Hakluyt, it does offer insight into Hore's character, showing a man who tried to maximize his profits and neglected to pay his debts. This image of Hore is further revealed in his next voyage.

In 1537 Hore set out on a common transport voyage from Lisbon to London. To add to his profits, he agreed to take onboard a group of Portuguese looking for passage to London. Instead of taking them to London as promised, he took them to a "small haven near Cardiff," where he held them prisoner while he attempted to extort a large sum of money from them.¹⁰⁹⁶ During the imprisonment, one of the Portuguese, a woman named Agnez, died. Hore was eventually brought before the Earl of Worcester at Cardiff Castle to account for his actions. He protested his loyalty and innocence, apparently convincingly, since he was quickly released. However, he was arrested three separate times for the charges of kidnapping and of mismanaging Walter Herbert's cargo which had been aboard the ship in 1537.¹⁰⁹⁷ A year later, in 1538, Hore again faced charges, this time for misrepresenting the ownership of the ship, *Valentine*, and for failure to pay rents on it. Sir Thomas Spert was forced to order the arrest of his own vessel, the *Valentine*, when Hore refused to pay Spert the £280 he owed for the vessel's use. The *Valentine*'s cargo of salt and wine was sold to cover the debt, although doubt was expressed as to

¹⁰⁹⁵ Taylor, "Master Hore's voyage of 1536," 470.

¹⁰⁹⁶ TNA SP 1/124 f. 172; STAC 2/21/10-11; STAC 2/21/60.

¹⁰⁹⁷ TNA STAC 2/21/60.

whether or not Hore had come by the cargo honestly.¹⁰⁹⁸ In an undated court case, Hore was accused by Richard Abbys, citizen and grocer of London, who claimed that he purchased the *Villyntyn* from Spert two years ago, and that while the ship was docked at Chepstow and being made ready for a voyage, Hore tried to take it, claiming he had purchased it from Spert. Abbys retook the ship and took it to San Lucar, where Hore met him and had the ship arrested.

Apparently, Hore believed he stood a better chance before the Spanish courts than he did in England. He was correct in this assumption, for Abbys had to file suit against Spert to cover his financial losses for the ship.¹⁰⁹⁹ When Abbys did not immediately get the results he needed from Spert, he wrote to Cromwell about the situation, stating that Hore had waited to take the ship in Spain because he “could have no justice in England.” Abbys wrote that “I trust to prove him a traitor and have him in prison for debt till I know your pleasure.”¹¹⁰⁰

Hore also appeared in two separate court cases involving the possession of property in Cornwall. In one case he was accused of taking possession of the house that Elizabeth Frenche had inherited from her mother, Constantine Raw. In the other, Hore accused John Toser of taking possession of the deeds and titles to the land Hore claimed to legally own.¹¹⁰¹ All of these cases accuse Hore of either not delivering on promised funds, such as rents on a ship or returns on cargo, or of manipulating the legal system for his own financial gain. It does not appear that the charges ever affected Hore that badly, for his name appears again in 1540 on a document testifying to the ill treatment of English merchants in Seville at the hands of the Spanish and the

¹⁰⁹⁸ Taylor identifies this as a Sir Thomas Spert, however, Taylor relied on the records of the Admiralty courts, other court cases related to this event reveal that the case involves Sir Thomas Spert, not Spent. Taylor, “Master Hore’s voyage of 1536,” 470; TNA SP 1/132 f. 17; SP 1/134 f. 90; SP 1/136 f. 121; C1/719/24.

¹⁰⁹⁹ TNA C 1/719/24.

¹¹⁰⁰ TNA SP 1/137 f. 244.

¹¹⁰¹ TNA C 1/797/37; C 1/1012/18.

Inquisition due to Henry's split with the church.¹¹⁰² The fact that Hore's name appears on the 1540 document, among some of the most well respected and powerful English merchants in Spain, demonstrates that, while Hore was a less than reputable merchant, he knew how to charm those around him. Despite his reputation for cheating those involved in his expeditions, he talked his way out of three separate court cases, three years in a row, and continued to rise through the ranks of English merchants, as demonstrated by that fact that he joined the ranks of the Merchant Adventurers in Seville.

Hore's natural inclination to take advantage of situations for his own personal gain eventually caught up with him. In 1546 he was a captain of one of Sir Thomas Seymour's ships which was accused of piracy. Hore was accused of capturing a ship belonging to Balthazar de Ahedo and Tylman van Kerssell and taking from it certain chests of sugar and wines. Hore's partner in crime was Richard Craye, captain of a ship belonging to the Lord High Admiral. The case became controversial and the issue was brought before the Privy Council who ordered that as many of the pirates as could be found should be arrested until the matter could be carefully reviewed.¹¹⁰³ Hore disappears from the historical record for the next decade and then appears again in 1557 and on January 27, 1558 on lists of persons committed to prison. In both instances, he is listed along with a John Raven, who may or may not be the same John Raven who, in the service of Lord Surrey, had sabotaged John Rastell's voyage in 1517.¹¹⁰⁴

While Hore's 1536 voyage was, admittedly, a colossal disaster, it is significant to the history of English exploration and maritime activities in several key ways. First of all, this was the third voyage to cost Henry money with no apparent return on his investment. Regardless of

¹¹⁰² TNA SP 1/161 f. 65.

¹¹⁰³ BL Add MS 5476 f. 230.

¹¹⁰⁴ TNA PC 2/8 f. 26; SP 11/13 f. 19.

whether or not Henry had financially invested in Hore's expedition, because he paid the Frenchmen, the expedition cost him money. This would have had a negative impact on Henry's attitude toward maritime ventures to the Newfoundland regions. Second, there does not appear to have been any privately organized ventures to North America outside of the regular fishing trips to the Grand Banks in the years following this venture. This lack of endeavors could be evidence that the stories of hardship and cannibalism had begun circulating with the return of Butts and the other gentlemen. As Quinn pointed out, Hore's voyage served as "strong negative propaganda for further North American exploring expeditions."¹¹⁰⁵

While the voyage would have played a significant role in discouraging London's merchants from ventures to North America, the politics of 1536 must be considered. 1536 was a pivotal year for Henry VIII, and his kingdom. Henry turned forty-five, an age considered to be the start of old age, and that year Henry played his last joust and nearly died. That year he executed Anne Boleyn, and his beloved illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, died at age seventeen and left him without even the possibility of legitimizing his bastard to gain an heir.¹¹⁰⁶ In 1536 England was also on the brink of destruction with both the Pope's edict, which would have legitimized any Christian King's invasion of England, and the rebellion, the Pilgrimage of Grace, a peaceful uprising which Henry could not hope to raise enough troops to suppress should it turn violent. It was also the year of the dissolution of the monasteries and Henry's reinforcement of his claim to be the Head of the Church of England. 1536 has been called the "year of three queens," as it saw the death of both Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn and Henry's marriage

¹¹⁰⁵ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 189. This sentiment is also asserted by Kenneth Andrews who states that, "after this fiasco neither Henry or his subjects ventured to promote exploration in the North Atlantic." *Trade, Plunder and Settlement*, 56.

¹¹⁰⁶ Suzannah Lipscomb, *The Year that Changed Henry VIII*, (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009), 44.

to Jane Seymore.¹¹⁰⁷ It was such a turbulent year for Henry that Suzannah Lipscomb has dedicated an entire book just to the one year.¹¹⁰⁸ It is not surprising that there were no voyages immediately after Hore's. It would be surprising if there had been plans right after this disaster and in the midst of the political turmoil rocking the nation.

Such dramatic changes in politics and policy had to be handled with care by those close to the court. The Barlows were well connected to the Boleyns, and with Anne's execution the entire Boleyn family fell out of favor and were in danger of losing everything, as was anyone too closely associated with them.¹¹⁰⁹ It appears that the Barlow brothers negotiated some of this political turmoil by more closely aligning themselves with Cromwell.¹¹¹⁰ In July 1540 Cromwell was also executed, endangering the position of all of those who had relied on his patronage and support, such as Nicholas Thorne and Roger Barlow.¹¹¹¹ The sudden loss of their main patrons in the course of four years was an unsettling event for the Barlow brothers and forced them to lie low for a time to ensure that they were not caught up in the sweeps, first of the Boleyn and then the Cromwell supporters. It also meant that if they were to continue in their current positions, or in similar ones, they needed to align themselves to new political powers. This shifting political field may be what finally prompted Barlow to take his chances and present the King with his geography.

A Brief Summe of Geographie

¹¹⁰⁷ R. W. Hoyle, as quoted in Lipscomb, 43.

¹¹⁰⁸ See footnote 1036.

¹¹⁰⁹ While at first the Barlows appear to have stood loyally beside Anne, it appears they quickly looked to their own self-preservation, for they made it through the political turnover without any real consequences. TNA SP 1/104 f. 191. This document illustrates how William Barlow was forced to carefully negotiate accusations that he was Anne's man and thus could be connected to her treason.

¹¹¹⁰ BL Cotton MS Cleopatra E/IV ff. 141, 316, 318; TNA SP 1/116 f. 195, 220; SP 1/153 f. 58.

¹¹¹¹ Dalton demonstrates that Nicholas Thorne was very much Cromwell's man and that many of his maritime enterprises were tied to Cromwell. Dalton, 153-54.

Barlow's *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, was put together in 1540 and presented to the king in the spring of 1541.¹¹¹² Barlow's presentation was made up of three separate pieces: a modified version of the proposal he had collaborated with Robert Thorne on, his book *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, and a map. The map has since been lost, and the book and proposal were subsequently archived separately. The proposal ended up in the collection of public and private letters, memoranda, and papers covering the reign of Henry VIII from 1509 to 1547, while the book made it into the royal collection which was presented to the British Museum in the eighteenth century.¹¹¹³ Barlow's book is an English translation of Enciso's *Suma* with additions being made for areas such as the Canaries and the Plata region, where Barlow had traveled, and for some areas of England, which Barlow knew a great deal more of than Enciso.¹¹¹⁴ In a few places Barlow changed or omitted parts of the text. This was most often the case in accounts of fantastical creatures, indicating that Barlow doubted their existence and wanted to present as accurate a cosmography as possible.¹¹¹⁵ Enciso is often considered the first conquistador to write with the intent to educate his audience, and he melded mathematical geography and descriptive geography throughout the book. Barlow continued this tradition by adding to the work new navigational information. He also reworked Enciso's astronomical tables to bring them up to date and modified Enciso's navigational calculations to make them more accurate, using Arabic

¹¹¹² Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 51-2. Taylor argues that this date can be firmly established from internal evidence and the watermarks used. I concur with Taylor's assessment.

¹¹¹³ Dalton, 159-60. While the proposal has been cataloged under 1534 in the National Archives, Taylor is of the opinion that the watermark confirms that it was presented in 1541 at the same time as the book. Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, xlvi. *A Brief Summe of Geographie* is currently at the British Library, Royal 18 B XXVIII.

¹¹¹⁴ As both Taylor and Dalton point out, Barlow had a considerable knowledge of the areas around London and Bristol and the waterways of southwest Wales, however, as he had never been to areas such as northeast England, he had very little to add to Enciso's account. Dalton, 164-5; Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, 48; BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, f. 25r-27v.

¹¹¹⁵ See Taylor, *A Breif Summe*, for a complete breakdown of the differences between Barlow's work and Enciso.

rather than Roman numerals, which was a growing practice in England by the 1540s.¹¹¹⁶ By presenting the book in English, not in one of the learned languages, Barlow hoped to make the information more readily accessible. In fact, he stated that he hoped the King would see fit to have the book published for the consumption of the English people.

Barlow wanted to provide Henry and the rest of his readers with the most accurate, up to date description of the world as possible, especially of its navigability and of the potentials each land represented. More than this, Barlow wanted to use this book to present his case to the king for new voyages of exploration. Barlow made this abundantly clear through the presentation of the material. He began the work with an address to the king that highlighted the benefits of exploration and ended the book with a description of Labrador that melded almost perfectly in places with Robert Thorne's letter to Henry. Unlike Enciso, Barlow did not encourage his monarch to convert the natives of the New World or of the Indies. In fact, while he found it essential that the English knew about the Spanish and Portuguese discoveries, he omitted Enciso's descriptions highlighting the advantages of colonizing regions such as the Caribbean, as well as Enciso's descriptions of the Spanish converting Native Americans to Catholicism. Rather than explicitly arguing for colonization, Barlow presented his information in an informative matter, instructing the reader in cosmography and navigation, while showing where profits could be made. Barlow thus presented himself to Henry as more than just a merchant with overseas experience, but as a well-educated man with first-hand experience in the New World and the capabilities of a navigator.¹¹¹⁷

¹¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note that when the deputy superintendent of *Her Majesties Nautical Almanac* studied the tables in the 1930s they were found to be consistent across all years and subject to an error of only five to ten degrees. Dalton, 160-64; BL Royal 18 B XXVIII.

¹¹¹⁷ Dalton also argues that one of Barlow's aims was to present himself "not merely a merchant keen to establish a new trade route, but a man of learning with first-hand experience of the New World." Dalton, 166.

Barlow inserted a few sections absent in Enciso's book. Most of these came from his own experiences and travels, however, one stands out that is not a personal experience, Barlow's insertion of a detailed description of Calicut. While Barlow had never been there, he thought the region of great importance for his readers, as a key destination for trade. The content Barlow inserted here was mostly a summary from Varthema, not a true translation. Barlow manipulated the summary to highlight not just the wealth of the region, but also the licentious lifestyles, stating that the merchants and gentlemen showed their affection and good favor for each other by swapping wives, and that the common women could marry up to seven men.¹¹¹⁸ Perhaps Barlow hoped that such information would create a fascination with the region and encourage English expeditions to the East.

The insertion that Barlow made which is of greatest importance to this study is his final insertion, his discussion of Labrador and the argument for a voyage to the north. Barlow began this section, describing it as the "new founde lande, which was first discovered by marchantes of brystowe where now the bretons do trat thider everie yere a fishing, and is called the bacaliaus."¹¹¹⁹ In this way, he mirrored Rastell by stating that the English first discovered the area but others reaped the benefits. He then discussed the commodities of the region stating that "what commoditie is within this lande as yet it is not knwoen for it hath not ben labored," however, it is unlikely that there will be much precious metal or stones in the region "for it stondeth farre aparted from the equinoctiall wheras the influens of the sonne doth norishe and bring fourth gold, spices, stones and perles."¹¹²⁰ Despite this, Barlow reminded his readers that

¹¹¹⁸ BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, ff. 76v-81r. Dalton argues that Barlow did this in order to "titillate" his readers, Dalton, 165; Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, 139.

¹¹¹⁹ BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, f. 99v.

¹¹²⁰ BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, f. 99v.

if the merchants of Bristol had followed through with their discovery and explored to the south, “no dowt but thei suld have founde grete riches of gold and perle as other nations hathe done sence that tyme.”¹¹²¹ Again, Barlow presented an argument that was very similar to Rastell’s in the *III Elements*.¹¹²²

In case this argument did not work to encourage further exploration, Barlow argued that England’s honor was at stake. Barlow stated:

How moche more shult thei count us for ferefull and of litil stomak to leve of suche an enterprise which maie be done with continuall light. Moche more passing this little space of navigation which is countyd daungerous maie be iij C leges before thei come to the pole and other as moche after thei have passed the pole, it is clere that from thens forward the sees and lond is temperat as it is here in England.”¹¹²³

England would be considered a nation of fearful individuals with little stomach for exploration if they did not go north. Not only would the expedition have nearly continual light, for the polar regions were known to have twenty-four hours of daylight in the summer, but the sailing would be easy, for there was only about three hundred leagues of dangerous water before coming to the pole, and another three hundred after the pole, before reaching temperate waters. Thus, in a manner similar to Rastell, Barlow repeated Thorne’s arguments for a northern voyage, stating England had not only missed out on the riches enjoyed by other nations, but England’s honor and international reputation were at risk if they did not take advantage of this easy route to the Spice Islands.

¹¹²¹ BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, f. 99v.

¹¹²² See discussion of this play in chapter 3 and 4.

¹¹²³ BL Royal 18 B XXVIII, f. 100v.

While there is no direct evidence of who read Barlow's book and when, it was presented to the Privy Council and it appears to have made an impression on the Council.¹¹²⁴ A letter written by Chapuys, the Spanish Ambassador in England, to Queen Mary of Hungary on May 26, 1541, reveals that the Privy Council took Barlow's arguments seriously:

About two months ago there was a deliberation in the Privy Council as to the expediency of sending two ships to the Northern Seas for the purpose of discovering a passage between Ilandt and Engronland for the Northern Regions where it was thought that owing to the exteme cold, English woolen cloths would be very acceptable and sell at a good price. To this end the King has retained here for some time a pilot from Seville well versed in the affairs of the sea, though in the end the undertaking has been abandoned, all owing to the King not choosing to agree to the pilot's terms.¹¹²⁵

While there is no direct evidence as to who the pilot was, it seems likely that it was Cabot.¹¹²⁶ It is evident that Barlow's work inspired serious discussions among the Privy Council of a voyage to the North. Given that Chapuys mentioned the prospect of selling woolen cloths, it is also logical that Barlow's book laid the groundwork for the northeast expeditions to be approved and for the Muscovy Company, which opened direct trade with Russia via northeast exploration expeditions, to gain its start.

The Later Years

The expedition of 1541 did not progress beyond the planning stages. This did not deter Barlow from continuing to serve in maritime affairs. In 1543 he was appointed Justice of the

¹¹²⁴ James Evans argues that this is the point that England begins to get excited about new markets for their woolen cloth and that this begins the discussions of a northern or northeastern voyage. Evans, *Tudor Adventures*, 33-34.

¹¹²⁵ Brewer, vol XVI, Doc. 864, p. 410.

¹¹²⁶ HARRISSE argues that the most logical conclusion is that Cabot was the pilot, pointing out that Cabot had apparently tried to gain employment in England in 1538 as indicated by a letter by Sir Thomas Wyatt. HARRISSE, *John Cabot*, 318-19. QUINN challenges this assumption and suggests that the pilot in question was Barlow. QUINN, *England and the Discovery*, 149. However, this would not make sense with the statement that the pilot came from Seville. DALTON suggests that it was likely a pilot who had trade at the Casa and who Barlow had recommended for the position. DALTON, 167.

Peace and commissioned to administer maritime law in Cardigan, Pembroke, and Carmarthen. He also received commission, along with John Barlow, Henry Wirriot, John Rastell, and John Sutton, a vice admiral, to investigate a specific case regarding a Spanish ship which had been captured by the French and forced into Milford Haven by bad weather, where it was taken into custody by the mayor of Pembrokeshire.¹¹²⁷ This is the first record of John Rastell and Roger Barlow serving together. Their shared interest in the New World and exploration created a point of bonding for the two men, who formed a friendship. The fact that Barlow named Rastell an executor of his will indicates just how close a friendship they formed.¹¹²⁸ There is evidence they served occasionally together in matters related to maritime law and politics. Late in 1548 Roger Barlow was appointed escheator of Pembrokeshire, and he, Rastell, and Henry ap Owen were commissioned to make a post mortem inquiry into the estate of John Revel of Pembrokeshire.¹¹²⁹ The following year Barlow was appointed by John Dudley as Vice-Admiral of Pembrokeshire, giving him authority over the enforcement of custom laws in the area and the task of regulating maritime smuggling, which had been rampant in the area.¹¹³⁰ This is an interesting connection for Barlow, as it was Dudley who brought Jean Ribault to England and was instrumental in Cabot's return and royal appointment. John Rastell also continued in positions of authority and was made mayor of Tenby in 1552-3.¹¹³¹

Barlow also maintained close contact with Nicholas Thorne, who named Barlow, along with Edward Prynne, as executors in his final will, which is dated August 1546. It is noteworthy

¹¹²⁷ TNA PC 2/1 ff. 487, 491; Letters and Papers, vol. 18 part 1, p. 106, 287, 304; Dalton, 170-71.

¹¹²⁸ TNA PROB 11/40/268; Dalton, 170. Barlow also named Edward Prynne, a strong supporter of Sebastian Cabot's plans for exploration an executor of his will.

¹¹²⁹ Dalton, 175-6.

¹¹³⁰ Evans, *Tudor Adventurers*, 54-55; Dalton, 176; Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, Lii-iii.

¹¹³¹ Roll of mayors of Tenby, available from <http://www.tenbytowncouncil.co.uk/mayors-previous.php>, accessed 11/18/18. Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, Lv.

that Thorne maintained contacts with Barlow and Prynne, both of whom held an interest in overseas exploration throughout their lives. Prynne supported Cabot in his plans to expand English trading interests, served as master of the Merchant Venturers of Bristol, and was a founding member of the Muscovy Company. He had a close relationship with both Thorne and Barlow and was made an executor in both of their wills.¹¹³² While Thorne might not have pursued his brother's dreams of a northern expedition of exploration, he shared his brother's and Barlow's interest in educating the general population in matters of cosmography and navigation. In his will, Thorne set aside £30 to start a library at the Bristol Grammar School and gave "all such books as I have mete for the said library; more, my astrolabie which is in the keeping of John Spryute, poticary, with cartes and mappis, with such intruments as is in my house belonging to the science of astronomy or cosmografia."¹¹³³ Barlow, Rastell, and Thorne shared an interest in exploration as well as in matters of navigation and cosmography. Furthermore, all three, and their deceased family members, saw the importance of making this knowledge available to the public, and worked toward this end.

While it has been assumed that it was the death of Henry VIII in 1547 that prompted Cabot's return to England, it seems more likely that it was the death of Cabot's wife, Catalina, that prompted his return.¹¹³⁴ After her death on September 2, 1547, Cabot appears to have lost all interest in remaining in Spain and quickly let his son-in-law, Henry Ostrich, know that he wanted to return to England. Ostrich must have had powerful connections, likely with Dudley, for within a month Edward VI officially invited Cabot to England and sent the funds needed for

¹¹³² TNA PROB 11/40/268; BRO JOr 1/1; Dalton, 181, 185.

¹¹³³ BRO JOr/1/1; This is the only list of the items Thorne gifted to the library. It is unknown what specific books were donated. Thorne's collection existed in its entirety as late as 1687, however, when the library was formerly catalogued in 1725 most of the original items had disappeared. Legend has it that the astrolabe and the other instruments were sold off for a few shillings. Dalton, 175.

¹¹³⁴ See for example Sandman and Ash, 822-4; Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 308.

the trip. Cabot arrived in England by September 29, 1548.¹¹³⁵ While there is no concrete evidence that Cabot met with his old friends from Bristol when he returned, or that he and Barlow spent any time together, there is circumstantial evidence that they did, and they certainly had ample opportunity to do so, as the two men continued to move in the same circles until their deaths, Barlow in December, 1553, and Cabot in December 1557.¹¹³⁶ Cabot initially returned to his home town of Bristol before moving to London, where he became actively involved in the creation of the Muscovy Company and the early voyages to the Barbary Coast.¹¹³⁷

Cabot's return to England sparked instant rumors, that he wanted to return to Venice to his mother's property, that he wished to return to Spain, that he was organizing an English attempt to find the Indies via Thorne's northern route, and that he was currently working with Jean Ribault on a marine chart and an expedition to discover a new route to the Indies.¹¹³⁸ Jean Scheyfve reported in June 1550, and then in December 1550, that Cabot planned a voyage to the north for which five or six ships were being outfitted.¹¹³⁹ Early in 1551 Scheyfve recorded that Cabot and Ribault were said to have a commission, "accompanied by certain Englishmen experienced in navigation, who have been with Cabot," to discover "some islands or seek a road to the Indies, taking the way of the Artic Pole."¹¹⁴⁰ It is often assumed that the English pilots

¹¹³⁵ Dalton, 127-8.

¹¹³⁶ Dalton argues that it stands to reason that the two men would have crossed paths and the lack of written communication between the two does not necessarily mean that they were estranged or did not communicate. Dalton, 179.

¹¹³⁷ Cabot's move to London corresponds with the death of Lord Seymour, the Lord High Admiral, who seems to have had little interest in Cabot. After Seymour's death John Dudley became the High Admiral once again and Cabot was moved to London. It is often thought that Dudley's interest had been piqued by the Thorne/Barlow proposal of a northern expedition. See, Sandman and Ash, 830; Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, Lii.

¹¹³⁸ R. Taylor, ed. *Calendar of Letters, Despatches and State Papers Relating to the Negotiations Between England and Spain, Preserved in the Archives at Vienna, Brussels, Simancas and elsewhere*, vo. 10 (London: 1914), 115, 217; Dalton, 179-81. Jehan Scheyfve wrote to the Queen dowager on June 24, 1550 stating that Cabot was being retained by King Edward VI to organize an expedition and that an expedition was being planned to the north. In January 1551 Scheyfve records that Cabot and Ribault were working together to draw up a marine chart.

¹¹³⁹ Taylor, *Calendar of Letters*, 115.

¹¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *Calendar of Letters*, 217.

referenced were Barlow and Patmer, as they were the only Englishmen known to have sailed with Cabot and to qualify as pilots.¹¹⁴¹ However, as Dalton points out, there is no evidence that Patmer ever returned from South America.¹¹⁴² This makes it more likely that Barlow was involved in the planning of this venture, as he was the only Englishman who possibly fit this description, though it is unlikely that he intended to accompany the expedition at his advanced age. While there is no evidence of a fleet leaving for the north at this time, the timing of these letters overlaps with the voyage to Morocco that was arranged in 1551 and in which Henry Ostrich, Cabot's son-in-law, was a central figure.¹¹⁴³ As Barlow was personally familiar with the sugar trade in Morocco, and was associated with both Ostrich and Cabot, it stands to reason that he was involved with the planning of this expedition on some level, if only to consult in the initial stages.

In 1551 Cabot, Sir Hugh Willoughby, and Richard Chancellor formed the company, The Mystery and Company of Merchant Adventurers for the Discovery of Regions, Dominions, Islands and Places Unknown, with the intent of northern exploration. In 1553 the company sent out Willoughby's ill-fated expedition to the northeast. This was likely the voyage by "way of the Artic Pole" that Scheyfve alluded to in his letters.¹¹⁴⁴ The company soon became known as the Muscovy Company, which opened up direct trade between England and Russia. Dalton points out that nearly three quarters of the initial two hundred and one chartered members of the Muscovy Company were London merchants. Thirteen were Merchants of the Staple (merchants controlling woolen cloth exports) and twenty-six counted among the Merchant Adventurers, the

¹¹⁴¹ Evans, *Tudor Adventurers*, 54-5; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 92-3.

¹¹⁴² Dalton, 181.

¹¹⁴³ Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, vol. VI, 136.

¹¹⁴⁴ Taylor, *Calendar of Letters*, 115, 217; Dalton, 183.

majority of whom had spent most of their lives trading with Portugal and Spain.¹¹⁴⁵ Very few had spent time trading with the Baltic or the Levant. Thus, the merchants involved in England's first major expedition to the north had lived and worked in the Iberian world, and had contact with transatlantic trade and knew from firsthand experience the wealth and prestige that could come with a successful voyage of exploration. These were not merchants who had focused on trade with Antwerp, but were much aware of, and interested in, the opening of the Atlantic.

The beginning of England's interest in exploration is often tied to the Muscovy Company and the expeditions to the northeast.¹¹⁴⁶ This was, after all, the much sought for outlet for the woolens industry. The severe decline in the cloth industry during the late 1540s finally forced the powerful London cloth merchants to turn to exploration for new outlets of trade. It was also through the Muscovy Company that men such as Stephen Borough, who is often cited with bringing geographical and navigational manuals to the English populace, gained their start and their first real experience with overseas exploration.¹¹⁴⁷ The organization and operations of the Muscovy Company are well researched and do not need to be rehashed here.¹¹⁴⁸ However, it is important to note that some of the men who organized this venture, and ensured that it had what

¹¹⁴⁵ Dalton, 183.

¹¹⁴⁶ For example, this is the opening argument in Armand J. Gerson's Ph.D. thesis "The Organization and Early History of the Muscovy Company," Armand J. Gerson, Ernest V. Vaughn, Neva Ruth Deardorff, *Studies in the History of English Commerce in the Tudor Period*, (New York: University of Pennsylvania, D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 1-3.

¹¹⁴⁷ See Sandman and Ash, 840; David Loades, *John Dudley: Duke of Northumberland 1504-1553*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 244-7.

¹¹⁴⁸ T. S. Willan, *Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953); James Evans, *Tudor Adventurers: An Arctic Voyage of Discovery: The Hunt for the Northeast Passage*, (New York: Pegasus Books LLC, 2014); Felicity Stout, *Exploring Russia in the Elizabethan Commonwealth: The Muscovy Company and Giles Fletcher, the Elder (1546-1611)*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Armand J. Gerson, Ernest V. Vaughn, Neva Ruth Deardorff, *Studies in the History of English Commerce in the Tudor Period*, (New York: University of Pennsylvania, D. Appleton and Company, 1912); Edward Delmar Morgan, Charles Henry Coote, eds., *Early Voyages and Travels to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen. With some Account of the First Intercourse of the English with Russia and Central Asia by Way of the Caspian Sea*, 2 volumes, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1886).

it needed to succeed, are the same men who had shown interest in the Atlantic world for most of their lives and who were also involved in opening English trade with Africa. Cabot is often rightfully given credit for being the inspiration and the chief organizer behind the Muscovy Company. He had at last found a means through which his dreams of northern exploration could be realized. However, it should not be overlooked that he also helped organize a venture to West Africa, a venture that was to be led by his son-in-law, Henry Ostrich. Cabot's interests were not completely focused on the north. He understood that there were opportunities to the south as well.

Edward VI's reign has been described as "a period of anxious consultation and discussion between cosmographers, navigators and merchants."¹¹⁴⁹ This created the environment Dudley needed to realize his own interests in exploration. In this environment, the English turned to new players who were returning from the continent with new knowledge and mastery of mathematics, such as John Dee. However, they also looked to the older generation, the ones with practical knowledge of overseas exploration and commerce, like Cabot and Barlow, who had spent their lives in the world of transatlantic exploration. With the woolen industry in peril, the powerful London merchants were finally willing to invest their money in the expeditions that Cabot, Barlow, and Thorne had long envisioned. As Dudley worked to bring English cosmographical and navigational knowledge up to par, Cabot and Dee operated in the same circles and had ample opportunity to exchange ideas and information. It was also at this time that Cabot took on Stephen Borough as his protégé, imparting upon him his passionate desire to see England become a nation of navigators.¹¹⁵⁰ Thus, it was during Edward's reign that the practical

¹¹⁴⁹ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 94.

¹¹⁵⁰ See Sandman and Ash, 840-41; Evans, *Tudor Adventurers*, 46-7, 59-60, 74-5; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 94; Loades, *John Dudley*, 245-6.

knowledge and experience of the Atlantic players from Henry's reign began to impart their knowledge to those who would help shape the Atlantic players of the Elizabethan era.

From the dawn of transatlantic trade, English merchants saw an opportunity to expand their trade, and they took it. The core group of English merchants around Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow all interreacted with the opening of the Atlantic world through trade and investment. They were there to invest in some of the earliest trading expeditions and were already actively engaged in the transatlantic market before Cortez discovered the wealth of Mexico. These men gained a foothold into the Atlantic sugar trade well before sugar was introduced to the Caribbean, and were already familiar with African slavery before the first transatlantic shipment of slaves. These men recognized the profits to be made in the Atlantic world, and they found a way to get in on the profits without having to shoulder all of the risks. They did so by trading through Seville, following the laws and regulations of Spain. They sent official factors, first Spaniards and later Englishmen, to the Caribbean, and they shipped their cargoes on Spanish ships. Some of them, like Thorne and Barlow, invested in what became official Spanish voyages of exploration, and some, such as Patmer, served Spain in official capacities in order to gain a front seat to Atlantic exploration. These men were there at the beginning of transatlantic exploration and trade, and they played an active role in the Atlantic world. They simply did not do so under the English flag. They did so for personal gain, and in the end, brought their vast experience and knowledge back to England.

Chapter 7

The South Atlantic: Brazil, Africa and the Dawn of England's Transatlantic Trade

Thus far, the majority of the discussion of the Atlantic has focused on activities in the north Atlantic and Caribbean. This is traditionally thought of as the region of the British Atlantic, as the English focused their colonizing activities in North America. Indeed, from the earliest calls for colonization, the English thought of North America as their destiny. However, the birth of independent English transatlantic trade, not just through Spanish systems or undocumented trade in fish, took place in the South Atlantic. It was through the triangle trade, trade between west Africa and the Americas, first modeled by William Hawkins, that the English realized the profits to be had in the Atlantic and began regular trade there. It was through the profits of these voyages to West Africa and Brazil, that London's powerful merchant syndicates began to take interest in the Atlantic world. Finally, it was through the South Atlantic that John Hawkins and Francis Drake first rose to fame and, as tradition has it, began England's maritime activities in the Atlantic.

Both the historiography of the British Atlantic and West Africa argue that the slave trade first brought the English to West Africa.¹¹⁵¹ The vast majority of historians who mention any English activity in Africa during the sixteenth century focus on the impact John Hawkins had on the transatlantic slave trade.¹¹⁵² Robin Hallett mentioned William Hawkins in passing and then

¹¹⁵¹ Robert July, *A History of the African People*, 4th ed. (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc. 1992), 143. July further argues that England's interest in West Africa was "linked to the growth of their own plantation colonies in America." 143.

¹¹⁵² This is true of both the historiography of English maritime history and of exploration and discovery, as well as of the historiography of the transatlantic slave trade. See footnote 53 from the introduction.

skipped straight to the English involvement in the slave trade during the seventeenth century.¹¹⁵³ George Brooks mentioned John Hawkins' activities in 1567, but said nothing of the other voyages he took, nor did he mention the other English voyages, only the activity of French raiders along the West African coastline in the 1580s. He made no reference to earlier activity of the French and English along the coastline.¹¹⁵⁴ James Walvin briefly mentioned William Hawkins, Wyndham, Lock and Towerson by name, however, he marginalized their voyages, moving quickly to John Hawkins' slaving activities in the 1560s. Walvin gave credit to John Hawkins' slaving voyages for opening the Atlantic to British interests.¹¹⁵⁵ Christopher Ebert stated that the Portuguese monopoly was not breached until the arrival of the Dutch in the seventeenth century, thus ignoring the activities of the French and English in the sixteenth century.¹¹⁵⁶

James A. Williamson, on the other hand, discussed the West African voyages and acknowledged that, after the voyages of Towerson, the Africans along the western coast were "inclined to play off one competitor against the other," revealing the weakness of the Portuguese monopoly. He argued that the true significance of this activity was that it led the heroes of the Elizabethan age, such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to question Spain's monopoly over the New World.¹¹⁵⁷ Kenneth Andrews gave one of the few summaries of English activity in Africa to include most of the known voyages. However, he only offered a brief summary of the

¹¹⁵³ Robin Hallett, *The Penetration of Africa: European Exploration in North and West Africa to 1815*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

¹¹⁵⁴ George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 70-72.

¹¹⁵⁵ James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora*, (London: Cassell, 2000), 14.

¹¹⁵⁶ Christopher Ebert, "European Competition and Cooperation in Pre-Modern Globalization: "Portuguese" West and Central Africa, 1500-1600" *African Economic History*, Vol. 36 (2008), 53-78. pp. 53-4.

¹¹⁵⁷ J. A. Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), 306.

events as they unfolded and the impact they had on English diplomatic relations with Portugal and Spain. He concluded his discussion of West Africa by pointing out that the English failed to establish permanent trade in Africa in the sixteenth century, as they never established any coastal strongholds or forts, and lacked good harbors for trade.¹¹⁵⁸ Because of the lack of permanent structures, he argued, the English could not possibly sustain any lasting effect on the West African coast or England in the sixteenth century. This historiographical treatment gives the impression that the early voyages which preceded John Hawkins' notorious slaving expeditions were of little importance to the narrative of the British Atlantic. This chapter will correct this impression and demonstrate that these voyages are key to the birth of England's transatlantic activities.

Before discussing the West African voyages of the sixteenth century, it is beneficial to take a moment to discuss the difficulties associated with researching activities in these regions. There is a lack of primary documentation of African history for much of the region visited by Englishmen in the sixteenth century. African societies relied on oral tradition, not written histories, so they did not leave behind any written accounts. Those that do exist prior to European contact are Arabic, written by Muslim traders and travelers who came into contact with African kingdoms. These accounts are useful for the study of the areas near Arabic trade routes and offer some insight into the large, centralized nations of West Africa. However, as Walter Hawthorne pointed out, a major obstacle confronting those who wish to examine the histories of decentralized societies is the relative dearth of evidence due to the fact that "Arab and European contemporaries were most concerned with commerce, and most commerce flowed

¹¹⁵⁸ Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630*, (originally published 1984), (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 112.

to and was largely controlled by states. Hence, chroniclers wrote about states and left few accounts of the happenings in decentralized societies.”¹¹⁵⁹ Complicating matters for decentralized societies is the fact that many of their oral histories pertain only to an individual village with little to no contextualization of the events occurring in the region.¹¹⁶⁰ Edda L. Fields-Black stated that “the lack of documentation for coastal Guinea’s early pre-colonial history is not unusual when compared to other regions of West and West-Central Africa.”¹¹⁶¹ Because of this, the first written accounts of Guinea’s Rio Nunez region began in the late fifteenth century and were Portuguese, as the Arabs were uninterested in the coastal regions which did not participate directly with the trans-Saharan trade routes.¹¹⁶² Thus, a discussion of early sixteenth century expeditions to West Africa relies almost exclusively on the European perspective, as European narratives are the only written accounts of much of the coastal region visited by English traders during the era under study.

Of the European sources available, Hakluyt’s collected narrative presents perhaps the most exhaustive source on the coastal regions of West Africa. Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* (1600), contains numerous accounts of sixteenth century Africa, including accounts of the English voyages to the West African coast, as well as descriptions of the African landscape, wildlife, and cultures. His cumulative account, gathered from multiple sources and written by many different authors over a forty-year span, is one of the most complete and insightful contemporary sources yet found on Africa in the sixteenth century. A. Teixeira da Mota stated

¹¹⁵⁹ Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900*, Social History of Africa, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 4.

¹¹⁶⁰ Hawthorne, 4.

¹¹⁶¹ Edda L. Fields-Black, *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 11.

¹¹⁶² Fields-Black, 4.

that “extant accounts of the early English voyages provide the African historian with a modest amount of detailed evidence on the territory, an amount exceeding in certain respects that in the longer and larger Portuguese record.”¹¹⁶³ He further stated that it is largely from the fragmented documents regarding these voyages that “the African historian has to deduce the history of the contemporary activities of the African peoples on the coast” and that the English records seem to be the best and most complete, as the French seem almost non-existent, and the Portuguese records “concentrate on the problem of administering a permanent commercial base so far from home.”¹¹⁶⁴

In addition to this, J. U. J. Asiegbu stated that modern scholars are finding that the early European accounts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are “much more reliable and much closer to the truth about African peoples and their past histories than the later records compiled by other Europeans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”¹¹⁶⁵ He argued that this is due, in large part, to the fact that early European authors were so surprised by what they found in Africa, by the seeming lack of organized governments, by the strangeness of cultures, that they recorded their findings in a more direct and shocked manner, free of the disdain found in later writings.¹¹⁶⁶ Thus, a careful reading of the European primary sources regarding English activity in the West

¹¹⁶³ A. Teixeira da. Mota, And P.E.H. Hair. *East of Mina: Afro-European Relations on the Gold Coast in the 1550s and 1560s: An Essay with Supporting Documents*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 3.

¹¹⁶⁴ Mota and Hair, 3. This assertion is further illustrated by such discussions as the one over the origins of the Mane people in Sierra Leone. Walter Rodney, P.E.H. Hair, Linda Heywood and John Thornton all rely heavily on contemporary English and Portuguese sources to track the movements of the Mane. Walter Rodney, “A Reconsideration of the Mane Invasions of Sierra Leone,” *Journal of African History*, viii (1967), 219-46, pp. 221-33. P.E.H. Hair, “Protestants as Pirates, Slavers and Proto-missionaries: Sierra Leone 1568-1582” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 21. (Cambridge, 1970). 203-224. pp. 214-16. Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton. *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 12.

¹¹⁶⁵ J.U.J. Asiegbu, “The Turning Tide: Medieval West Africa and the Foreign Connections in the 15th and 16th Centuries,” *Fifteenth Century Studies*, (Jan. 1983), 22-32, 23.

¹¹⁶⁶ Asiegbu, 24-26.

African trade networks provides a glimpse into African history and provides much of the source material for this study.

William Hawkins and the Triangle Trade

Just as the North Atlantic expeditions can be traced back to enterprising merchants from Bristol, English trade in Africa can be traced back to at least 1481 and is likely connected to Bristolian merchants. In a letter from 1481, the King of Portugal, John II, wrote to Edward IV of England to inform him that two Englishmen, John Tintam and William Fabian, who were in the service of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, were preparing ships to sail to the coast of Guinea. John informed Edward that the Portuguese government had prohibited the Duke from dealing directly with Guinea and hoped that after being so informed of Portugal's monopoly on the trade to Guinea, Edward would "charge thorow all his kingdoms, that no man should arme or set fourth ships to Ginnee."¹¹⁶⁷ Further, John specifically requested that Edward order Tintam and Fabian to dissolve their fleet and avoid trade with Guinea. According to Hakluyt, Edward "condescended unto all that the ambassadors required of him," and sent them home with written proof thereof.¹¹⁶⁸ However, a letter from Edward IV to Pope Sixtus IV, dated February 27, 1481, reveals that Edward hoped to circumvent Portugal's claim to Africa and requested that the Pope sanction English trade there.¹¹⁶⁹ Since Hakluyt's account only records the year of the Portuguese

¹¹⁶⁷ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 123. Hakluyt's account is backed up by the chronicler Ruy de Pina's account in his *Chronica del Rey Dom João II*, ch. 7. An English translation can be found in John William Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1540-1560: Documents to Illustrate the Nature and Scope of Portuguese Enterprise in West Africa, the Abortive Attempt of Castilians to Create an Empire there, and the Early English voyages to Barbary and Guinea*, vol. II, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1942), Doc. 105, p. 295.

¹¹⁶⁸ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 124.

¹¹⁶⁹ Blake, doc. 107, p. 297; Heather Dalton, "'Into speyne to selle for slavys': English, Spanish, and Genoese Merchant Networks and their Involvement with the 'Cost of Gwynea' Trade before 1550," Green, Toby ed. *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa*, Proceedings of the British Academy no. 178 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 89-123, 113-4.

request, it is impossible to know which came first, Portugal's demand that the English stay out of the Guinea trade, or Edward's request that the Pope sanction English trade. Either way, Tintam and Fabian were able to make a second voyage in March 1482, and after dividing their gains with the Duke of Medina, they reportedly each pocketed one hundred thousand pounds.¹¹⁷⁰ In 1488, the Count of Penamacor went to England, where he joined forces with Englishmen for a merchant voyage to Guinea.¹¹⁷¹

It is likely that Hakluyt's record of the Englishmen's names lacks accuracy. He worked from a Portuguese source, which Hispanicized the names, and then translated the names back into English. Heather Dalton has suggested that William Fabian was actually William de la Founte of Bristol and that John Tintam was his Castilian business partner, Juan Tristán.¹¹⁷² If Dalton is correct in her assertion, then this connects the first recorded English expedition to the Guinea coast not just with Bristol, but also with the circle of merchants in which Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow grew up and became prominent members. William de la Founte was actively involved in Seville's slave trade in the 1490s, which gave him some connection to Africa. More importantly, he is believed to have been one of the financial backers of John Jay's westward voyage in search of the Isle of Brazil.¹¹⁷³ Unfortunately, like so many of the voyages to West Africa during the period under study, there are more questions left unanswered than answered by the sources available. The next recorded English expedition to the coast of Africa is not until 1530, and is connected to the merchants of Plymouth, not Bristol.

¹¹⁷⁰ Dalton, "Into speyne to selle for slavys," 114.

¹¹⁷¹ Blake, Doc. 108, p. 297. Unfortunately, Pina does not record who the Englishmen were who joined forces with the Count.

¹¹⁷² Dalton, "Into speyne to selle for slavys," 114.

¹¹⁷³ See chapter 1.

William Hawkins is often believed to be the first Englishman to initiate and carry out a trading expedition to West Africa. He was the first of three generations of Hawkins of prominence in the Tudor era, and the leading merchant of Plymouth by the 1530s. Like all dutiful merchants of wealth at the time, Hawkins performed his civic duty and served in Plymouth politics throughout his adult life. In the year 1524-25 he was appointed Receiver or Treasurer to the Corporation of Plymouth, while also serving as Collector of the subsidy for the county of Devon.¹¹⁷⁴ By 1527 he was already a fairly successful merchant, and when there was a minor town emergency, Hawkins was able to provide needed goods in large quantity for the defense of the town.¹¹⁷⁵ It is little wonder that an enterprising merchant of the southwest would begin to look into the wider Atlantic to find new markets and improve his profits. The English had regularly visited the fort of Santa Cruz, modern day Agadir in Morocco, from around 1470 to purchase cane sugar. The English also traded regularly with the Canary Islands and were well aware of the goods that came in from Cape Verde, as well as the fact that São Tomé was inhabited by Portuguese. Barlow made note of the population of São Tomé as being “well inhabited” in his geography, and although the Portuguese had claimed a monopoly on the Cape Verde Islands and São Tome, individual foreigners had been initially welcomed to help settle the

¹¹⁷⁴ William Hawkins (c. 1495-1555), may have served as ship’s master in the war of 1512, the first certain reference to him is in 1524, as a merchant in Plymouth. Over the next 30 years he became the richest merchant in Plymouth. He married Joan Trelawny of Cornwall and had two surviving sons, William Hawkins, (c. 1519) and John Hawkins (c. 1532), both of whom would go on to be leading members of Elizabeth’s court and navy. “HAWKINS, William (c.1495-1554/55), of Plymouth, Devon” *The History of Parliament*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/hawkins-william-1495-155455>. Accessed 1/10/2019. James A. Williamson, *Hawkins of Plymouth: A New History of Sir John Hawkins & of other members of his family prominent in Tudor England*. (1949), (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 18.

¹¹⁷⁵ An Italian ship sought refuge from French pirates in Plymouth’s harbor. The French ship followed the Italians into the harbor and threatened to attack the ship, which could do damage to the harbor and town in such close quarters. The townspeople intervened and saved the Italian ship. Soon afterwards Hawkins contributed to the defense of the town by selling the corporation two brass guns for £24 and 196 lb. of powder for 6d. a pound. Williamson, *Hawkins*, 18.

islands and participate in official trade.¹¹⁷⁶ The French were already trading illegally along the West African coast and finding rich rewards.¹¹⁷⁷ A prominent merchant such as William Hawkins would have had ready access to rumors, if not detailed knowledge, of this trade. By the end of Henry VIII's reign, customs records show that Hawkins exported cloth and tin to the ports of western Europe. He imported salt from Rochelle, wines from Bordeaux, Portugal, and Spain, olive oil, and soap, mostly likely from Spain, perhaps even from the factories formerly owned by Robert Thorne and his business partners. He was also known to deal in "Newland fish," and imported sugar and pepper, which he likely purchased from the Canaries and West Africa.¹¹⁷⁸

All that is known of Hawkins' first voyage to West Africa, is what Hakluyt records, which is not much. In 1530 Hawkins set out with his ship the *Paul* of 250 tons, to West Africa. Arriving off the coast of modern-day Liberia he made his way up the river Sestos. Here he was able to trade for ivory and "other commodities which that place yeeldeth."¹¹⁷⁹ As he was in the center of the Malagueta Coast, named such for the malagueta pepper which grew in the region, and he is known to have imported peppers, it is safe to assume that part of his cargo consisted of malagueta peppers. From Africa, Hawkins sailed west to Brazil where, according to Hakluyt, he "behaved himself so wisely ... that he grew into great familiarity and friendship with them."¹¹⁸⁰ Hakluyt did not record any additional details about Hawkins' voyage, nor did he offer any real

¹¹⁷⁶ BL Royal MS 18. B. xxviii, Barlow, f. 57v; Dalton, "Into speyne to selle for slavys," 97-98; Williamson, *Hawkins*, 16-7.

¹¹⁷⁷ Andrews, 60; Piertuigi Valsecchi, *Power and State Formation in West Africa: Appolonia*, Translated by Alian Cameron (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 61-2; John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 95-6, 119; Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa 1300-1589*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 207; Ryder states that the first real threat to Portuguese dominance in West Africa came from the French in the 1520s when the Dieppe merchant Jean Ango became the first French smuggler along the Guinea coast. A. F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897*, (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1969), 68-9, 74.

¹¹⁷⁸ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 24.

¹¹⁷⁹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 23-4.

¹¹⁸⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 24.

details of the voyage of 1531. Hawkins embarked on a similar voyage in 1531. After trading with the natives in Brazil, one of the local Kings agreed to return with Hawkins to England for the year. As a sign of good faith, Hawkins left behind a member of his crew, Martin Cockeram of Plymouth. Upon arriving back in England, Hawkins took his Brazilian guest to Henry VIII's court at Whitehall, where "the King and all the Nobilitie did not a little marvaile."¹¹⁸¹ The following year, after having impressed Henry and his court, the Brazilian chief returned with Hawkins to Brazil, just as Hawkins had promised at the outset of the voyage in 1531. Unfortunately, the chief did not survive the voyage. Falling ill "by change of aire and alteration of diet," he died at sea. The unexpected death of their royal guest would, understandably, create great consternation over their reception in Brazil and over the fate of Martin Cockeram. However, Hakluyt recorded that the Brazilians believed "the honest dealing of our men with their prince," returned Cockeram unharmed, and sent Hawkins home with a full cargo of "the commodities of the country."¹¹⁸²

The details Hakluyt offered of these voyages are frustratingly sparse, and can leave the reader with more questions than answers. It is left to the educated guess to try to fill out the missing aspects of these voyages. For instance, how did Hawkins navigate the West African coast and safely find his way to an area of the Brazilian coast inhabited with villagers willing to trade with Europeans? To attempt to answer these questions, it is important to consider the activities of the French at this time. The French were well known along the Brazilian coast, and had successfully distinguished themselves from the Portuguese, to the point that many of the villages preferred to trade with the French over the Portuguese. The Portuguese retaliated in

¹¹⁸¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 24.

¹¹⁸² Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 24-5.

1526-7, ravaging any village known to have willingly traded with the French. As a result, the Portuguese faced open hostility along the coast, while the French, and apparently the English, were welcomed as trade partners.¹¹⁸³ It is entirely likely that Hawkins did not “invent” the triangle trade, which became a defining feature of the British Atlantic after the transatlantic slave trade took hold of the Atlantic economy. On December 22, 1538, responding to pressure from Portugal, Francis I of France issued a mandate to the president of parliament of Rouen and others forbidding French subjects from sailing to Brazil or Malagueta.¹¹⁸⁴ Decrees such as this rarely occurred after one or two complaints. Rather, they were normally issued when the accumulation of complaints had reached a level that they could no longer be ignored. Thus, it is likely that the French had already perfected a triangular trade between West Africa and Brazil, and that Hawkins was simply following their lead. With this in mind, and remembering how common it was for the English to sail with a Portuguese pilot, it is very likely that Hawkins sailed with either a French or Portuguese pilot who was familiar with the Malagueta Coast and Brazil.

It is important to note that the triangle trade, defined as European trade first to Africa and then the Americas, did not start with the transatlantic slave trade, or with John Hawkins in the 1560s. Decades before John became the first Englishman to transport enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas, his father, William, traded for ivory and other “commodities of the region” before sailing to Brazil, where he again traded with the native populations for local

¹¹⁸³ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 27-8. For a discussion of French trade in Brazil see João Capistrano de Abreu and Arthur Brakel, *Chapters of Brazil's Colonial History 1500-1800*, Library of Latin America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30-35. The English historiography of French activity in the South Atlantic during the time period discussed in this chapter is frustratingly sparse. The French are often referenced as an aside or briefly considered along the periphery of studies done on the history of Portuguese Brazil or West Africa. A more detailed example of this can be seen with Ryder's discussion of the early French activity in West Africa, however, he does not discuss the triangle trade taking place, only the implications for Portuguese policy in West Africa. Ryder, 68-9, 74. There is some historiography in French and Portuguese, however, much more English scholarship is needed on this activity.

¹¹⁸⁴ TNA 1/140 f. 148.

products and brazil wood, sailing what would be known as the triangle trade route in the next century. Hawkins did not invent this route; he followed in the footsteps of the French. For a brief moment, at the dawn of European transatlantic activity, this triangular pattern did not revolve around slaves. Rather, after several decades of European trade in Africa and the Americas, John Hawkins became the first Englishman to involve slavery in this triangular trade pattern, and in doing so, set the precedence for what became the defining feature of the British Atlantic in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Hawkins made three transatlantic voyages three years in a row. However, he did not personally return to Brazil in 1533, because he became Mayor of Plymouth in 1532, and held the post for a year.¹¹⁸⁵ Hawkins disappears from the records for the following two and a half years. It is entirely possible that he took to the seas again and personally went to Brazil. The fact that he did continue to trade through Africa to Brazil is reflected in a letter he sent to Thomas Cromwell in 1536. In the letter, he stated that he had already ventured ships and goods to seek the commodities of the strange countries and had safe return. However, one of his pilots had recently “miscarried by the way,” meaning that he had lost the ship at sea. Hawkins then laid out his plans for extending his transatlantic business and asked Cromwell to forward his request to the King for a loan of £2,000 and four “brass guns, and a last of powder.” Hawkins stated that the funds would be used to operate three or four ships for seven years in the transatlantic trade.¹¹⁸⁶ As there is no indication of a lost ship in Hakluyt’s accounts of the three voyages, and Hakluyt stated that Hawkins set out with the *Paul*, which survived for many years, it is clear that Hawkins continued to send ships to Brazil even if he could not go himself. Furthermore, while

¹¹⁸⁵ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 29; List of Past Mayors, <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/aboutcouncil/lordmayor/listpastlordmayors> accessed 1/10/2019.

¹¹⁸⁶ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 30.

the custom books for this period are spotty, there are enough surviving records to show that there was a considerable export of brazilwood from the southwest ports to the Mediterranean in the 1530s. One of the exporters was Nicholas Thorne of Bristol, whose ship the *Savior* regularly traded in the Mediterranean.¹¹⁸⁷ The fact that the *Saviour* sailed under Cromwell's flag makes Hawkins' proposal much more reasonable. If Cromwell was already reaping financial benefits from the Brazil trade, he more than likely would take Hawkins' proposal seriously.

Hawkins was unable to personally cross the Atlantic again, finding himself caught up in several court cases and matters of civic duty for the rest of the decade. In 1535 Hawkins was involved in a court case with Peter Grisling. The case concerned a debt Grisling owed in the French port, La Rochelle. Hawkins discovered and purchased this debt while doing business there. Upon his return to Plymouth, he demanded that Grisling repay the debt. When Grisling offered to repay the debt in kind with cloth, Hawkins demanded above and beyond the amount Grisling felt just. Grisling then submitted his case to John Elyot, the Mayor of Plymouth. While Elyot ruled in Grisling's favor, the case does reveal a deeper animosity between Hawkins and Grisling. During the case, Hawkins accused Grisling of taking one of his ships and selling it for far less than it was worth. Unfortunately, the document is too badly damaged for the details regarding the ruling on this accusation to be known.¹¹⁸⁸

During James Horsewell's tenure as mayor in 1535-6, Hawkins once again became involved in proceedings against Grisling, along with Horsewell and John Elyot. Elyot, Horsewell, and Hawkins, all of whom were shipowners and merchants, brought suit against Grisling, who served as searcher of the port (Chief Customs Officer), accusing him of unfair

¹¹⁸⁷ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 31.

¹¹⁸⁸ TNA, C 1/806/10-13.

dealings. The case was taken before the Star Chamber and all four men were called to London to appear before the Privy Council.¹¹⁸⁹ How the Privy Council ruled in the matter is not recorded. However, all four men returned to Plymouth and continued their daily activities. Hawkins found himself involved in another court case with Horsewell and Elyot in 1539, this time regarding money left in the will of Francis Bane.¹¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the records for this case are incomplete, offering little insight into the details of the case. Once again, in 1545, Hawkins found himself tied up in a court case, this time involving the debts of John Ilcom, who was subsequently sent to the jail in Exeter.¹¹⁹¹ During the final years of his life, Hawkins again appeared in the courts, this time over a land dispute regarding deeds that Hawkins had purchased and thought would be inheritable by his sons. While the ruling of the case is unknown, it appears that Hawkins lost the case, for he is only known to have owned one landed property.¹¹⁹²

Between court cases Hawkins remained active in the city of Plymouth. He was once again elected mayor for the year 1538-1539.¹¹⁹³ In 1539 Horsewell and Hawkins were both chosen to represent Plymouth in Parliament, serving on the Parliament which passed the Act of the Six Articles, thus witnessing the end of the monasteries in England.¹¹⁹⁴ Hawkins remained a municipal leader for the rest of his life and rose in prominence, becoming the wealthiest merchant in Plymouth. As is discussed in greater detail below, Hawkins put his merchant enterprises on hold during the war with France to focus on the lucrative business of privateering. In 1547 he was re-elected to Parliament. On his last appearance in the House, during the first

¹¹⁸⁹ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 21-22.

¹¹⁹⁰ TNA, STAC 2/34/188.

¹¹⁹¹ TNA, STAC 3/10/5.

¹¹⁹² TNA, C 1/1387/44-49; "HAWKINS, William," *The History of Parliament*.

¹¹⁹³ List of Past Mayors, <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/aboutcouncil/lordmayor/listpastlordmayors> accessed 1/10/2019.

¹¹⁹⁴ "HAWKINS, William (c.1495-1554/55), of Plymouth, Devon" *The History of Parliament*.

Marian Parliament in 1553, he was counted as one of those who “stood for the true religion,” and shortly after the dissolution of Parliament, the city of Plymouth began to prepare to resist Philip of Spain if he chose to land there.¹¹⁹⁵ The exact date of Hawkins’ death is unknown. There is no extant will, only a deed dated February 8, 1555 which refers to his recent death.¹¹⁹⁶

Despite the fact that Hawkins was never able to personally cross the Atlantic again, he did continue his transatlantic trade. The customs records for Plymouth are missing for most of the 1530s, so it is impossible to prove through these records that Hawkins continued his transatlantic trade throughout this decade. However, there are books for the years 1539-40 and 1540-41 (each book runs from September-September), and these books prove that Hawkins sent out a transatlantic expedition in 1540. According to the customs records, the *Paul* left Plymouth on February 25, 1540 with John Landy serving as master laden. The *Paul* carried a cargo that consisted of 940 hatchets, 940 combs, 375 knives, 5cwt copper and 5cwt lead made into manelios or arm-rings, 10 cwt copper and 10 cwt lead in the lump, three pieces of woolen cloth, and nineteen dozen nightcaps, all of which belonged to Hawkins. The cargo was valued at £23 15s. 0d., a sum which James A. Williamson pointed out was rather low, suggesting that Hawkins had made a deal with the customs officials.¹¹⁹⁷ The *Paul* re-entered Plymouth on October 20 after an eight-month voyage. Her cargo consisted of a dozen tusks of ivory from Africa and 92 tons of brazilwood. The entire cargo was valued by the customs official at £615, for which a duty of £30 15s. was paid. There is no mention of pepper, but the *Paul* was a ship of 250 tons, assuming it is the same *Paul* from Hakluyt’s account of the 1530-32 voyages, and only reported 92 tons of brazilwood and a dozen tusks of ivory, making it very likely that the ship held a large

¹¹⁹⁵ “HAWKINS, William (c.1495-1554/55), of Plymouth, Devon” The History of Parliament.

¹¹⁹⁶ “HAWKINS, William (c.1495-1554/55), of Plymouth, Devon” The History of Parliament.

¹¹⁹⁷ Blake, Doc. 110, p. 300; Williamson, *Hawkins*, 32.

quantity of pepper which went unrecorded.¹¹⁹⁸ It is also likely that there was a certain amount of gold aboard that also went unrecorded, given that the *Paul* had been to West Africa.¹¹⁹⁹ These records prove that Hawkins had a lucrative transatlantic trade in 1540. Taking into consideration the letter to Cromwell, it is almost certain that Hawkins had sent out a yearly expedition into the south Atlantic since his first expedition in 1530. If the customs records of 1540 are any indication of his ability to manipulate customs officials to his benefit, it is little wonder that he became the wealthiest merchant in Plymouth.

Hawkins' profits from the south Atlantic quickly encouraged other merchants from the southern ports to venture into what became known as "the Brazil trade." Hakluyt recorded that "this commodious and gainfull voyage to Brasil" was frequented by Robert Reneger, Thomas Borey and "divers other substantial and wealthie marchants of Southampton" by 1540.¹²⁰⁰ In addition to these merchants, who appear to have been interested solely in trading along the coast in a manner somewhat similar to Hawkins, Hakluyt recorded that Pudsey of Southampton, "a man of good skill and resolution in marine causes" went to Baya de todos los Santos, which was then the principal town in Brazil and the seat of the Portuguese viceroy, and that he then traveled not far from the city and built a fort there.¹²⁰¹ Hakluyt did not offer any additional details regarding Pudsey or his fort, once again leaving the reader with more questions than answers regarding the Brazil trade. The trade apparently included Guinea, just as Hawkins, and possibly the French before him, had modeled. All English trade to Brazil, however, appears to have been abandoned with the start of the war with France.

¹¹⁹⁸ Both James A. Williamson and John William Blake assert that it was indeed the same ship. Williamson, *Hawkins*, 32-33; Blake, 269-70.

¹¹⁹⁹ Blake, Doc. 111, p. 301; Williamson, *Hawkins*, 33.

¹²⁰⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 25.

¹²⁰¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. XI, p. 25.

The *Barbara*

The *Barbara* of London was owned by John Chaundler, John Preston, and Richard Glasyer. It departed Portsmouth on Wednesday, March 7, 1540 under the captaincy of John Phillips, with a crew of 100 men, 12 of whom were French, including the pilot, John Nycoll of Dieppe, and George Mon, John Wardell, Thomas Harryson, John-a-Wood, and John Brydges, who related the story of the *Barbara* to the courts.¹²⁰² The presence of such a large number of Frenchmen onboard the *Barbara* illustrates the transnational space in which many of the English merchants operated. They set sail with a trading commission from the mayor of Portsmouth. It is unclear whether they intended to sail first to Africa and then Brazil. When they were off of Cape St. Vincent, Portugal, they came upon a group of twenty ships, one of which was a barque of Biscay. Despite being severely outnumbered, the crew managed to capture the barque, turning over her crew to a Portuguese vessel which happened to be passing by. The *Barbara* then exchanged shots with a Spanish ship after leaving St. Vincent, but failed to take her. However, off of Cape Alquer they captured a Spanish caravel carrying a reported 5,000 ducats of gold, amber and other merchandise. The English took the gold and amber before making it to the Canaries and then the Cape Verde Islands where they turned toward Brazil.¹²⁰³ Thus, from the outset, this voyage was markedly different from the other English voyages to Brazil, pirating its way across the Atlantic rather than focusing on trade.

The *Barbara* first made landfall in Brazil at Cape San Roque. After trading with the natives, they realized that they were off course and set off again to “fetche the country where the

¹²⁰² R. G. Marsden, “The Voyage of the ‘Barbara’, of London, to Brazil in 1540,” *English Historical Review*, Jan. 1909, 96-100, 96-7. For a full transcription of the witness’s testimony see R.G. Marsden, ed. “Voyage of the Barbara to Brazil, A.D. 1540,” in *Naval Miscellany*, 2 (London: 1912), 3-66.

¹²⁰³ Marsden, “Voyage,” 12-14; Connell-Smith, 128.

brasell woode growethe.” Unfortunately for Phillips and his crew, it appears that his French pilot was not as familiar with the region as he presumably led the English to think. Not only had he landed the ship too far north, near the northeast tip of Brazil, but to fix his error, instead of sailing south, they continued up the coast toward modern day Guiana, known as the Cannibal Coast, as the area was known for its cannibalistic tribes, not for brazilwood.¹²⁰⁴ The *Barbara* ran afoul of rocks as she slowly made her way along the coast and was forced to make landfall for several days as her hull was repaired. The barque which had been captured off the coast of Portugal had sailed ahead to scout the coastline and disappeared for twelve days. Despite the delay, the *Barbara* eventually made its way to the Cannibal Coast where the crew traded with natives for roughly a month, for “cotton wolle, popynjaves, monckeyes, and dyvers other straunge beastses of that country.”¹²⁰⁵

While trading, a “servaunte of Monsher Rochepottes, a Frenchman, and with him a Portuguese,” boarded the vessel and demanded that the English leave the area immediately.¹²⁰⁶ The English ignored the demand, and soon after the Frenchman and the Portuguese were caught trying to cut some of the *Barbara*’s cables. At this point, the twelve Frenchmen on Phillip’s crew abandoned the ship, taking most of its wares. John Podd and fifteen of the crew chased after the Frenchmen. However, none of them returned and they were presumed eaten by cannibals. At the same time, the storehouse which had been set up on the beach was attacked and burned, destroying nearly all the cotton in it. In an ensuing skirmish on the beach, many of the *Barbara*’s crew were killed or wounded. Finding themselves lacking hands and missing much of their cargo, the *Barbara* sailed toward Trinidad, passing between it and the mainland.

¹²⁰⁴ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 25; Marsden, “Voyage,” 14-16.

¹²⁰⁵ Marsden, “Voyage,” 16-17.

¹²⁰⁶ Marsden, “Voyage,” 17

By the time they reached Trinidad, the vessel had begun to leak excessively, so the crew turned toward Santo Domingo where they captured a Seville ship laden with sugar and hides.

Exchanging the two ships, the English dumped most of the sugar overboard and rechristened the Spanish ship the *Barbara* and, taking the Spanish master and pilot with them, they sailed for home, arriving in England eleven weeks later, in August 1540, with only thirteen crewmen fit for duty.¹²⁰⁷

The piratical actions of the *Barbara* elicited complaints from Portugal and Spain almost immediately, and English authorities acted promptly. 1540 was not a good year for the English to alienate Spain, and by extension Charles V. On January 2, 1541, Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador in England, wrote to Charles that the pirates had been taken into custody and were going to be executed. To ensure that similar acts of piracy did not occur again, Chapuys promised to try to have it enacted that no armed ship could sail for Brazil without giving security that they would not attack the Emperor's ships.¹²⁰⁸ While the transcripts for the questioning of the crew members have been recovered, the ruling of the court on the issue has not. While Chapuys' letter may or may not give an accurate account of the punishment for the pirates, it does reveal something very interesting. The fact that he felt the need to urge the English government to enact a new policy that would ban arms on ships headed towards Brazil indicates that the English were sailing to Brazil in a significant enough number that the Imperial government was becoming nervous. It also reveals that they knew the English would continue to sail to Brazil. Chapuys does not give any indication that he thought the trade could be curbed. His only recourse was to ban weapons or demand guarantees for good behavior. He had little to

¹²⁰⁷ Marsden, "Voyage," 17-22.

¹²⁰⁸ L&P, 1540-41, vol. 16, 211.

worry about, for the English would soon turn their attention from Brazilian trade to the war with France and the wealth to be won by privateering.

The 1540s, War with France and Turn to Piracy

Many of England's leading merchants, including Hawkins, found piracy more profitable than trade during the 1540s and in the following years, as war continued sporadically. Soon after declaring war on France in 1543, Henry authorized government officials throughout England to begin issuing commissions to mariners to harass the enemy. In September, 1544, Hawkins, Horsewell, and John Elyot were empowered to annoy the French at sea with four, six, or eight barques at their own expense and were given the authority to impress mariners, gunners, victuals, and artillery as needed.¹²⁰⁹ Likewise, Robert Reneger abandoned his lucrative trade with Brazil for the more profitable act of privateering.¹²¹⁰ Even Richard Hore captained one of Sir Thomas Seymour's ships as a privateer in 1546.¹²¹¹ Scotland soon allied with France, giving the English two enemies in the Channel. Privateering fever quickly swept through the major ports of England, and despite the fact that privateers were to restrict their activities in 1544 to Scottish and French ships, the English soon began to capture Spanish ships. Conditions had worsened considerably for Imperial subjects in the Channel after Charles signed the Peace of Crépy towards the end of 1544, ending hostilities with France, without Henry's knowledge. The peace treaty declared all subjects of the Emperor to be neutral in the conflict, and Spanish merchants seized the opportunity to reopen trade with France. Knowing this, and seeing a chance to

¹²⁰⁹ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 270. An interesting Chancery Court case in Devon illustrates Hawkins' power to requisition goods to feed his sailors. George Colsyll and Alexander Besse brought charges against Thomas Clowter and William Hawkins for seizing wheat from the ship *Elizabeth* of Ash, stating that it was needed for biscuits for the King's fleet. TNA C 1/1111/84-85.

¹²¹⁰ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 270-2; John C. Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2009), 46.

¹²¹¹ L&P vol. 21 part I, 1556, p. 519.

increase their profits, the English privateers turned their attention to Spanish and Flemish shipping, accusing the captains of carrying French goods.¹²¹² By the end of 1544, the Spanish found it so dangerous to sail in the Channel that on January 5, 1545, the Emperor was forced to retaliate against the English and ordered the arrest of persons, property and ships of English subjects in the Low Countries.¹²¹³

Throughout 1545, the Privy Council received complaints from Spanish and Flemish officials and merchants who claimed their goods had been unduly taken by privateers. Henry's court took these complaints seriously and followed up on a number of them. Even just a cursory reading of the Acts of the Privy Council for the years 1545-6 reveals that the Council spent a considerable amount of time looking into accusations of piracy and, more often than not, ruling against the English privateers.¹²¹⁴ A notable example of this was William Hawkins.

On May 31, 1545 Hawkins stood before the Privy Council at Greenwich to answer to the charges that he had wrongfully captured a ship belonging to a Spaniard. The case had been brought to the Council's attention by the factor of the Spaniard, Juan de Quintanadeon, who claimed that Hawkins had unlawfully taken his ship and wares. Hawkins declared that he could prove that the ship had falsified its papers and packing, and that in reality it carried French goods. After hearing his testimony, the Council agreed that the best way to proceed was to remit the case to the Admiralty Court and send Hawkins and Wyndham, who had taken an additional ship, to the Emperor's Ambassador to give a full statement.¹²¹⁵ On July 27, 1545, the Council received word that Hawkins and the Mayor of Plymouth had sold the goods in question without a

¹²¹² Connell-Smith, 133-4; Scarisbrick, 440-449; Appleby, 44-46.

¹²¹³ Connell-Smith, 133.

¹²¹⁴ See for example the entry for July 28, 1545 in which the Council dealt with five separate cases of piracy. *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1542-7, 217-21.

¹²¹⁵ *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1542-7, pp. 167, 176-7; L&P vol. 21, part 1, 1545, 471.

final verdict being handed down on the contested case. Both men were ordered to appear before the Council, and on July 28, they appeared at Portsmouth where the Council declared that they should make full restitution for the goods and “for his contempt of the Cownselles letters and the slacke accomplishing of the same,” Hawkins was sent to prison until he made full restitution for the goods.¹²¹⁶ This was not the last time that Hawkins found himself in trouble with the Council for acts of piracy. He was again ordered to appear before the Council in 1546, when one of his ships, the *Mary Figge*, was accused of unlawfully taking Flemish goods.¹²¹⁷

It is probable that William Hawkins and Thomas Wyndham knew each other at this time, and it has been claimed that the two were good friends.¹²¹⁸ Both had appeared before the Council to answer for charges of piracy on May 31, 1545, and both were associated with the case involving the *Mary Figge* in 1546. The ship was owned by Hawkins in partnership with John Elyot, Richard Hoper, Thomas Crowner, “and others.” Wyndham became involved in the case due to the unlawful sale of wines which had been taken by the *Mary Figge*. This case involved multiple meetings of the Privy Council as they worked to straighten out who was responsible for the restitution of the sold goods. In the end, both the Mayor of Plymouth and the Mayor of Bristol became involved, and the owners of the *Mary Figge*, including Hawkins and Elyot, as well as Wyndham were all ordered to see to it that full restitution was made.¹²¹⁹ There was a level of cooperation and support among the English privateers at the time, and chances are good that if Hawkins and Wyndham were involved in one case together that made it to the Privy Council’s attention, then they were involved in others that did not make it all the way up the

¹²¹⁶ *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1542-7, 220-21.

¹²¹⁷ *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1542-7, 543-4.

¹²¹⁸ Tong, 222; Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 271; Williamson, *Hawkins*, 35-6; Connell-Smith, 136.

¹²¹⁹ BL Add. Ms. 5476 ff. 108, 201, 204, 222, 256, 283, 284.

court system. As both men operated in close circles at the time, it is likely they had at least a passing acquaintance. This leads to the interesting prospect of what information Hawkins might have passed on to the man who would lead the first English expedition all the way down the West African coast to Benin.¹²²⁰

While the Council was more than willing to rule against English privateers and placated the Imperial Ambassador on more than one occasion, there was one notable exception that must be discussed. This was the case of Robert Reneger. Reneger had been one of the first English captains to be granted letters of marque against the French, receiving them as early as 1543, before war was officially declared. He had a personal grievance with France due to the fact that some of his goods had been seized earlier, and he fully committed himself to privateering.¹²²¹ On March 1, 1545 Reneger captured the Spanish ship, the *San Salvador*, off Cape St. Vincent. The *San Salvador* was not an ordinary merchant vessel; it was a Spanish treasure ship from Santo Domingo carrying a shipment of Imperial gold from the Indies. With this act, Reneger became the first Englishman to capture a Spanish treasure ship from the West Indies. In a letter from Charles V to Francisco de los Cobos, dated August 2, 1545, Charles stated that the English ambassador in Worms admitted that Reneger took the goods out of the *San Salvador* as compensation for a ship taken from him by the Emperor's subjects.¹²²² Reneger had taken the opportunity presented by the war with France to exact his own private revenge on Spain. He was not alone in this.

¹²²⁰ James A. Williamson argues that the two men worked together during the war years as privateers and that it is most likely that Hawkins shared information with him regarding the West African Coast. Unfortunately, much of this is based on tantalizing circumstantial evidence. Williamson, *Hawkins*, 35-6.

¹²²¹ Connell-Smith, 138-40.

¹²²² L&P vol. 20: part II: 1545, 9.

Rather than being arrested, as Hawkins had been, Reneger was received as a hero in England. Unlike Hawkins and Wyndham, Reneger did not try to make a fast profit from the capture. Instead, he took the treasure to the Tower, where he deposited the majority of the gold with Henry's government. In doing this, Reneger surrendered a portion of the prize to the Crown. Phillip of Spain reacted swiftly to Reneger's act, and without approaching Henry's government or waiting to see how they would react to Reneger's actions, ordered the arrest of all English ships and property in Andalusia as a reprisal.¹²²³ This began a back and forth between England and the Holy Roman Empire that signified the end of friendly relations between Charles and Henry. Francois Van der Delft, the Imperial ambassador to London, wrote to Charles V on June 12, 1545 stating that he had interviewed both Reneger and Wyndham regarding separate acts of piracy and both were "very insolent."¹²²⁴ He had argued with the Council several times in an attempt to have the Indies gold returned, however, the Council told him that they could not be expected to act quickly in these matters when their citizens faced seizure of their goods in Flanders and Spain. He then asked them how they could consider these seizures so bad when "they could excuse Captain Reneg[er], who had outraged all treaties and rights, and yet, instead of being punished like a pirate, was treated like a hero."¹²²⁵ Van der Delft went on to state that his conclusion after a frustrating week was that "the English mean to seize everything they meet at sea as French and then refer claimants to the Admiralty."¹²²⁶ This indeed does appear to have been the case.

¹²²³ Connell-Smith, 199-200.

¹²²⁴ L&P vol. 20, part I, 1545, 454.

¹²²⁵ L&P vol. 20, part I, 1545, 454-5.

¹²²⁶ L&P vol. 20, part I, 1545, 455. For further details regarding Reneger's capture see TNA SP 1/203 f. 115; L&P vol 20 part I 1545 pp. 193, 278, 604; vol. 20, part II 1545, 9, 366; Hume, *Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers*, Doc. 46, 93; Doc. 62, pp. 117-19; Doc. 97, pp. 175-77.

Charles' reaction to Reneger's feat had immediate and far-reaching effects on England's perception of the seas. The number of English attacks on Spanish shipping and the number of Englishmen taking to the seas as privateers and pirates quickly rose. While the arrest of English property in Andalusia served as an excuse for privateers like Reneger, Hawkins, and Wyndham to commit bolder and more outrageous acts of piracy, it also cut off a significant source of income for many merchants who had hoped to stay out of the fray, and men such as William Aphowell and John Cappes of Bristol abandoned their stalled trade in Spain to turn to privateering. These men were likely encouraged by the fact that Reneger was hailed as a hero, not sitting in a cell in the Tower. By the end of 1546 reports indicate that the majority of Spanish, Portuguese, and Flemish ships coming from the south were robbed by English pirates, and diplomatic correspondences between England and the continent were full of complaints and efforts to seek redress.¹²²⁷

Despite the Council's willingness to investigate and rule against prominent men such as Hawkins and Wyndham, the deprivations continued in the Channel and the western coast of the Iberian Peninsula. By the time Edward VI inherited the throne from his father in January 1547, the protracted disputes concerning the spoil of the Emperor's subjects and the persistent lawlessness of the privateers was one of the most pressing problems facing the regency. In September 1547, the Privy Council attempted to placate Charles and regulate the activities of English ships by passing several measures. First, they prohibited the sending out of vessels without special license from the Lord Admiral. Second, owners were required to take out bonds

¹²²⁷ TNA SP 1/203 f. 115; SP 1/202 f. 56, 77, 105; SP 1/204 f. 136; BL Add. Ms. 5476 ff. 108, 201, 204, 218, 222, 253, 256; L&P vol 20 part I 1545, p. 455-6; vol. 21 part I 463; *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1542-7 pp. 210-11, 220-21, 431-38, 441-47, 543-4. These are just a few of the telling examples. Both Connell-Smith and Appleby argue that the Reneger case and its fallout served as a turning point in England's maritime affairs and that after this point the English were much more brazen in their attacks on Spanish shipping. Connell-Smith, 152-56, 171-2, 199-200; Appleby, 47-8.

for the good behavior of their ships. Local officials were to take out similar bonds from the owners of all vessels engaged in trading and other voyages. Finally, a record was to be kept of all vessels that were licensed to go to sea, and a copy sent to the Council. There is little indication that these new restrictions were followed.¹²²⁸

In an additional gesture of goodwill, toward the end of 1547, the plundered treasure which Reneger had placed in the Tower was returned to Spain. However, Reneger was now a very important member of the merchant community of Southampton, and instead of being forced to repay any of the treasure he had kept, he was awarded £250 by the crown to cover the costs of resolving the dispute. In addition, on November 13, 1547, Thomas Wyndham, who had just been appointed Vice-Admiral of the King's ships on the coast of Scotland, was sent to Scotland where he would be occupied with the Scots and, possibly not cause as much trouble in the Channel. This appears to have worked, for there was a marked drop in the number of cases of piracy involving Wyndham.¹²²⁹

In August 1549, privateering picked up once again, in a manner similar to the last years of the Henrician era. The majority of those active in privateering at this point came from the south-west, and the cases involved a large number of ships from ports such as Dartmouth, Exmouth, and Plymouth. Once again, merchants who were actively involved in piracy during Henry's reign took to the seas as privateers, including Elyot. Some other noteworthy men involved in this wave of privateering were Thomas Winter, whose family was closely involved in the voyages of John Hawkins and Francis Drake, and Gregory Cary, a local Admiralty official

¹²²⁸ Appleby, 56-7.

¹²²⁹ TNA SP 15/1 ff. 125, 134; SP 50/2 f. 139.

who was involved in several ventures with Walter Raleigh.¹²³⁰ Edward's government was able to focus much of this maritime aggression against the French and Scots during the last part of his reign. However, when Mary became queen in 1553, her government took vigorous action against piracy. This sudden shift in maritime policy and the diplomatic and religious interests of Mary's government pushed many prominent families including the Strangeways, Tremaynes, Staffords, Horseys, Carews, Killigrews, and Cobhams to take to the seas in a markedly anti-Spanish movement.¹²³¹ The most notorious of these families, at this time, was the Killigrews.

In December 1553, rumors reported that an English adventurer, perhaps one of the Killigrews, had offered to serve the King of France, Henry II, with eight or nine ships which were to be used to attack Spanish vessels. Carew, Strangeway, Nicholas Tremayne, Christopher Ashton, Henry Dudley and the Horsey brothers were quickly implicated in the rumors as well. By 1556 this group of exiles, who had indeed received patronage from the King of France, were able to send out a small fleet of at least six ships to attack Spanish shipping. Assisting in the organization of this fleet was Jean Ribault.¹²³² In his deposition of 1556, Peter Killigrew stated that he and his brother intended to take two ships with 180 men "of all nations" to sea. They intended to try their hand at the transatlantic trade, going first to Guinea and then to Peru. However, they did not plan on departing France with trade goods, intending instead to take a prize or two on their way to Africa which they would use as trade.¹²³³ The willingness of these men to align themselves with France, who had been England's enemy for most of the sixteenth century, in order to oppose Mary and Spain, illustrates the turning tide among England's

¹²³⁰ Appleby, 58; John Cummins, *Francis Drake: The Lives of a Hero*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 45, 69;

¹²³¹ Appleby, 66-7; James Anthony Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 14.

¹²³² TNA SP 11/7 f. 106; SP 11/9 ff. 43, 45, 51, 68; SP 69/9 f. 83; Appleby 68-9, Loads, *John Dudley*, 274, 76-7.

¹²³³ TNA SP 11/9 f. 51.

merchant families. Most of the men mentioned thus far in the chapter identified as Protestant by the end of their lives and showed no hesitation in targeting Spanish shipping. The activities of these men, many of whom had served during Henry VIII's last war with France, set the stage for the privateers of the Elizabethan era who are credited with opening the Atlantic world. Perhaps more importantly for this discussion, these men illustrate the shift among English merchants from respecting Spain's claims to maritime trade, to a flagrant disregard for Spanish rights at sea. This disregard would extend to the claims of the Catholic king of Portugal as well, as both monarchs based their claims on decisions issued by the Pope.

Thomas Wyndham and the reopening of West African Trade

In 1551, after nearly a decade of warfare, English merchants returned once again to Africa to expand their trade. This was a good time to do so. While England had been busy fighting France and pillaging European shipping in the Channel and along the Iberian coast, Portugal had effectively lost control of Morocco. In the 1540s the Saadians had risen to power in what is now Morocco and forced the Portuguese out of Agadir, Safi, and Azemmour, uniting Morocco under the rule of Muhammad al-Shaikh, who effectively ruled all of Morocco by 1551, except for the ports of Tangier, Ceuta, and Mazagan, which remained in Portuguese hands.¹²³⁴ Thus, Portugal's control over the trade in the region had ended, and the region opened for foreigners to establish new trade routes. English merchants who were already familiar with the Iberian trade would have had some knowledge of the trade to Morocco and could easily extend

¹²³⁴ Andrews, 101; Basil Davidson, *West Africa before the Colonial Era; A History to 1850*, (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 178-79.; M. El Fasi, "Morocco," Ogot, B.A., ed., *Africa From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, General History of Africa, vol. V. (Oxford: UNESCO, 1992), pp. 200-232, 212-15.

their business there, since English cloth sold well for sugar, an increasingly valued commodity in England.¹²³⁵

The first recorded venture to return to Africa set sail in 1551 under the command of Thomas Wyndham. Wyndham had served in Henry's navy for the majority of his adult life, rising to the rank of "Master of the Ordnance in the King's Ships" under Henry VIII and being appointed Vice-Admiral of the fleet sent by Somerset to the east coast of Scotland under Edward VI in 1547.¹²³⁶ During his time in the navy, Wyndham combined his military service with piracy and found time for legitimate trade. In 1550, Wyndham had left the Royal Navy and turned to trade and exploration.¹²³⁷ Wyndham's first expedition as a private merchant and explorer was partially backed by his uncle, Sir John Luttrell, and Sebastian Cabot. It is possible that other voyages had been made to the Barbary coast two or three years before this expedition, however, Wyndham's voyage is the first with extant records.¹²³⁸

Not much is known of the first voyage to the Barbary Coast in 1551. The voyage appears to have been organized by Cabot with Sir John Luttrell, Wyndham's uncle and part owner of the *Lion*. Luttrell had welcomed John Rastell the younger on his return from the Hore expedition and likely had some interest in the voyage. Other backers of the voyage included William Ostrich, Cabot's son-in-law, John Fletcher, William Chester, William Garrard, and Thomas Lodge. All of these men were prominent merchants in London. Chester, Garrard, and Lodge all

¹²³⁵ Andrews, 101.

¹²³⁶ Thomas Wyndham appears in the naval records as early as 1530 and in the 1540s he is most often associated with Seymour's fleet and then Somerset's fleet. TNA, SP 1/155 f. 70; 1/184 f. 25; 1/188 f. 171; 1/205 ff. 44, 46; 1/15 f. 125; 15/1 f. 139; 50/2 ff. 146, 159, 163; 50/3 ff. 1, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 25-27, 35, 54-5, 69.

¹²³⁷ TNA, PC 2/3 f. 133, Connell-Smith, 134.

¹²³⁸ Sir William Chester wrote to Sir William Cecil in 1561 stating that the Barbary trade had "byn knowen and traded contynewally by us this xii or xiii yeres." The letter is cosigned by William Garrard and Thomas Lodge. As these three men were active promoters of Barbary and Guinea trade it is not unreasonable that they stated the truth and had been trading with Africa since 1548-9. Blake, Doc. 115, p. 302-3.

served as charter members of the Muscovy Company, and held key positions in it over the course of their lives, and all three would invest and promote the later trading voyages to West Africa.¹²³⁹

It is very likely that Roger Barlow played a key role in planning for this voyage.

The expedition to Morocco was led by Wyndham. James Alday later claimed that he was supposed to have led the expedition, as he was the one who had originally conceived of and planned it. However, just before the expedition was to set sail, London was hit with the sweating sickness, and Alday was far too ill to sail at the appointed time. Wyndham took the *Lion* and one other unnamed ship, along with “two Moores, being noble men, whereof one was of the Kings blood.”¹²⁴⁰ Alday complained bitterly that he had lost money when the ship left without him, cutting him out of the expedition. However, Alday was lucky to have survived the sweating sickness, which claimed the lives of Luttrell, Fletcher, Ostrich, and others involved in the voyage.¹²⁴¹ It is not known to which ports this first expedition sailed, other than Santa Cruz, or the profits made. However, the profits must have been good, for the following year Wyndham set out again for the Barbary Coast.¹²⁴²

The backers of the voyage were prominent London magnates, including William Garrard, Sir John Yorke, Sir Thomas Wroth, Master Frances Lambert, Master Cole and others.¹²⁴³ Again,

¹²³⁹ Andrews, 102; Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers*, 181; T. S. Willan, *The Muscovy Merchants of 1555*, (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973), 87-8, 97-8, 109-10.

¹²⁴⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 136-7.

¹²⁴¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 137. John Alday was a merchant from Bristol and longtime associate of Sebastian Cabot. Sandman and Ashe, 831.

¹²⁴² In the account of the second voyage it is mentioned that Wyndham had traded in Santa Cruz the year before. Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 139.

¹²⁴³ At this time William Garrard was quickly rising in prominence in London, he was an alderman from 1547-71 and in the 1540s he purchased the manor of Southfleet, Kent, the manor of Dorney, Bucks, and land in Bermondsey, Surrey. In the 1550s he became one of the “principall doers” of the Muscovy Company and served as mayor of London in 1557 and master of the Haberdashers Company in 1557. He was knighted while serving as mayor and served as M.P. for London in 1557. His prominence in London and wealth would continue to rise until his death on September 27 1571. Sir Thomas Wroth was an extremely successful merchant of London, leaving a substantial inheritance to his six sons, four daughters and wife, including manors in Middlesex, Essex, and

the voyage was sponsored by several men who went on to be founding members of the Muscovy Company, with Garrard, Yorke, Wroth, and Lambert among the original founders. Each of these men went on to sponsor additional voyages to West Africa.¹²⁴⁴ In addition, Walter Young, who was a founding member of the Muscovy Co., and his brother Alexander invested merchandise in the expedition.¹²⁴⁵ This expedition consisted of three ships and departed from Bristol, not London. In addition to the London merchants who backed the expedition, there were Bristol merchants who invested cargo, including Hugh Draper, Giles White, Frances Codrington, Robert Halton, and Robert Butler.¹²⁴⁶ The expedition made stops at Zafia and Santa Cruz (modern day Safi and Agadir) where they traded their goods of linen and woolen cloths, coral, amber, jet and “divers other things well accepted by the Moores.”¹²⁴⁷ They spent close to three months in Santa Cruz before they were able to set sail with a full cargo of sugar, dates, almonds, and molasses.¹²⁴⁸

After a misadventure on their way home, in which they were delayed by a leak and then mistaken for pirates, the English came upon several ships belonging to the King of Portugal. The two fleets must have parlayed, for when the Portuguese learned that the English were returning from a successful trading expedition, they “were much offended with this our new trade into Barbarie, and both in our voyage the yeere before, as also in this they gave out in England by

Somerset. This is despite the fact that he was implicated in Suffolk’s rising and was in exile on the continent from July 10, 1554 to the end of 1558. Despite his exile he served as a founding member of the Russia Company in absentia. Francis Lambert was a rising merchant in London, he was a grocer, cloth exporter and promoter of the Barbary voyages as well as a founding member of the Russia Company. Sir John York was a well-known cloth merchant and would go on to become a wealthy landowner. Willan, *Muscovy*, 97-8, 130-31, 107; T.S. Willan, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 94, 99.

¹²⁴⁴ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 138; Willan, *Muscovy*, 107, 130, 131.

¹²⁴⁵ Willan, *Muscovy*, 132.

¹²⁴⁶ Jean Vanes, ed. *Documents Illustrating the Overseas trade of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, Bristol Record Society’s Publications, vol. XXXI, 1979, Doc. 178, p. 158.

¹²⁴⁷ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 138.

¹²⁴⁸ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 139.

their marchantes, that if they tooke us in those partes, they would use us in their mortall enemies, with great threatens and menaces.”¹²⁴⁹ This is the first sign that Portugal was aware of the renewal of English trading expeditions to West Africa. True to their word, from this point forward the Portuguese viewed English traders who infringed on their claimed trading monopolies as “their mortal enemies,” and kept a close eye on the West African coast for English interlopers. While Wyndham did not return to the Barbary coast, other expeditions were sent there. For example, in 1555 the *Grace of God* set out for the Barbary coast on a venture backed by a group of at least fourteen merchants including, Sir Thomas White, Sir John Yorke, Thomas Lodge, Alexander Coles, and Walter Young, all of whom supported other ventures to West Africa.¹²⁵⁰

West African Geography and Demography

Before moving on to discuss Wyndham’s third voyage, which sailed to the Lower Guinea rather than the Barbary Coast, it is prudent to take a moment to discuss the geography of West Africa, as this shaped trading practices and Portugal’s inability to effectively patrol the areas around their trading posts on the West African coast. To the Europeans in the sixteenth century, West Africa was categorized into a few key regions. From modern Sierra Leone to Cape Palmas stretched the Coast of Malagueta, or the Grain Coast. Here the chief commodity was the malagueta pepper, which, though not a true pepper in the modern understanding of the word, fetched a good price in Europe, where almost any exotic spice was welcomed. The coast which ran from Cape Palmas to the Niger Delta and the Bight of Biafra was known as the Lower Guinea. Its currents run eastward with the coast, as do the prevailing winds, making it easy to

¹²⁴⁹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 140.

¹²⁵⁰ Blake, Doc. 134, p. 347, Doc. 135-37, pp. 351-54.

follow the coast east, but very difficult to return west. Skilled navigators had to work southward to the equator, where a favorable current could be found. Much of the fatality rate in the Lower Guinea occurred during this protracted homeward passage. But the Lower Guinea held the Gold Coast, where the English could trade for measurable amounts of gold, and it was home to the kingdom of Benin, where a pepper closer to the coveted black pepper of the east Indies grew.¹²⁵¹

Much of the English trading activities took place in the shadows, as the English tried to avoid Portuguese notice. To do this, the English made use of the many rivers flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, the majority of which were between the Gambia and the Niger. Along the west African coast, major rivers such as the Senegal, Gambia, Casamance, Cacheu, Geba, Nunez, Pongo, Scarcies, and Sherbro provided routes for maritime access, to a degree, into the interior. The area between the Gambia and the Sherbro rivers offered an especially rich field for maritime commerce as they were affected by a tidal bore, allowing ships greater access to the lowland regions of the major rivers.¹²⁵² For instance, the tidal impact of the Gambia River helped ships navigate upstream for more than 200 miles, though this example is on the high end of tidal impact. Much of West African littoral regions consisted of marshy estuaries intersected by many rivers and were covered in mangrove swamps and alkaline deposits, limiting navigation to small, oared craft. This maze of rivers and tributaries, marshes and tidal flows ranked amongst the most complex river systems in the world and left geographers and cartographers frustrated and baffled for centuries, as they attempted to make sense of these river systems.¹²⁵³ Most of the

¹²⁵¹ Williamson, *Hawkins*, 4-5. Robert Stock, *Africa South of the Sahara: A Geographical Interpretation*, 3rd edition, (New York: The Guildford Press, 2013), 138-141, 151-52; Harm J. de Blij, *A Geography of sub-Saharan Africa*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), 24-28, 39.

¹²⁵² A strong ocean tide that sweeps up the river, overpowering the ocean-bound current and allowing ships to sail further inland than normal.

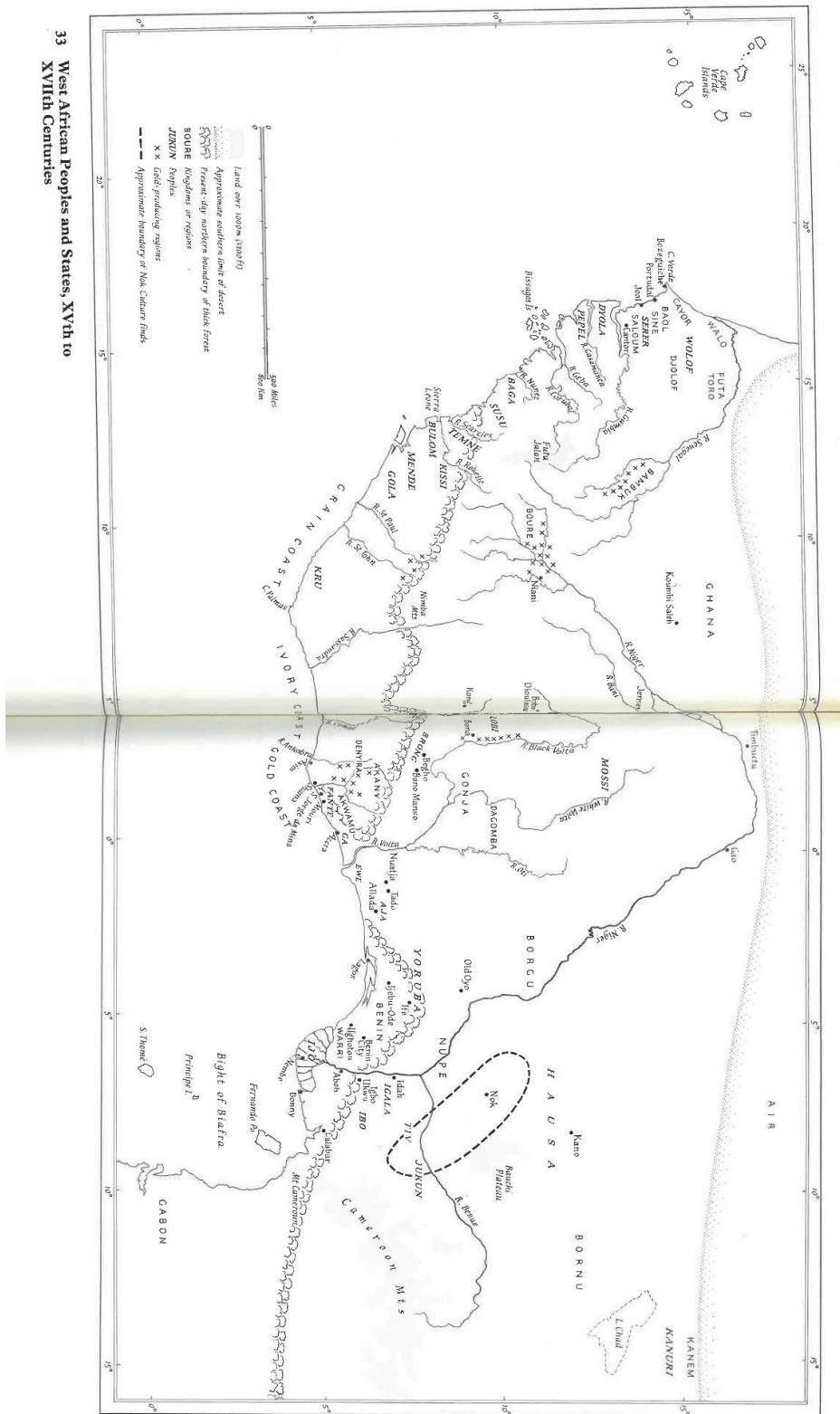
¹²⁵³ Toby Green, ed. *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa*, Proceedings of the British Academy, no. 178, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16-17; Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, (1988), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17; Hallett, 6.

West African coast frequented by sixteenth century English traders was tropical rainforest.

However, a small area in the Ghana-Togo-Dahomey littoral was semi-arid and had some savanna land.¹²⁵⁴ This region lay just east of Cape Three Points, where the coast line bent northeastward and was surprisingly dry, sunny and cool in August.¹²⁵⁵

¹²⁵⁴ Dahomey, which gained its independence in 1960, changed its name in 1975 to Benin, taking on the historic name of the kingdom which was located in Nigeria just north of the Niger delta.

¹²⁵⁵ Blij, 39.



33 West African Peoples and States, XVth to XVIIth Centuries

Figure 7-1 J. D. Fage, *An Atlas of African History*, (New York: African Publishing Company, 1978), 33.

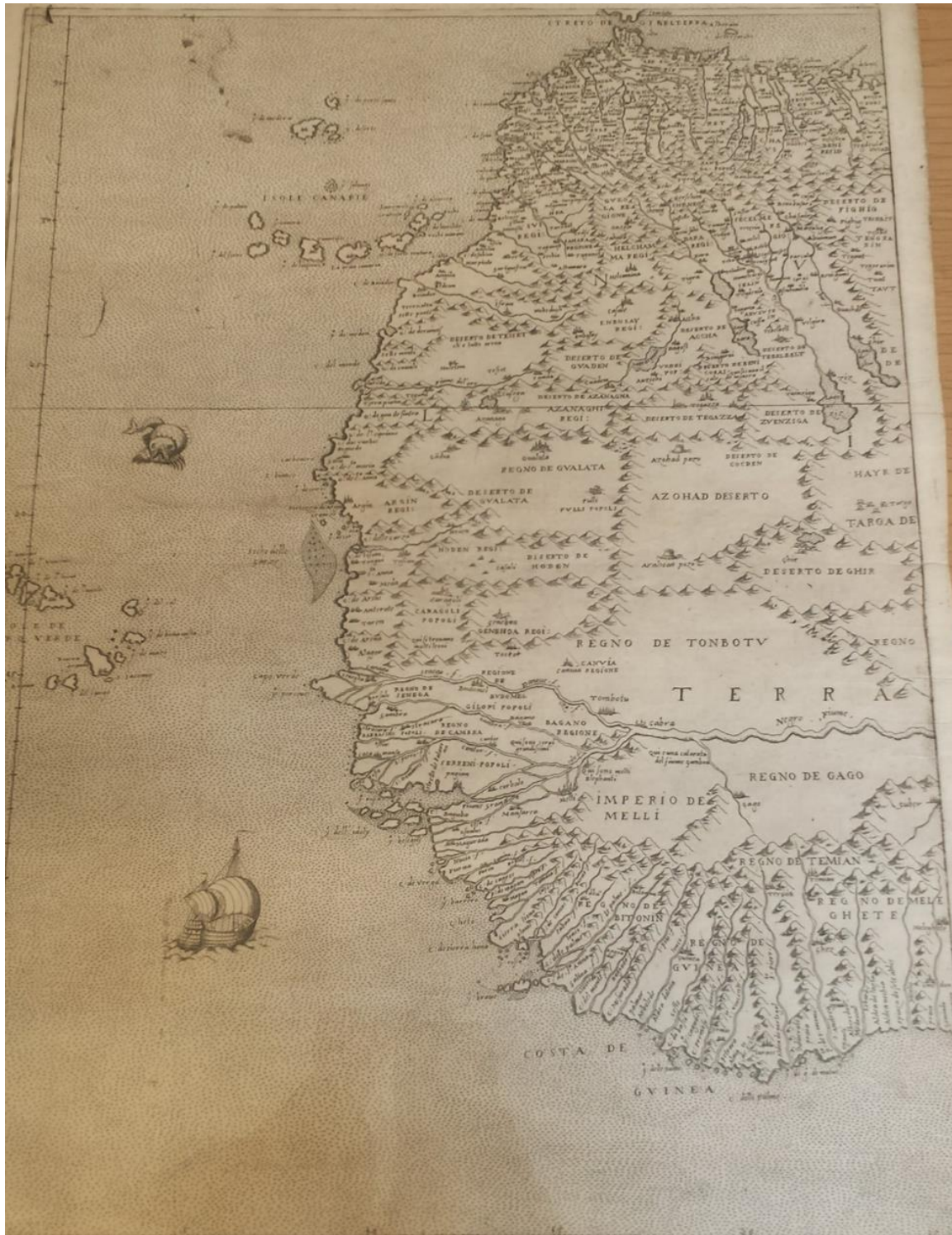


Figure 7-2 This map shows the efforts of sixteenth century cartographers to make sense of the river systems in west Africa. Personal Photo, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, G290:1/8 A, Gastaldi's 1564 map of Africa.



Figure 7-3 This c. 1570 Ortelius map of Africa shows the discrepancy in the mapping of the major rivers in Africa. Abraham Ortelius, (1570-1581). University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections, Gift of Dr. Jack Franke.

These dense lowlands river systems were home to a wide range of people, many of whom migrated to the areas to escape the encroachment of centralized nations. The Senegal and Gambia rivers, and the rivers which made Senegambia accessible to Atlantic trading also offered

refuge; in Senegambia particularly they provided a home for members of the Wolof, Peul, Tukolor, Manding, Sereer, Soninke, Susu, Joola, Nalu, Baga, Beafada, Bainuk, and Basari.¹²⁵⁶ Jolof hegemony had taken hold for a short period of time over much of the Senegal region, however, a Peul invasion led by Koli Tengela in the early sixteenth century, which was itself a reaction to destabilization and migratory movements in western Sudan, overturned the political balance in Senegambia.¹²⁵⁷ The Peul invasion destroyed everything from the Gambia to the Rio Grande. The invading force changed the population map of Senegambia, as people fled their villages ahead of the invaders, and as the Peul left behind at every stop many of Koli's followers, who then took up residence. As a result of the invasion, the Jolof confederation began to fall apart, resulting in the rebellion of the Kajor, Waalo, and Baol provinces, which then each became independent kingdoms. Playing into the political turmoil was the competition within Africa to take advantage of the growing European trade along the coast. Thus, the English arrived to a Senegal in flux, experiencing dramatic shifts in power structures and mass movements in much of the region.¹²⁵⁸

Similarly, the Niger Delta region, which also presented European traders with a veritable labyrinth of interconnected rivers, swamps, and small waterways, was inhabited first by the Ijo fishermen and salt makers. They were soon joined by the Igbo, Edo, Jekri, Ibibio, Efik, and even some Tiv and Fulani from the north, who all flocked to the fertile Delta region and participated in European trade. The Delta peoples lived on islands in the swamps and on the banks of their creeks and rivers, using canoes for transportation. They were able to dominate the trade from the

¹²⁵⁶ Barry, 3-5.

¹²⁵⁷ During the fifteenth century the Sahel region between the forest and the desert regions was becoming noticeably drier. While this was not a phenomenon limited to the sixteenth century, nor was it a new one, at this time it appears to have triggered a migratory movement for many in Ghana and Mali to migrate south. Blij, 53-4.

¹²⁵⁸ Barry, 7-8; Davidson, 96-99.

entire Niger Delta, from the Cross estuary to the River of Benin, along a coastline of more than 300 miles, forming small, decentralized societies, chief among which were known to the inland Igbo as the Ndu Mili Ndu, the “People of the Salt Water.”¹²⁵⁹ In these river communities, outside of the centralized African kingdoms such as Benin, Oyo, the Jolof confederation, Mali, and Ghana, Europeans could trade more freely, for in areas with weak states or little state control, trade was open and unpredictable. Europeans often paid no trade taxes and did not have to engage in special negotiations, whereas many other states, such as Benin, required significant gift-giving in order to open trade. Along the estuaries and rivers in the coastal lowlands, Africans in groups of two or three would sail out to the European ships for small-scale, impromptu bargaining over ivory, malagueta pepper, foodstuffs, and occasionally gold. While this commerce was risky and a much slower way to fill a ship’s cargo than trading with a centralized kingdom, it often offered both parties better negotiating power.¹²⁶⁰

As a general rule, to trade with the centralized nations in West Africa, such as the kingdom of Benin, one had to first go through a series of negotiations and diplomacy.¹²⁶¹ The Europeans met with the king and a truce or treaty was agreed to.¹²⁶² This first contact normally included a series of lavish gifts given to the African king. In many instances, gifts had to be given each time the Europeans tried to open up a trading session. These gifts became an annual tax paid to the king.¹²⁶³ In this manner, African rulers were able to exert control over their trade

¹²⁵⁹ Davidson, 122-23; July, 93.

¹²⁶⁰ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 68-70.

¹²⁶¹ Historic Benin, which is located in the area that is now Nigeria, should not be confused with the modern Benin, the two are distinct and separate nations.

¹²⁶² Often, they had to travel far inland to do this, as they had to meet with the king, not just the ruler of the local village.

¹²⁶³ This is nicely illustrated in the account of John Lok’s voyage in 1554 and in the accounts of Towerson’s voyages in 1555 and 1556 as found in Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 154-76, 17-230. The practice of gift giving as a

networks and ensure that they benefited from the trade, and to an extent, exert their own trade monopolies over their networks and coastal region.¹²⁶⁴ Thus, the Portuguese sphere of influence in West Africa, beyond their coastal forts, was extremely limited and tenuous.

Even after the Portuguese had established diplomatic relations and opened trade networks, their position remained precarious. When there was mutuality of interests, negotiations between the Portuguese and the Africans were normally successful. However, when the interests of the Portuguese and the Africans did not align, Portuguese trade negotiations were not very successful, and despite their physical presence, as represented by the forts established along the coast, the Portuguese were only welcomed along the coast as long as they were useful. When their merchandise or prices were no longer desirable, they were no longer welcomed and their position became tenuous.¹²⁶⁵ This is demonstrated by the closing of the Portuguese outposts at Wadane in Mauritania and Gwato in Benin (modern Nigeria).¹²⁶⁶ The main function of the Portuguese forts during the sixteenth century was to keep out European competition. Their ramparts and canons looked to the sea and not inland. African rulers were not blind to this aspect of the Portuguese agenda, and both Wadane and Gwato were closed after a short period as a result of the hostility of local political and commercial leaders, who believed that their interests were being damaged by the Portuguese attempts to keep other Europeans out of the African

form of tax or customs is discussed by both Thornton and Northrup in their respective works. Thornton, *Africa and Africans* 66-67. David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe: 1450-1850*, (Oxford University Press, 2002), 53.

¹²⁶⁴ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 66, 68. Thornton does point out that these were very limited monopolies as no African sovereign was able to dominate the trade over much of the coast as "African sovereignty was just as fragmented as the theoretical sovereignty that Europeans tried to maintain over the trade." 66.

¹²⁶⁵ Elbl, 168, 172. Northrup also highlights the efforts of the ruling and commercial elites of Africa to maintain an advantageous trading relationship with the Europeans, but they did not limit this to the Portuguese. Northrup, 54; Andrews, 103.

¹²⁶⁶ Elble, 176-8.

trade.¹²⁶⁷ Ivana Elbl pointed out that the Gwato factory, in particular, was perennially at the mercy of the Oba (king) of Benin, who warmly welcomed Wyndham's crew in 1553.¹²⁶⁸

The Guinea Voyages

Unlike his first two recorded voyages to Africa, which departed from London, Wyndham's third voyage set out from Portsmouth on August 12, 1553 to trade in Guinea and Benin.¹²⁶⁹ There is a brief reference to the expedition in the proceedings of the Privy Council. An entry dated July 30th, 1553 ordered the Mayor and the Customers and Comptrollers of Portsmouth to dismiss Wyndham's ship so that he might set out on his intended voyage. While the expedition took place after Mary assumed the throne in July 1553, the expedition had been planned under Edward, and it is possible that the *Moone* and *Primrose* belonged to the royal navy. Once again, the financial backers of the expedition included leading merchants in London, Sir George Barne, Sir John Yorke, William Garrard, Francis Lambert, who was the Lord Mayor of London and whose son, Nicholas Lambert, did not return from the voyage, and other London merchants. The majority of the backers for the expedition were also men who were founding members of the Muscovy Company.¹²⁷⁰ This time Sir John Yorke sent along his seventeen-year-old kinsman, Martin Frobisher, the same Frobisher who went on to win fame for his exploits and failures during the Elizabethan era.¹²⁷¹

¹²⁶⁷ Elbl, 176-7.

¹²⁶⁸ Elbl, 178.

¹²⁶⁹ The account of this voyage was recorded by Richard Eden and first published in his *Decades of the New World* in 1555. This is the only account of Wyndham's final voyage. Hakluyt later copied Eden's account in its entirety to include in *Principal Navigations*. Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 141-152; Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 278.

¹²⁷⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 152; Blake, Doc. 123-125, p. 309-10; Andrews, 104, 106; Willan, *Muscovy*, 78, 107; Ryder, 76.

¹²⁷¹ BL Nero B. I, 41; TNA SP 70/37 f. 151; Tong, 228; Robert McGhee, *The Arctic Voyage of Martin Frobisher: An Elizabethan Adventure*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 27.

It is likely that Benin was Wyndham's intended destination from the outset of the voyage, despite the arguments which occurred on the expedition about whether or not they should continue to Benin. Just before setting sail, Wyndham had his portrait done by Hans Eworth. In this painting, Wyndham was depicted wearing a square brass bell around his neck. This brass bell is identical to the ceremonial bells still used today in Benin for invoking spirits.¹²⁷²

Wyndham likely received the bell as a gift from Anthony Anes Pinteado, who had been to Benin in the past. Pinteado had been one of the foremost Portuguese commanders in Portugal's Atlantic trade and naval operations, and was charged with the specific task of keeping the African and Brazilian coasts free of French intruders, a fact which is illustrative of the prevalence of French smuggling in these areas. At some point around 1549 he had been forced to flee Portugal, due to personal enemies who caused him to lose favor in the court. Despite the efforts of João III and his ambassadors to convince Pinteado to return, he took his knowledge of the Guinea trade to England, where he appears to have shared it freely. He sailed with Wyndham and acted as both navigator and guide to the coveted Benin trade.¹²⁷³ In addition to Pinteado, the expedition also included the Portuguese pilot, Francisco Rodrigues.¹²⁷⁴

¹²⁷² Tong, 226.

¹²⁷³ Pinteado's defection to the English greatly concerned the Portuguese government and both Portugal and Spain worked to get Pinteado out of England. Both the King of Portugal and his brother wrote to Pinteado personally. Pinteado shared these letters with Richard Eden, whom he was close with. Hakluyt, vol. VI, 152-4; Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 93; Andrews, 106; Ryder, 76. For a brief background on Pinteado see Blake, 284-5, 313 n. 4.

¹²⁷⁴ Andrews, 106.



Figure 7-4 Hans Eworth's portrait of Thomas Wyndham. Image taken from Hans Eworth Catalogue, <http://www.hanseworth.com/HEworthCatalogue2013.pdf>. Accessed 1/14/2019.

Wyndham appears to have been particularly keen to maximize profits on this expedition and began pillaging Portuguese shipping almost immediately. After finding only grain and Malagueta peppers along the Sestos River, he continued to the Mina Coast (Gold Coast) where they were able to trade for one hundred and fifty pounds of gold. Eden stated that they could have traded all of their goods for gold if not for Wyndham. However, Wyndham insisted that the fleet continue to Benin for pepper. Pinteado argued with Wyndham over this point, insisting that it was too late in the year, and that if they did not return to England, they ran the risk of succumbing to fever along the tropical coasts of Guinea. Falling into a rage, Wyndham called Pinteado a Jew and threatened to cut his ears off and nail them to the mast, if he did not guide the ships to Benin. Having no alternative, Pinteado led the expedition to the River Benin, where Wyndham sent ashore some of the English merchants who had accompanied him, Pinteado, Francisco Rodrigues, and others, to find Ugwato, the port of Benin, which was an old Portuguese fort. The Portuguese had abandoned Ugwato in the 1530s, finding the area too dangerous to their health and the people of Benin unwilling to meet their demands.¹²⁷⁵ The landing party then traveled some ten leagues from the river before they reached Edo (present day Benin City) where they were granted an audience with Oba Orhogbua.¹²⁷⁶ Orhogbua had been educated in a Portuguese school and baptized into the church. Known as a wise ruler, he successfully expanded Benin and ensured that his people received the best deal possible when trading with Europeans.¹²⁷⁷

¹²⁷⁵ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 146-9; Davidson, 120; Jacob U. Ugharevba, *A Short History of Benin*, (1934), 4th edition, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1968), 27-29; Williamson, *Hawkins*, 5.

¹²⁷⁶ Oba is the term for king in the Edo language.

¹²⁷⁷ Raymond Tong, "Captain Thomas Wyndham: Tudor Merchant Adventurer" *History Today*, (Apr. 1957), pp. 222-228, 227-8; Ugharevba, 29.

At this time Benin was at the height of its power and stretched from the banks of the Niger to present-day Benin.¹²⁷⁸ Oba Orhogbua was one of the most important kings in West Africa, and the English were impressed with what they saw. Benin City, at this time, was a stronghold twenty-five miles in circumference, protected by walls and natural defenses. It contained an elaborate royal palace surrounded by neatly laid-out houses with verandas and balustrades. The city was divided by broad avenues and smaller intersecting streets.¹²⁷⁹ Such a city would have amazed the English, who came from London, Bristol, and Portsmouth, overcrowded cities consisting of confusing networks of medieval streets. Eden's account reveals the awe with which the English beheld Orhogbua and his retinue, describing in detail the great hall of the Oba and the manner in which his court showed deference to him.¹²⁸⁰ So impressed were they with the reverence shown the Oba, that they compare it to the reverence the English show to God, stating "And here to speake of the great reverence they give to their king, it is such, that if we would give as much to our Savior Christ, we should remove from our heads many plagues which we daily desrve for our contempt and impietie."¹²⁸¹ Such reverence was surely reserved for only the most powerful of kings, reinforcing the impression that they were dealing with a very powerful king of a large nation. The English were further impressed and awed when the Oba spoke to them in Portuguese.¹²⁸²

Upon learning that the English had come to his land to trade for pepper, Orhogbua ordered their trade goods brought before him so that he could determine if he wanted to trade with them. When he had seen the wares, Orhogbua told the merchants that within thirty days he

¹²⁷⁸ Tong, 227.

¹²⁷⁹ July, 106.

¹²⁸⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 149.

¹²⁸¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 149.

¹²⁸² Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 149.

would fill all of their ships with pepper, “and in case their merchandizes would not extend to the value of so much pepper, he promised to credite them to their next returne, and thereupon sent the country round about to gather pepper, causing the same to be brought to the court: So that within the space of 30 dayes they had gathered fourscore tunne of pepper.”¹²⁸³ When the English arrived at his court, Orhobua already had “30 or 40 kintals of Pepper (every kintall being a hundred weight)” in a store house.¹²⁸⁴ He was apparently so impressed with the quality of goods brought by the English, and eager enough to ensure an established trading relationship with them, that he ordered his people to gather all the pepper in the countryside and then offered to extend credit to these merchants whom he had never dealt with before. This revealed the willingness of the Oba to defy Portugal’s perceived monopoly and establish a trading alliance with the English on their own terms, just as they had done with the Portuguese when they first arrived in Africa, and just as they had done with other African kingdoms for generations.

While the landing party traded with the Oba and gathered the pepper, Wyndham and the members of his crew who had remained with the ships fell victim to the diseases of the tropics, just as Pinteado had warned. Thirty days after the landing party had departed, Wyndham sent a message to Pinteado ordering that they pack up what goods they had and return to the ships immediately. Pinteado sent a response telling him of the great quantities of pepper that they had received and were still waiting on. Wyndham then responded that if the landing party did not return at once, he would leave without them. Pinteado returned to the ship alone, presumably to convince Wyndham to stay longer, only to find Wyndham dead and the crew on the verge of mutiny.¹²⁸⁵ The crew demanded that he take them back to England at once, refusing to listen to

¹²⁸³ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 149.

¹²⁸⁴ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 149.

¹²⁸⁵ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 150-51.

his pleas that they send for the merchants, including Nicholas Lambert, the son of the mayor of London, to return to the ship, or to leave them the pinnace. The best that Pinteado could do was send a message back to the city, promising that he would do everything in his power to return. Lacking the crew to man both ships, the crew sank the *Lion* before setting sail, abandoning the English merchants who remained in Edo.¹²⁸⁶ Unfortunately, Pinteado died less than two weeks after setting sail. The ship made it back to England with less than one third of the men who had set out. One of the survivors to return was Martin Frobisher.

Another survivor of note was William Winter. Keeper of the naval record in 1546, he returned to the royal fleet after sailing on Wyndham's ill-fated voyage and became the master of the naval ordinance in 1557. He continued to support West African trade, joining the syndicate of merchants which advanced a project to build a permanent trading fort in Guinea in 1561. He also invested in John Hawkins' second slaving voyage of 1564-65. In 1565, while serving Elizabeth I as the Vice Admiral of the navy, he and his brother, George, sent their ship the *Mary Fortune* on an expedition to Guinea. The Portuguese sank the *Mary Fortune* off of the coast of Guinea and took the entire crew prisoner. Winter again sent one of his ships in a fleet of four vessels to West Africa in 1570. In 1573, for his services to the navy as well as his private ventures, he was knighted.¹²⁸⁷ The Winter family became one of the leading families of the royal fleet and worked closely with the Hawkins family and Francis Drake during the Elizabethan era.

Wyndham's crew must have returned with the majority of the gold and tales of a wealth of pepper ready and waiting for the English, for despite the fact that the majority of his

¹²⁸⁶ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 153; Blake, Doc. 132, p. 325.

¹²⁸⁷ Ungerer, 80; Andrews, 105; Willan, *Muscovy*, 27, 35; R. G. Marsden ed., *Documents Relating to Law and Custom of the Sea*, vol. I, (Printed for the Navy Records Society, 1915), 184-9; Nick Hazlewood, *The Queen's Slave Trader: John Hawkins, Elizabeth I, and the Trafficking in Human Souls*, (New York: William Morrow, 2004), 145.

expedition had died, and none of the pepper actually made it back to England, the prospective profits were so attractive that the investors immediately began planning for a second voyage. A relative of Wyndham's, Alexander Coles, quickly departed for Flanders to buy the necessary merchandise for the next fleet.¹²⁸⁸ The King of Portugal, having learned of Wyndham's voyage and piratical activities, was furious over the intrusion into his perceived trade monopoly and kept a close eye on the preparations in London, sending his spies to discover the route the fleet planned to follow. There appears to have been significant investment in the expedition, for it consisted of three ships, the *Trinity* (140 tons), the *Barthelmewe* (90 tons), and the *John Evangelist* (140 tons), along with two pinnaces. Once again, the key backers for the voyage were Yorke, Barne, and Edward Castelin. This time Anthony Hickman, Castelin's trading partner to the Canaries, and Thomas Locke were also listed as main investors. Both men were charter members of the Muscovy Co.¹²⁸⁹ The Castelin family was a powerful merchant family trading with Italy, the Levant, Spain, Portugal, the Azores, and the Canaries. William Castelin served as Governor of the English Merchants in Antwerp in the mid-1540s. Edward Castelin had a strong desire to open trade with West Africa and promoted the Guinea voyages of 1554, 1558, 1561, 1563, and 1564, as well as John Hawkins' second slave trading voyage, which was also in 1564.¹²⁹⁰ Thomas Locke was the son of Sir William Locke, who had died in 1550, leaving an extensive property in London and lands in Surrey to his five sons. Thomas's brother, Michael Locke, was a chief advisor to the Muscovy Company in 1574. Michael had been sent to Europe as a teenager for his education, which appears to be what first interested him in the New World. In addition to being an advisor to the Muscovy Company, Michael was also a major financial

¹²⁸⁸ Ryder, 78.

¹²⁸⁹ Willan, *Muscovy*, 103, 108-9; Andrews, 107.

¹²⁹⁰ TNA SP 1/179 f. 59; Willan, *Muscovy*, 85.

contributor and promoter of Frobisher's voyages.¹²⁹¹ Thomas and Michael's brother, John Locke, served as Captain of the expedition of 1554.

Locke's fleet departed on October 11, 1554 and was guided by survivors of Wyndham's expedition, including Martin Frobisher, who led the fleet back to the places where they had obtained grain and gold. At the River Sesto, the fleet took on a ton of grain. They then traded along the coast until they came to a town called Samma, trading until they wore out their welcome, at which point one of the captains was held against his will, and the town shot a piece of ordnance at the fleet to encourage their departure.¹²⁹² The fleet continued down the coast to a place called Percow, near Monte Rodondo, where they finished trading their wares. The crew offered to take Locke "to a place, where the Primrose was and had received much gold at the first voyage to these partes."¹²⁹³ However, Locke appears to have mistrusted the currents and, as it was already February, decided against a venture to the coast of Benin, where so many had died.¹²⁹⁴ Instead, the fleet turned for home on February 13, 1555. It had been a very successful voyage, with the fleet purchasing grain and other goods, along with roughly 400lb of gold, which is the largest amount of gold recorded in any single expedition.¹²⁹⁵

¹²⁹¹ Bourne, 120, 121, 124.

¹²⁹² Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, 158-60.

¹²⁹³ The account of the voyage of 1554 was included in by Eden as an appendix to his *Decades*. It is likely that the *Primrose* is a mistake and that the ship referred to was actually the *Lion* as the crew reference the first voyage to these parts. Eden, 379-383.

¹²⁹⁴ Eden, 379-383; Ryder, 78-9.

¹²⁹⁵ Williamson, *Maritime Enterprise*, 285.



Figure 7-5 In this expanded view of the Ortelius map the major place names such as Cape de las Palmas, can be seen. Image from the University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections, Gift of Dr. Jack Franke.



Figure 7-6 This expanded view of a contemporary Münster map of Africa shows some of the major cities and villages in Africa. Sebastian Münster, (1598). University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections, Gift of Dr. Jack Franke.

There is no direct evidence that the English returned to Benin in the following three decades. However, it seems a bit presumptuous to state that the English did not return to such a profitable source of pepper, especially one which had so readily welcomed English trade and did not have Portuguese ships actively patrolling the coast. There is one key piece of evidence that suggests after Wyndham's visit, English merchants returned to the region to trade for pepper, but did so secretly. A letter dated May 13, 1582, written by Randall Shaw indicates that at least one or more English vessels had returned to Benin. Shaw offered key details about the trade that could only come from personal knowledge of the area and the people. He described the waterways in Ureju Bay, stating that the ship should not lie outside the bar but well into the river to avoid sickness and that they would need ten to twelve oared pinnaces to get the cargo to and from Ughoton. He also stated that they could not trade with anyone but the Oba himself, and that he would pay for their merchandise with pepper, but that they needed to make sure that they traded for "cleaned peppers."¹²⁹⁶ Shaw's letter offers interesting insight into the Benin trade as he gave a detailed list of the merchandise most desired in Benin that should be stocked by merchants planning on trading for peppers.

a few pieces of brown Rouen canvas; good quality white Rouen canvas, Holland cloth; at least fifteen pounds of artificial Flemish coral (these were tubular beads two-thirds of an inch long which were to be strung into bracelets and necklaces on green, red, and yellow thread, preferably with glass beads of the same colours between each coral—"the estimation of them is much in vallew there"); more artificial coral in nut-shaped beads to be interspersed with artificial pearls; coarse red woolen cloth; red cotton cloth; Calicut cloth; red caps; various kinds of pots and pans; small glasses; belts; knives; saws and hatchets; shertts of mail; copper manillas; black horse-tails and small bells¹²⁹⁷

¹²⁹⁶ Ryder, Appendix VIII "Instructions for a voyage to the Benin River and trade there written by Randall Shawe 1582," PRO 12/153, p. 339.

¹²⁹⁷ Ryder, Appendix VIII, p. 340.

As a present for the Oba, they should take half a dozen drinking glasses and three or four mirrors. According to Shaw, the possible profits from a successful voyage were immense. “You shall by god’s helpe have a hundred tonne of pepper for 400lb of commodities; yf you send sage and wise men tha can use the matter will with the king, the next vyadge may be worthe 100,000lb to you yf you once fawl in trade with the king.”¹²⁹⁸ The greatest danger, and the only real caution Shaw gave, was the risk of disease in the region. To combat this, Shaw gave detailed instructions about where the ships should anchor, avoiding local food and water and trading only from December to February 5, which would keep them in the cool, dry season. This practice of trading only in the short dry season became the practice for all Europeans trading in the region in the future.¹²⁹⁹

The details offered by Shaw indicate that he had firsthand knowledge of the region and trade. The possible profits that he suggested are outstanding and would surely have tempted some during the missing years. Even if it is assumed that Shaw exaggerated by half, these are the profits the London syndicates and adventurous merchants were looking for. It stands to reason that over the course of the thirty years missing records of illicit trade to the region, there were English merchants who took advantage of this profitable pepper trade.

When Locke’s expedition returned, another voyage was immediately planned. However, John III of Portugal had watched closely over the past year and was determined to put an end to the English trade in West Africa. He had sent a squadron to take up station in Mina in 1554 to prevent Locke’s expedition from trading, however, for an unknown reason the Portuguese ships

¹²⁹⁸ Ryder, Appendix VIII, p. 340.

¹²⁹⁹ Ryder, 81, Appendix VIII, p. 340-41.

went to Brazil at the last minute instead.¹³⁰⁰ He then increased his diplomatic pressure on Mary I to end the trade. He demanded that she surrender all Portuguese nationals involved in the expedition, that restitution be made for the goods taken at Mina, and that she publish a general prohibition against future expeditions under grave royal penalties.¹³⁰¹ John based his arguments for Portuguese possession of trade rights on the points which had been used successfully in diplomatic circles between Portugal and Spain for decades. He argued that West African trade belonged to Portugal by right of first discovery, conquest, possession and decree of the Pope.¹³⁰² It was arguments such as these, regarding possession of trade rights, that caused Dr. Lee to first approach Robert Thorne for information on the Spice Islands in the 1520s, when he worried that Charles V did not have the right to sell the trading privileges of the islands to the English.¹³⁰³ John reminded Mary of what, for all intents and purposes, were long established diplomatic rules regarding trade.

When John first began putting pressure on Mary in 1554, she was consumed with her wedding to Phillip of Spain. By the time Locke returned, however, Mary had the time and attention to give John's demands some thought. On July 18, 1555, the Privy Council sent the Mayor of London a letter, instructing him to call all of the merchants who traded with Guinea together and order them to stop all such trade in those parts "until further ordre be taken herein, for that the King of Portingale maketh a clayme to that navygacion."¹³⁰⁴ At a meeting of the Privy Council on December 30, 1555, Mary's government specifically forbade Edward Castelin,

¹³⁰⁰ Vogt, 102-3.

¹³⁰¹ TNA SP 69/7 f. 149; Vogt, 104.

¹³⁰² These claims and the logic behind them were formalized in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 and the subsequent Zaragoza treaty of 1529.

¹³⁰³ See discussion of Thorne's book in previous chapters.

¹³⁰⁴ TNA PC 2/7 f. 283.

Jeffery Allen, Rowland Fox, and Richard Stockbridge “and to the resto of the merchauntes of that companye” from proceeding with any further voyages to Guinea.¹³⁰⁵

The Lord Mayor sent Castelin, Allen, Fox and Stockbridge to the Council to understand the Queen’s resolution against their planned voyage. They presented Mary with a declaration in which they stated their rights to trade, claiming that by the very definition of the word “merchants,” they traded to all places of the world, having never before been restrained from doing so. They followed the laws and authorities of the places in which they traded, finding the people of those places eager and willing to trade. In regard to the specific restrictions against all lands claimed by the King of Portugal, they had always traded with the Portuguese without incident or malice. As far as Africa was concerned, they pointed out that they met with many princes in the region who welcomed their trade and even offered ground on which to build trading posts. Further, the King of Benin was a sovereign, not a subject of Portugal, and welcomed English trade. They went on to state that they had left three merchants in Benin to learn the language and customs of the region and that “this last somer,” had made provisions to return to Benin, only to be stopped by the King and Queen. They were once again being stopped. They humbly requested that “seing that we beganne this voyage without malice, moved by the common fredome of all merchauntes, and have sithens that time obeyed all commaundementes” that they be allowed to trade with Africa, promising to avoid any place inhabited by the Portuguese.¹³⁰⁶ This petition is significant for two reasons. First, the merchants used logic that is very similar to the arguments that would be made by Elizabeth and many of her merchants, that it was not right for merchants to be banned from ports when they had not been

¹³⁰⁵ TNA PC 2/7 f. 345.

¹³⁰⁶ Blake, Doc. 140, pp. 355-58.

banned in the past and had obeyed the laws of the land. They also argued that Portugal did not actually have claim to West Africa, only to those forts and outposts that they inhabited, as it was the African kings and princes who had the right to agree to or deny trade in their own lands. The second reason this petition is of note is that it reveals that this group of merchants had planned an additional voyage for 1555 to return to Benin, but had been stopped by Mary.

The merchants apparently presented their case effectively, for the Queen ordered that all of their merchandise, which was only suitable for the Guinea trade, be collected and the merchants be compensated for the merchandise and “other charges sustained by their preparacion for the said voyage.”¹³⁰⁷ The fact that Mary felt compelled to make full compensation for losses sustained by the cancelation of the voyage reveals just how powerful the merchant syndicate backing this expedition was. If it were backed by only one or two prominent merchants and several smaller merchants, Mary likely would have felt no responsibility for their losses, or would have offered partial compensation. However, in this case she offered full compensation indicating the need to keep the syndicate happy. This shows that by 1555 the merchants orchestrating Atlantic trade ranked among the most powerful merchants in London and by extension held some political power.

Despite the letter of July 18, 1555 forbidding trade to Guinea, William Towerson left the haven of Newport on the Isle of Wight on September 13, 1555 with two ships, the *Hart* and the *Hinde*, bound for Guinea. It appears that Towerson had put together an expedition lacking any solid knowledge of the West African coast or backers who were familiar with the trade, and that this was a smaller, poorly organized voyage trying to break into the Guinea trade. The merchant

¹³⁰⁷ TNA PC 2/7 f. 345.

syndicate which had practice and knowledge of the West African trade had been stopped by Mary from sending forth their ships in December. Hakluyt, who provided the details of Towerson's expedition, offered no insight into who the backers of the expedition were. Towerson's first expedition was fraught with misadventures as he fumbled his way to West Africa and struggled to find places to trade, constantly getting lost in the river systems and mistaking landmarks, only to find when he reached them that he did not know where he was. When he did come across ports and towns willing to trade, he found that his merchandise was not up to standard, and he was turned away for having inferior goods. On more than one occasion he found that the French had recently been or were currently in the area, and that their cloth was far superior to his. It was not until the end of January, when the trading season was coming to an end, that Towerson was able to begin selling his wares in sizable amounts. Despite the poor quality of his merchandise and the low prices it fetched, Towerson still returned to England with ivory, grains and gold.¹³⁰⁸ While Towerson's first voyage was arguably a failure, it is important for two reasons. First, it shows that while there were well organized voyages being backed and sent out by merchants who knew what they were doing, others were taking note of the trade and likely sending out poorly organized voyages, such as Towerson's, which left behind no records. Secondly, this expedition, and Towerson's later voyages, reveals that the West African coast, though claimed as a Portuguese monopoly, was in fact a transnational market in which the French, English, and Portuguese competed for African trade.

Towerson set out for Guinea again in 1556, this time aboard the *Tiger* of London, with the *Hart* and a pinnace, both of which were outfitted in Bristol, suggesting that he had the backing of Bristol merchants. The expedition was most likely sponsored in part by Giles White

¹³⁰⁸ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 177-211.

and Thomas Chester, both merchants of Bristol, who were brought before the Council on the matter of two ships which they had sent out for Guinea.¹³⁰⁹ Miles Mordeine, merchant of London, also appears to have been a sponsor of the voyage, as he was reportedly in Flanders for some time preparing merchandise to be sent to Bristol for an expedition to Guinea.¹³¹⁰ Towerson set out from Harrwich on September 14, 1556 and planned to meet up with the *Hart* and the pinnace at the Isle of Sillie, as the two ships were setting out from Bristol. However, the two ships did not arrive, so Towerson turned back for Plymouth on October 12. There, they met the two Bristol ships and were able to finally set sail on October 12. The two ships had likely been held up by the Privy Council's investigation into the expedition, as the Council had sent a letter to the Mayor, Aldermen, Customers, Comptrollers, and Searchers of Bristol regarding the two ships.¹³¹¹ The ships were forced to slip out of the port in secret. Once it became known that they were gone, the Mayor and customers of Bristol were reprimanded, and Mordeine sent for, as he was believed to be "oone of the chiefest doers" of the voyage.¹³¹²

Once again, Towerson found the market along the West African coast to be much more competitive than he anticipated. The picture given of the coastline in Hakluyt's account was that of a very busy market. Time and again Towerson found the African prices far too high for him to pay and that the French had already flooded the market with superior goods. Early in the expedition Towerson decided to join with a French ship for protection, for both had heard that the Portuguese had finally come out in force to protect their trade interests. At the town of Hanta, where Towerson could not even pay half the asking price for the goods he wanted, he was

¹³⁰⁹ Acts of the Privy Council, vol. 5, 1554-1556, p. 358.

¹³¹⁰ TNA PC 2/7 f. 473.

¹³¹¹ TNA PC 2/7 f. 505.

¹³¹² TNA PC 2/7 f. 473.

informed that there were five Portuguese ships at the Castle, and that all of the villages in the area lived in fear of the Portuguese, who had been taking their frustrations with French and English traders out on the villages that dared to trade with them.¹³¹³ Towerson met with the Portuguese several times along the Gold Coast and was forced to cut off his trading expedition due to the increased number and strength of the Portuguese patrols who were, at this point, on the lookout for his fleet.¹³¹⁴ Despite facing Portuguese resistance at nearly every stop along the way, Towerson managed to have a moderately successful voyage, bringing back 120 pounds of gold, several tusks, and 2 hogsheads of Guinea pepper without losing any vessels and only losing one man.¹³¹⁵

While Towerson's expedition is the only expedition of 1556 with an extant narrative, there were other English voyages that year. When Towerson was at Shamma, he was informed that there was an English ship at Mina, and that the ship had among her crew one of the Africans who had been taken to London on Locke's expedition.¹³¹⁶ The Portuguese complained bitterly that the English had flooded the coast with cheap cloth of inferior quality, to the point that none came to the Portuguese trading posts of São Jorge or Axem to buy Portuguese wares.¹³¹⁷ Knowing that decisive action needed to be taken, the Portuguese had sent a new governor, Afonso Rodrigues Botafogo, to Guinea in 1556, with orders to engage any enemy ships before the interlopers had a chance to land and open trade. Upon arriving in Guinea, he sent a small contingent of Portuguese troops to conduct reprisal raids against the villages which had traded

¹³¹³ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 218.

¹³¹⁴ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 212-231.

¹³¹⁵ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 213-231; Vogt, 107.

¹³¹⁶ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 219. Robert Gaynsh had captured five men during Locke's expedition and taken them back to London where they were taught English. Two of the men sailed with Towerson in 1556.

¹³¹⁷ Vogt, 107.

with the English and the French. A second wave of reinforcements was sent early in 1557. These were the ships which Towerson encountered on March 3, 1557. This fleet included two warships estimated at 200 and 500 tons. Despite the added reinforcements, Francisco Pirez begged Queen Catherine of Portugal to speak to her husband about the need for additional ships as “this year so many pirate ships sailed to it that they glutted the whole coast with many commodities of all kinds,” so that the yearly return for the King was half what it could have been.¹³¹⁸ Likewise, Affonso Gonçaves Botafogo, the acting governor of Mina, stated that “the pirates trade freely this year....leaving the land so stripped of goods for sale that there is absolutely no gold remaining.”¹³¹⁹ A single expedition of two English ships and a pinnace could not have flooded the region with cloth, nor could they have satiated the market’s appetite for European goods. To justify the complaints and sending of reinforcements, there had to have been more than just Towerson trading along the coast. From Hakluyt’s account, it can be seen that there were numerous Frenchmen in the region, and that there was at least one other English vessel. How many others were along the coast is impossible to know, but it is certain that there were others in the region trading illicitly.

On January 30, 1558, Towerson set out on his third and final voyage with three ships, the *Minion*, the *Christopher*, the *Tyger* and the pinnace, the *Unicorne*.¹³²⁰ On January 22, the Privy Council had issued a letter to the mayor of Plymouth ordering him to stop Towerson from sailing

¹³¹⁸ Mota and Hair, Doc. B, p. 59.

¹³¹⁹ Mota and Hair, Doc. C, p. 60. Similarly, Francisco Pirez, the chief mayor of Mina wrote to Queen Catherine on April 17, 1557 stating that “this year there were so many ships of the corsairs here that they glutted the whole coast with many goods of every kind,” Blake, vol. I, p. 181.

¹³²⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 231. A misprint in the 1598-9 edition has the date as 1577, this error was reproduced in the MacLehose edition of 1904 for the Hakluyt Society. The correct date 1557 appears in the 1589 edition of Hakluyt. Towerson’s ships left Plymouth on January 30, 1557/8. Blake, 410 n. 3.

to Guinea.¹³²¹ However, it appears that the letter did not arrive in time to prevent the ships from departing. Unfortunately, Hakluyt did not record who the backers were for this voyage. After some pirating along the way, and a brief, cordial encounter with the Spanish West Indies fleet off the Canary Islands, Towerson's fleet made it to the Malagueta Coast, where they traded for ivory and some peppers, but found that the French had already been along the coast, driving up the prices.¹³²² By April, the fleet made it to the Lower Guinea coast where Towerson, having apparently recognized the steep competition represented by the French, opened fire on a group of French ships to scare them away from the coastline. While the names of the French captains are not known, some of the ships' names match the names of the French ships Towerson had aligned with in the past.¹³²³ This only provided a temporary boost in trade, for the closer they got to the Castle at Mina, the less willing the villages were to trade with the English. At Shamma they were told that there was no gold to trade, as it had all been traded with the Portuguese, and that there was not even a chicken to be bought due to their agreement with the Portuguese. After attempting to trade in the area for a few days with similar results, Towerson ordered the town of Shamma be burned, because it had fallen under the rule of Portugal.¹³²⁴ Towerson's fleet continued to find the market along the West African coastline either closed due to Portuguese influence or extremely competitive due to French merchants. In the end, Towerson's final voyage ended on a sour note with most of the men falling ill and lacking the profits he had hoped for.

¹³²¹ Acts of the Privy Council, 1556-8, p. 247.

¹³²² Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 231-38.

¹³²³ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 240-1.

¹³²⁴ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 246-7.

Despite Towerson's low returns for the 1558 voyage, the Portuguese government was furious over the incursion. On November 21, 1558, Dom Francisco Pereira, the Portuguese ambassador in Castile, wrote to King Sebastian of Portugal stating that the English ships which had gone to Mina were expected home soon. He wrote that while he believed Queen Mary and King Phillip were honorable and could be taken at their word, the English sailors could not, and this was proven by the latest voyage to West Africa. Pereira was adamant in his belief that Sebastian must take the threat to their trade seriously, stating, "if you do not command them to be severely punished, and if you do not order a fleet to be at the coast of Mina, which may send both the French and the English likewise to the bottom of the sea without [mercy], this business may have no end in her kingdom."¹³²⁵ He assured Sebastian that he need not worry about how Phillip might react to such a demand, for Phillip was "angry enough [for his] part that your highness is no badly treated."¹³²⁶ Clearly, the English and French activity along the West African coast had grown to be a serious concern for the Portuguese officials, and despite the reinforcements sent in 1557, King Sebastian was told that it was not enough. He needed to send more.

On April 20, 1561, the Portuguese ambassador warned that if the King should loosen his restrictions on who could and could not enter the countries of Guinea, Brazil, and other parts of the empire, then "the English will go to the said coasts of Guinea and Brazil to traffic for themselves," and take away the King's profit. He went on to state that this point had been proven, particularly by the predecessors of the Queen of England.¹³²⁷ This statement indicates that the English had returned to the transatlantic trade between West Africa and Brazil, either

¹³²⁵ Blake, Doc. 148, pp. 431-2.

¹³²⁶ Blake, Doc. 148, p. 433.

¹³²⁷ TNA SP 70/25 f. 83.

during the reign of Edward VI or Mary I, for if it had only been practiced during the reign of Henry VIII, then the ambassador would have no justification for saying “predecessors,” and there would have been a quarter of a century between the writing of this letter and the trade to Brazil. The fact that this was a worry at the forefront of his letter indicates that he had very real reason to believe that the English wished to continue the Brazil trade.

There are no specific, detailed records of individual voyages to Guinea between 1559 and 1561. The only voyage to Africa of which there are extant detailed documents is that of the *Mary Martin* and the *John Evangelist* to the Barbary coast in 1559. This voyage involved men in the employment of Sir Thomas White and Sir William Garrard and likely involved the financial backing of many of the merchants who had backed the previous voyages to Barbary.¹³²⁸ Unfortunately, the details of the backers for this voyage are currently unknown. Despite the lack of surviving narratives, Portuguese documents indicate that there were French and English voyages to the Gold Coast every year.¹³²⁹ In April 1559, the governor of São Jorge da Mina reported the increasing English activity along the Mina coastline, stating that there was considerable English activity every year from June to the end of the year.¹³³⁰ In December 1561, a Portuguese factor in Flanders informed his government that an English fleet had departed for the coast of Mina to build a fort there. He was most likely referencing the efforts of Sir William Garrard, William Winter, Benjamin Gonson, Anthony Hickman, Thomas Lodge, and Edward Castelin, who had formed a syndicate to build a fort in Guinea and reached out to John Locke to captain the expedition. This fleet did not make it to the Mina coast, having to turn back for

¹³²⁸ Blake, Doc. 151-155, pp. 435-440.

¹³²⁹ Vogt asserts that the exact number of English and French voyages during the latter part of the 1550s and 1560s will never be known, however, “interlopers sailed from these countries every year bound for Mina.” Vogt, 111.

¹³³⁰ Ryder, 79; Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 253-4, 255-57, 158; Willan, *Muscovy*, 109.

England due to bad weather. However, in 1562 the syndicate sent four English ships on a successful voyage to Mina.¹³³¹ This syndicate sent out another voyage in 1564, this time with Elizabeth I's involvement.¹³³²

The years 1558-1561 were eventful years for England. Queen Mary I died on November 17, 1558, ending England's union with Spain and the brief restoration of the Catholic Church. Now Elizabeth I sat upon the throne, and how she was going to govern was still unknown. She returned England to the Protestant church, but she did not appear willing to embrace the more extreme Protestant faction, as her brother Edward had done. Which way Elizabeth would lean on matters of the church was a heavy matter for many, but for the merchants the main question had to have been, how would their young Queen rule on matters of trade and rights of the sea? There is little indication that the merchants felt safe enough to brazenly trade in the Atlantic during the first few years of Elizabeth's reign, but in 1561 the floodgates were opened and Elizabeth's government was inundated with complaints from Portugal regarding English expeditions to Guinea and Brazil.¹³³³ It was also in 1561 that Hakluyt's narratives of Guinea voyages resumed. Once again, the merchants of the Muscovy Company led the charge back into open trade with Africa, with Garrard, Winter, Hickman, Lodge, Chester, and Castelin being major supporters of the Guinea trade in 1561.¹³³⁴

In April 1561, Elizabeth promised the Portuguese Ambassador that she would admonish her subjects not to sail into any country subject to Portugal, and specified that they were not allowed to "traffic in any port of Ethiopia being under his dominion and tribute," nor to impede

¹³³¹ Ryder, 79.

¹³³² Elizabeth contributed her ship the *Minion* to the expedition, Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, p. 262.

¹³³³ TNA SP 70/25 f. 83.

¹³³⁴ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 253, 255, 258-261, 262.

the shipping of his subjects.¹³³⁵ However, she carefully couched her words to leave several loopholes. For instance, she only banned her subjects from trading in ports that were under Portugal's dominion and tribute. Given that the Portuguese paid tribute to African kings to keep trade open, and no one paid tribute to Portugal, this left the majority of the ports open for English trade.

In her response to the ambassador, Elizabeth stated quite firmly that she did not know of any reason why her subjects could not trade in Portuguese controlled ports, if they paid the due tribute.¹³³⁶ A year later, on May 27, 1562, Elizabeth responded to a declaration of five reasons for Portuguese rights to Africa, which had been drafted by the Portuguese Ambassador and delivered to her just a few days before.¹³³⁷ She stated that, while she had admonished her subjects not to enter any of the havens of Ethiopia in which the King of Portugal had dominion, obedience and tribute, this order was taken "for no small prejudice to her natural subjects" not because they disliked the Portuguese but because "the example of such a prohibition was never heard before in this realm."¹³³⁸ She continued that she could see no reason why her subjects should be forbidden to resort to any country where the Portuguese had either dominion, obedience, and tribute, or not, as "amongst all Princes and countries the use of intercourse of merchandise is the chief exercise of amity."¹³³⁹ She further stated that such a prohibition did not make sense for Christian kingdoms as the "more Christian people that shall resort to the Gentiles and Saracens, the more shall the faith increase" and she could not allow that more regard should be given to the enriching of any particular person by trade monopolies than to the public utility

¹³³⁵ TNA SP 70/25 f.95.

¹³³⁶ TNA SP 70/25 f. 93.

¹³³⁷ TNA SP 70/37 f. 121; SP 70/37 f. 153.

¹³³⁸ TNA SP 70/37 f. 153.

¹³³⁹ TNA SP 70/37 f. 153.

of the whole body of Christendom.¹³⁴⁰ In this way, Elizabeth argued that Portugal had no right to ban trade from areas they did not control, that free and open trade was tradition, and as it was allowed between their two countries, and the rest of Europe, it should be allowed to Portugal's dominions as well. Finally, she offered an argument that Rastell first proposed in 1519 as a reason for colonization and which Hakluyt would make famous in his publications, that the extension of English activities into the Atlantic world would bring Christians into contact with the Gentiles, and by extension, extend the faith. These arguments became key to Elizabeth's maritime policy and the philosophy of her seamen who are credited with giving birth to the British Atlantic.

While Elizabeth did issue a proclamation banning her subjects from trading in African ports controlled by the Portuguese, she worded it so that her subjects could work around the prohibitions. Not only did the English continue to trade with West Africa, but their trade appears to have grown, and royal ships became involved in the trade, as Elizabeth began investing in the Guinea ventures, having recognized the potential profits offered by the south Atlantic.¹³⁴¹ In 1562, Elizabeth partnered with Sir William Garrard, Sir William Chester, Thomas Lodge, Anthony Hickman, and Edward Castelin, contributing her pinnace, the *Fleur de Lys*, and two of her ships, the *Minion* and the *Primrose*, to an expedition to Guinea. While Hakluyt recorded William Rutter's account of the voyage, he did not mention Elizabeth's contribution. However, a letter from Edward Kingsmill to Hugh Tipton mentions the pinnace by name, identifying it as belonging to the Queen and being involved in the expedition.¹³⁴² The indenture between the Queen and Lodge stated that the Queen contributed the *Minion* and the *Primrose* to "partes of

¹³⁴⁰ TNA SP 70/37 f. 153.

¹³⁴¹ TNA SP 70/31 f. 56; SP 70/35 f. 78.

¹³⁴² TNA SP 70/35 f. 124. For an account of the expedition see Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. VI, pp. 258-61.

Africa or Ethiopia where the king of Portugall hath not presntly dominion, obediture and tributes,” and that she further commanded that all of their tackle be handed over for the voyage to Africa.¹³⁴³ This was a significant contribution on the part of the Crown. Not only did Elizabeth commit two ships and a pinnace, she committed the tackle as well, making this a serious financial and physical investment, which would have entitled her to a large portion of the profits from the voyage.¹³⁴⁴ A letter from Sir Nicholas Throckmorton to Elizabeth revealed that the King of Portugal knew of Elizabeth’s contribution and had sent two great galleons and four caravels to defeat the merchant ships, as well as the Queen’s ship.¹³⁴⁵ This does not seem to have concerned Elizabeth, and she continued to commit her ships to transatlantic trade.

The voyage of 1562 was the first time Elizabeth is known to have invested in an Atlantic venture, but it would not be her last. Elizabeth would invest in John Hawkins’ transatlantic voyages as well, beginning a habit of denying the activities of her mariners while not so secretly benefiting from their exploits. In 1564 alone, Elizabeth invested in both John Hawkins’ expedition to Africa and the Caribbean and in the voyage of “Cobham and others who are bound for Guinea and the Portugal Indies,” as well as the voyage of Mr. Stukly, who was bound for Florida.¹³⁴⁶ She continued to invest both ships and goods in ventures to the south Atlantic for years to come. Thus, with this first investment in a Guinea voyage, Elizabeth picked up where her father had left off, contributing royal assets to Atlantic enterprises, only she was not, at this time, interested in the north Atlantic for the purpose of exploration or colonization. Her interest

¹³⁴³ TNA SP 12/26 f. 87.

¹³⁴⁴ Elizabeth committed these ships to the Merchant Adventurers to Guinea again in 1564 in return for a third of the profits. TNA SP 12/35 f. 91.

¹³⁴⁵ TNA 70/35 f. 78.

¹³⁴⁶ TNA 70/73 f. 206.

in the Atlantic world began in the south Atlantic and the profits to be made in Guinea, and then in the triangle trade.

It is often argued that England did not become interested in the Atlantic world until the exploits of John Hawkins and Francis Drake revealed the profits of the Atlantic, and men like Richard Hakluyt and Walter Raleigh made public pleas for colonization which captured public imagination. John Hawkins is often given credit for ushering in this new era of Atlantic activity. It is argued that he was the first Englishman to participate in the transatlantic slave trade, and that it is this activity which first brought the English into the Atlantic and gave birth to the British Atlantic. However, as demonstrated earlier in this dissertation, Hakluyt was not the first to make public arguments for English colonization. Richard Eden had made similar calls decades earlier, and before that John Rastell had presented similar arguments for colonization in a manner which appealed to both the learned elite and the common man. John Hawkins did not invent the transatlantic triangle trade for which he has been remembered. Rather, his father was the first Englishman to practice this trade pattern, trading between West Africa and Brazil, but did not invent it, following in the footsteps of the French. Through this trade, the Hawkins family became the most prominent merchant family in Plymouth, allowing John and his brother William to rise to fame in Elizabeth's court. Nor was John Hawkins the first Englishman to sell enslaved Africans to the Caribbean. While he was the first Englishman to transport a significant number of enslaved Africans and to demonstrate the lucrative profits to be had in the transatlantic slave trade, this trade was not, as some have argued, what first brought English merchants to West Africa. The labor demands of the sugar plantations and the desire to join the rapidly growing slave trade came much later, nearly a century after English merchants began to profit from West

African trade. These sixteenth-century merchants did not trade in human cargo. They purchased gold, ivory, grains, and pepper.

William Hawkins was not alone in his transatlantic ventures. Others, such as Robert Reneger, also gained wealth and prominence through this trade, a trade that was well underway during the reign of Henry VIII. Though the trade in the south Atlantic was put on hold during the war with France in the 1540s for the more lucrative practice of privateering, once the war was over, the leading voices for England's mercantile expansion turned once again to the South Atlantic. These voyages should not be written off as failures due to the fact that they did not result in permanent English structures along the West African coast, or the start of English imperialism in the region. This is an Anglocentric, imperialistic approach to the history of West African trade. While some voyages proved more profitable than others, with some ending undeniably in failure, these voyages are significant for they reveal the consistent and growing English activity in the Atlantic world throughout the sixteenth century. Barlow, Cabot, Wyndham, Castelin, Garrard, and William Hawkins all began their careers and gained the majority of their experience during the first half of the sixteenth century, during Henry's reign. It was these men, and the merchant syndicates that they formed, who opened the south Atlantic trade and paved the way for the great Elizabethan adventurers, who are remembered as the pioneers of the British Atlantic. It was in the south Atlantic that Martin Frobisher was introduced to maritime trade and exploration into unknown regions, and where he gained his start as a mariner. It was the syndicate formed by Garrard, Castelin, Chester, Hickman, and Lodge which served as Elizabeth's first investment in Atlantic trade.

Through such investment Elizabeth began a lifelong practice of investing in transatlantic ventures. She did so to take part in the profits clearly seen in the south Atlantic, and in doing so,

some would say, began the British Atlantic. However, this was not a beginning. Rather than beginning something new, Elizabeth was simply joining a growing trade which had proven its profitability for English merchants for the past thirty years, and which was a segment of England's broader interest in the Atlantic world.

Courtly interest in the Atlantic world did not begin with Elizabeth and her court. This interest was present in the court of Henry VIII, continually revealing itself through his activities and the activities of his courtiers throughout his reign. The interest of English noblemen and the academic elite did not end with the death of Henry, rather it continued during the reign of Edward VI and can be seen in the return of Sebastian Cabot to England. While this interest was overshadowed by the piratical activities during Mary's reign and her efforts to support Phillip II in every way, it did not disappear or die off. This was when Richard Eden published his arguments for English colonization in North America. It was during Mary's reign that the Muscovy Company formed and reopened northern exploration, and when English activity in West Africa picked up once again and grew, according to the Portuguese, to a dangerous level. By the time Elizabeth took the throne, English merchants and academics had been active in, and dreaming about the Atlantic world for over half a century. For England's merchants in Bristol, Southampton, and London, the Atlantic world had been a growing market and a place to make one's fortune since the turn of the century. And for England's forward-thinking elite, the Atlantic world had held the promise of England's future since John Cabot and Robert Thorne Sr. had first promised wealth via the west.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Epilogue

In August, 1568, battered by multiple storms, John Hawkins guided his fleet of six ships into the safety of the harbor at San Juan de Ulúa, (part of modern-day Veracruz), a major port for Mexico. It was the end of a long transatlantic voyage which had started along the Guinea coast where Hawkins acquired roughly 500 enslaved Africans to sell to the Spanish colonists in the Americas. Of his human cargo, 250 captives were acquired by helping a Mane king conquer an enemy village of 8,000 inhabitants. Hawkins contributed both men and weapons to the ground assault and naval support by bombarding the village with cannon.¹³⁴⁷ This was Hawkins' third slaving voyage and became a turning point for the English activities in the Atlantic world. While Hawkins repaired his damaged fleet at San Juan de Ulúa, the Spanish fleet carrying the new Viceroy of New Spain arrived. Having received specific orders to stop the smuggling activities of the English in New Spain, the Viceroy feigned friendship and launched a night attack against Hawkins' fleet. In the aftermath of the battle, a small barque named the *Jasper* and Hawkins' flag ship, the *Jesus of Lubeck* (which belonged to the Crown), managed to escape. However, the two ships were quickly separated, and as the *Jesus of Lubeck* was severely damaged and lacking in supplies, Hawkins was forced to abandon 100 men in Florida. In the end, many of his crew died of starvation on the homeward voyage, and Hawkins had to take on fresh men at Vigo, Spain in order to make the final stretch home to England.¹³⁴⁸

¹³⁴⁷ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. X, pp.65. The debate over the identity of the two warring groups in Hawkins' account can be found in Walter Rodney, "A Reconsideration of the Mane Invasions of Sierra Leone" *Journal of African History*, viii (1967), 219-46. As well as in P.E.H. Hair, "Protestants as Pirates, Slavers and Proto-missionaries: Sierra Leone 1568-1582" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 21. (Cambridge, 1970), 203-224.

¹³⁴⁸ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. X, pp. 64-74.

Despite the colossal loss of lives, profit, and investment represented by this voyage, the expedition of 1567-8 is often cited as the birth of England's Atlantic interests. Hawkins was outraged by his losses in the attack at San Juan de Ulúa, and he spent years bringing the matter up before the English Court and Spanish officials, demanding restitution for his losses, claiming that he had every right to trade in areas willing to trade with him. In addition, this was the first battle Francis Drake participated in against the Spanish. Drake had obtained his first exposure to transatlantic enterprise aboard Hawkins' slaving expeditions, and through this incident in San Juan de Ulúa, he developed an instant animosity against the Spanish and embarked on a personal war against Spain, becoming the most famous English privateer of his era and for centuries to come. Thus, with this personal animosity triggering Drake's piratical activities, which inspired so many others to take to the seas, many have pointed to Hawkins' third slaving voyage as the start of the English Atlantic.¹³⁴⁹

However, John Hawkins did not start something new with his transatlantic activities. Rather, he built upon the foundations laid by those who had gone before him; by his father, William Hawkins, who had modeled the triangle trade, by the English merchants such as Thomas Tison who had traded freely and openly with the Spanish colonies in the New World, and by the merchant adventurers who had sponsored so many voyages to West Africa in the preceding

¹³⁴⁹ For examples of this see John Friske, *The Discovery of America: with Some Account of Ancient America and the Spanish Conquest*, vol. II, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892); James Anthony Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century*, (Longmans, Green and Co. 1928); Williamson, J.A. *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1913); Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: Northern Voyages A.D. 1500-1600*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History. Atlantic America 1492-1800. Vol. I*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Cummins, John. *Francis Drake: The Lives of a Hero*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora*, (Cassell, 2000); George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration*, (Oxford University Press, 2006).

decades. Hawkins had first learned of west Africa from his father and then expanded his knowledge through his contacts and time spent in the Canaries, where he learned that forced labor was in short supply in the West Indies and that he could easily turn a profit by obtaining slaves in Guinea to sell in the West Indies. His first voyage in 1562-63 was partially backed by Sir Thomas Lodge, Sir William Winter, and Sir Lionell Ducket, all of whom had been active promoters of previous Guinea voyages.¹³⁵⁰ On Hawkins' second voyage in 1564-65, William Chester's son, John Chester, accompanied him. It is unknown who invested in the 1564-65 expedition beyond Elizabeth I and Edward Castelin, who had been a central figure in the West African expeditions.¹³⁵¹

Conclusion

Too often studies of English expansion into the Atlantic overlook the activities of the first half of the sixteenth century. The voyages which embarked during the reign of Henry VIII are often ignored, or if they are acknowledged, relegated to the footnotes of history as an interesting anomaly, an amusing tale of little value to our understanding of the British Atlantic or of Atlantic exploration. Likewise, historiography has all but ignored the activities of English merchants in the Atlantic world, with the activities of men like Robert Thorne and Roger Barlow known to a handful of specialists and the merchant expeditions along the West African coast written off as unproductive anomalies, false starts to the British Atlantic. It is to the Elizabethans that historians look for the impetus of the British Atlantic, when larger than life figures such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins championed England in a battle against Spain for the wealth and souls of the Americas, and when Englishmen such as Frobisher and Gilbert stirred the

¹³⁵⁰ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. X, p. 9.

¹³⁵¹ Hakluyt, *Principle Navigations*, vol. X, p. 10, 63; Willan, 85.

imaginings of Englishmen and inspired voyages to North America for the glory and expansion of England. This is a patriotic tale of Atlantic expansion, one which Englishmen have taken pride in since it was first propagated by Richard Hakluyt in 1589, and one which was again celebrated by a renewal of interest in England's maritime history at the turn of the twentieth century.¹³⁵² While most historians work to keep such nationalistic bias out of their research today, the legacy of these groundbreaking and authoritative studies remains.

This omission of the English presence in the Atlantic world before the reign of Elizabeth I owes much to the fact that it is overshadowed by the celebrated exploits of the Elizabethans, however, it is perhaps also due in large part to the manner in which historians have conceptualized the history of exploration and discovery, and Atlantic history. The Atlantic world is often studied in nationalistic/imperialistic modes. The descriptive titles of many of the fields of Atlantic history exemplify this point: The British Atlantic; The Spanish Atlantic; The British Slave Trade; The Dutch Slave Trade. Even the geographical categorization of the Atlantic world has been used to shore up imperialistic boundaries, with the North Atlantic associated with the purview of the British and the French, and the South Atlantic associated with the Portuguese and the Spanish. This is a criticism of the field of Atlantic history that is often traced back to the very foundations of the field in the post-World War environment, when many scholars built upon the works of imperial historians and argued for the nation's "natural" affinity for overseas expansion and trade.¹³⁵³ There are many reasons for imperialistic categorization of

¹³⁵² For some examples of this type of narrative see, H.R. Fox Bourne, *English Seamen under the Tudors: The Rise of English Seamanship Under the Earlier Tudors and the Progress of Maritime Discovery and Colonial Enterprise Under Queen Elizabeth*, volume I, (1868); John Friske, *The Discovery of America: with Some Account of Ancient America and the Spanish Conquest*, vol. II, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892); James Anthony Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century*, (Longmans, Green and Co. 1928).

¹³⁵³ For a discussion of this see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 1-50. There are several examples of Atlantic historians who are pushing back against these imperialistic boundaries to Atlantic studies. One such example is Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, who argues

the field: it is easier to establish a research project within well defined boundaries; much of Atlantic history is defined by these imperial boundaries and the efforts to enforce them; or the simple truth that historical fields must start somewhere and basic parameters must be created and understood before the messiness of a field can truly be appreciated. These imperialistic boundaries serve a useful purpose in the organization and teaching of Atlantic history. However, when solely operating within these contexts, it is easy to forget that diplomatic borders are not tangible entities and cannot contain the flow of information or even commerce and people at all times. History does not happen in a vacuum; each event is influenced by events and changes happening around it.

By moving away from this nationalistic framework and considering the Atlantic world as a fluid, transnational space, a very different picture of Atlantic exploration emerges. Rather than taking place within the neatly defined parameters of a Spanish or a Portuguese imperial space Atlantic exploration took place within a transnational world. Instead of a Spanish, French or English moment of first contact with the Atlantic world, there was a European moment. The voyages of exploration were manned by international crews and backed by foreign investors. They were, in a sense, transnational efforts to find new trade routes.¹³⁵⁴ In addition to this revelation, by laying aside the nationalistic glasses through which the Atlantic is often subconsciously viewed, the voyages which did not add to the growth of empire come into clearer focus. No longer are these voyages blurred by the understanding that they are meaningless to

against this trend of creating a clear separation of the Atlantic world into imperialistic spheres, arguing for an entangled or common Atlantic history. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). For further discussion of this current movement within the field of Atlantic history, and some of the push back against the field, see the introductory essay in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 3-33.

¹³⁵⁴ A similar argument is made by Heather Dalton in her description of the early sixteenth century Atlantic world as an entangled space. Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers*.

history as they add no real contribution to the establishment of empire. Now these voyages can be seen for what they are, early attempts at exploration and colonization that failed, for one reason or another, but that nevertheless represent a concerted effort, on some level, to expand into the Atlantic.

The English were present in the Atlantic from the very beginning of westward voyages, with merchants in Bristol leading the way into the Atlantic during the reign of Henry VII and looking south to Africa as early as 1481. These merchants' efforts predate Columbus's famous voyage of 1492, and they likely recognized they had discovered a new land long before Columbus laid eyes on the American continent. These Bristolian merchants were entrepreneurs who sought to expand their business by finding new avenues of trade, not just new routes through which to trade English goods. Joining forces with John Cabot, they explored the north eastern coastline of North America. If the Spanish Crown was correctly informed regarding English exploration, then the English likely made it as far south as the Yucatan Peninsula.¹³⁵⁵ By the end of Henry VII's reign, the English merchants had a good understanding of the current state of Atlantic exploration, and through their partnerships with Italians, such as Cabot, and Portuguese merchants, such as João and Francisco Fernandes, they already exemplified the entangled nature of the Atlantic. These entrepreneurs laid the groundwork for the next generation. In the case of Robert Thorne this is very literal, setting the stage for England's active commerce in the Atlantic world.

¹³⁵⁵ See the discussion of Ojeda's commission in chapter 1. The commission can be found in M. Fernandez de Navarrete, *Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos, que Hicieron por mar los Españoles Desde fines del siglo XV, con varios Documentos Ineditos Concernientes Á la Historia de la Marina Castellana y de los Establicimientos Españoles en Indias*, vol III (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1829), 86.

English merchants actively participated in the creation of the Spanish Atlantic, investing in voyages, providing commerce for voyages, and trading directly with the Caribbean. As early as 1509, there was an English presence in the Spanish Caribbean, and this presence continued throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. Men such as Thomas Tison operated in the Spanish Caribbean as official factors of merchants who remained in Spain and England. These English merchants, most of whom had ties to Bristol, actively contributed to the expansion of the Atlantic world. They looked to expand their trading networks and invested in some of the earliest trading expeditions to the New World, actively participating in the transatlantic market before Cortez discovered the wealth of Mexico. Men such as Thomas Malliard capitalized on the new, growing markets of the Spanish colonies by sending essential trade goods to the colonies in their earliest stages. Before sugar was introduced into the Caribbean, these merchants had already gained a foothold into the Atlantic sugar trade, making them familiar with African slavery before the first transatlantic shipment of slaves. This is best exemplified by Malliard, who, along with his Genoese business partner, Francesco Spinola, leased a sugar plantation in La Palma in the Canaries.¹³⁵⁶ Not only do Malliard's activities reveal the early activity of English merchants in the Atlantic sugar trade, but his connection to the sugar plantations is yet another illustration of the international nature of the Atlantic world at the time, due to his partnership with Spinola who was himself a Genoese operating in Spain by taking advantage of Spanish trade networks. Through Malliard, Roger Barlow gained first-hand knowledge of the sugar trade as well as the African slave trade. Malliard is also the first Englishman to participate in the transatlantic slave trade, doing so legally by purchasing two *asientos* in 1521, forty years before John Hawkins' first slaving voyage.¹³⁵⁷ English merchants

¹³⁵⁶ Unger, 19-20, 61.

¹³⁵⁷ Unger, 28.

participated in the Spanish Atlantic through a variety of ways, operating in a transnational space within the defined parameters of the Spanish Atlantic.

Perhaps one of the best examples of the entangled, or transnational nature of the Atlantic during the first half of the sixteenth century is Cabot's voyage of 1526. This voyage can be traced back to an agreement made on December 2, 1524, by a group of seven men, none of whom were Spanish by birth. This document was signed by Sebastian Cabot, Robert Thorne and his Genoese colleague, Leonardo Cattaneo, Leonardo's son, Angel Cattaneo and three other Genoese merchants: Francisco Leardo, Pedro Benito Basinana, and Pedro Juan de Riberol. These seven men pledged to raise the funds needed to send a fleet to the Moluccas and Terra Firma, and to draft an agreement to present for royal approval for the expedition.¹³⁵⁸ The Crown approved of the agreement, and these men all served as major financial contributors for the 1526 expedition headed by Cabot, sailing under the Spanish flag. In addition to being initially organized and partially funded by an international group of merchants, the expedition also sailed with a significantly high ratio of foreign sailors. Nearly half of the crew were not Castilian.¹³⁵⁹ Several of the crew members were Englishmen, including Roger Barlow and Henry Patmer.¹³⁶⁰

Through the Spanish networks many of the English merchants, such as Bridges and Malliard, were able to satisfy their desire to expand their trade into the New World without assuming all of the risk involved in a transatlantic voyage. Through these networks it was possible for Englishmen to sail on Spanish expeditions of exploration, such as Cabot's to the Rio de la Plata. The successful group of English merchants around Thorne and Barlow interacted with the opening of the Atlantic world through trade and investment. These men recognized the

¹³⁵⁸ Dalton, 73.

¹³⁵⁹ Dalton, 84; Medina, 105-6, 226.

¹³⁶⁰ For further discussion of this expedition see chapter six.

profits to be made in the Atlantic world, and negotiated ways of partaking of the Atlantic profits without having to shoulder all of the risks, by participating in the Spanish system, by sending official factors, first Spaniards and later Englishmen, to the Caribbean, and by shipping their cargoes on Spanish ships. These men were present at the beginning of transatlantic exploration and trade, playing an active role in the Atlantic world. The fact that they did not do so under the English flag does not negate their presence or the precedence it set. In many ways they laid the foundation for English activities in the Atlantic during the latter decades of the century, bringing back their vast experience and knowledge to England, where they worked toward English expansion. The presence of Englishmen abroad not only allowed for the flow of Atlantic goods and wealth into England, but also information.

As demonstrated in chapters two and three, historians have been quick to write off English interest in the exploration of the Atlantic world due to the lack of English publications regarding geography, navigation, and exploration. However, this reasoning is centered in nationalistic terms and forgets the international community of learning of which English academics and literary elites were active members. Barlow and Thorne were simple merchants, yet they were able to operate seamlessly in Spain, being fluent in Spanish and likely having at least reading knowledge of Portuguese and Latin. They were familiar with Oviedo's history of the New World and Enciso's geography. They purchased books in the learned languages on the continent, not in England or in English. Similarly, the academic elite were all proficient in the learned languages and acquired the majority of their books from the continent. As chapter two demonstrates, these books were not published in English. They were published in French, Latin, and German. Englishmen such as John Rastell and Sir Thomas More stayed current on academic debates occurring on the continent, despite the fact that they were not published on English

presses. They read Vespucci's accounts of the New World. Rastell was familiar with Waldemüller's works. These men did not need English publications to stay well informed.

Likewise, members of Henry's court and household, as well as the literate elite, also purchased books printed on European presses in the learned languages. Henry VIII's household contained impressive libraries and he, as well as several of his wives, were known for being bookish. They were proficient in the learned languages, lauded for their skills at conversing and translating foreign languages, and enjoyed reading books published in French, Latin, Italian, and Spanish. They did not purchase books in English, nor does it appear that the majority of the English literate did either. While John Rastell argued for the need for English translations to ensure that knowledge was accessible to all Englishmen, the lack of translations did not stop the English from consuming large quantities of books. It was not until the mid-Elizabethan era that books printed in English began to outpace books in the learned languages.¹³⁶¹

In many ways, John Rastell's life exemplifies the difficulties for the English literate to create a concerted push towards Atlantic expansion. Rastell, like many of his humanist friends, was a man with wide and varied academic interests. He pursued many careers in his life, but he never lost his passion for learning and his interest in English exploration and expansion. Rastell recognized early on that England needed to expand into the Atlantic world and, more specifically, into North America if it was to keep up with Europe. Rastell presented the first nationalistic plea for colonization, reminding his fellow Englishmen that they were the first to discover North America, when, "the noble kynge of late memory, The moste wyse prynce the seventh Herry," caused it to be found.¹³⁶² If not for the cowardice of mariners, who had

¹³⁶¹ See chart 2 in chapter 2.

¹³⁶² Rastell, *IIII Elements*, Li-Lii. For further discussion of this see chapter three.

prevented the his voyage from going forward, the English would already be claiming the vast resources in North America and building permanent habitations. Because of this betrayal, France already reaped the benefits of the fisheries, sending yearly over a hundred ships to the fisheries which should, by right of first conquest, belong to England. Rastell goes on to identify other key resources, such as timber, which England sorely needed and relied upon European trade for.¹³⁶³ Rastell did not see North America as a frozen wasteland with nothing to offer, as some historians have argued was the view of the English at this time.¹³⁶⁴ Rather, in a manner similar to the nationalistic pleas which Hakluyt would perfect, Rastell played upon his audience's patriotism, presenting his argument for colonization as not only beneficial to the native Americans, but also as a glorious task for England.

O what a thyng had be than
If that they that be Englyshe men
Might have ben the furst of all
That there shulde have take possessyon
And made furst buyldyng & habytacion
A memory perpetuall
And also what a honorable thyng
Bothe to the realme and to the kynge
To have had his domynyon extendyng
There into so farre a grounde¹³⁶⁵

Rastell's play reveals that Hakluyt did not invent the nationalistic pleas for colonization. Nor was Richard Eden the first to publish a passionate plea for England to lay claim to North America. These arguments had already been made at the beginning of the century, before the

¹³⁶³ Rastell, *IIII Elements*, Lii.

¹³⁶⁴ Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America*, 160; Davies, 4-8; Fuller, 121-124. For further examples of this see the Introduction.

¹³⁶⁵ Rastell, *IIII Elements*, Lii.

Reformation took hold in England, pitting England against Spain in a battle of Protestants against Catholics.

Rastell passionately pleaded for colonization, and at every opportunity he attempted to educate his audience in cosmographical and geographical matters, to inspire interest through pageants and plays. He discussed these matters with his family, likely discussing concepts of colonization with his sons and his brother-in-law, Thomas More. His son John later did what his father could not, and crossed the Atlantic to see North America. However, Rastell was distracted by the Reformation, becoming so consumed with it that he alienated himself from his son William and More, and focused so exclusively on printing Reformation pamphlets that he brought his printing business to ruin. In the end, the Reformation would prove to be the death of both More and Rastell, though they died on opposite sides of the issue. Rastell's life demonstrates how the English Reformation stalled discussions of exploration and colonization even for the most devoted of its proponents.

Throughout his reign, Henry VIII returned again and again to the prospects of Atlantic exploration. He encouraged Rastell's voyage of 1517 and pushed for a significant voyage in 1521, likely after seeing Rastell's play, *A Merry Interlude of the IIII Elements*. After a brief period of war with France, Henry once again turned his attention to the topic of exploration in 1525, promising Paulo Centurione, a noted Genoese navigator and cosmographer, the equipment for several vessels for a voyage of discovery. Plans for this expedition were abruptly ended by the untimely death of Centurione. However, this did not stop Henry from pursuing exploration for long.¹³⁶⁶ In 1527, he sent John Rut on an exploratory expedition to the Americas, a voyage

¹³⁶⁶ HARRISSE, 50; J. A. WILLIAMSON, *Maritime Enterprise, 1485-1558* (1913), (London: Oxford University Press, reprint, 1952), 249.

which explored the entire eastern seaboard of North America and created a flurry of transatlantic discussion by its arrival in the Caribbean.¹³⁶⁷ Though Henry was consumed with his divorce from Catherine of Aragon by the time Rut returned, which was subsequently followed by the all-consuming break with Rome, marriage to and then execution of Anne Boleyn, and then his marriage to Jane Seymour, Henry did not lose his interest in Atlantic exploration. Once again, in 1541, rumors abounded that Henry planned to send out an expedition, one that was likely encouraged by Roger Barlow's *Summe of Geographie*. Throughout his reign Henry showed a noted interest in maritime affairs, building the English Navy into a noteworthy fleet and making maritime service and interest fashionable. He possessed a deep interest in learning, especially the sciences, and surrounded himself with well-educated men and women who read widely and stayed up to date on the latest publications from the continent. He encouraged and sponsored cartographers throughout his reign, welcoming French cartographers and navigators such as Verrazzano, Jean Rotz and Jean Ribault to his court. Henry faced many distractions throughout his reign. Many of these distractions were all consuming and took immediate precedence over voyages of exploration. His reign is well studied and notable precisely because of these distractions: the constant wars with France, the Reformation and break with Rome, his many marriages. However, each and every time life calmed down for a brief moment, Henry returned again to matters of exploration, demonstrating that his interest in exploration was not just a passing one, it was a deep, lifelong interest that he never let go.

Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century the educated elite in England discussed the widening Atlantic world and the possibilities that lay within the Atlantic for England. John Rastell was not alone in his opinion that North America held vast resources, especially within its

¹³⁶⁷ For the details of Rut's voyage see chapter five.

forests and seas, that England could and should reap the benefits of. As discussed in chapter three, More and Eden also made arguments which presented the resources of North America as being beneficial for society. Eden also, like Rastell, argued that it was God's work for the English to colonize North America and bring the gospel to Native Americans. Hakluyt did not invent these arguments. In fact, he directly copied much of Eden's work. The discussions of intellectuals during Henry's reign, such as Thorne and Barlow, helped shape the arguments of the next generation. When Humphry Gilbert and Anthony Jenkinson debated the necessity of a north-west passage venture before Elizabeth I and her Privy Council, they did so in a manner that, E. G. Taylor has stated, proves they were familiar with the Thorne-Barlow arguments.¹³⁶⁸ Thorne's writings, which had passed to Emanuel Lucar, made their way into Hakluyt's hands and became well publicized in England, shaping much of the dialogue of northerly ventures for decades to come. Arguments for, and discussions of, colonization and exploration were present among the intellectual elites throughout the sixteenth century. Though they were suppressed by the Reformation in England, as is illustrated by the life of John Rastell, this does not mean that they were unimportant to the men who engaged in these discussions.

Conversations regarding colonization and the Atlantic world took place in a transnational environment, among men of learning who associated with intellectuals from the continent and often traveled there themselves. These conversations were informed by publications from the continent and by the knowledge brought to England by men such as Verrazzano, Nicholas de Nicolay, Jean Rotz and Jean Ribault. The voyages which embarked during this period were often international expeditions, with French and Portuguese crewmembers and navigators, and with foreign backers from Portugal and Italy. The ships were thus spaces of transnational

¹³⁶⁸ Taylor, *Tudor Geography*, 98.

exchange, and they sailed to international spaces, going to Newfoundland, whose fisheries were remarkable for the number of nationalities that were fishing there at any one time, to West Africa, and to Brazil, where the French and English competed for trade within Portugal's claimed domain. It was this entangled nature of the Atlantic that English merchants pointed to when they protested restrictions on their trade, arguing that it was contrary to the very nature of trade and definition of "merchant" to bar them from trading in regions where their goods were welcomed by the locals and where the indigenous populations desired competitive, international trade. All of these areas reveal that the Atlantic of the sixteenth century was inherently a fluid, transnational space, and thus an argument that the English were late to the Atlantic world because they lacked an imperial sphere in the Atlantic is to deny the very nature of the Atlantic at this time.

William Hawkins opened up the triangular trade for Southampton merchants as early as 1530. By trading for ivory, gold, pepper and grains with west Africa, and brazilwood and other local goods in Brazil, Hawkins built his fortune, operating for at least a decade in the south Atlantic, becoming the wealthiest merchant in Southampton. He was followed by other merchants of Southampton such as Robert Reneger, who had apparent success, and the crew of the *Barbara*, which experienced a colossal failure in their attempt at transatlantic trade. The *Barbara* expedition, as well as Hawkins' expeditions, reveals the international nature of the transatlantic trade to Brazil. Not only did the *Barbara* sail with a number of Frenchmen on board, they encountered both French and Portuguese merchants and officials in South America who worked together and cost the *Barbara* the majority of her cargo. Hawkins brought back word from his expeditions to the Guinea coast and Brazil that the French were already experts at this trade, having already established such friendly relations with the natives in Brazil that they

preferred to trade with the French over the Portuguese. This welcome appears to have been extended to the English as well, as Hawkins brought back a native Chief on his second voyage and had no negative repercussions when he returned the following year with news that the Chief had died on the return trip.¹³⁶⁹

Although the merchants who traded with Brazil and west Africa appear to have taken a break from the trade during the war with France in the 1540s, English merchants quickly returned to the Guinea trade when the war ended. Even when expeditions failed, such as Wyndham's expedition to Benin, the information and cargos brought back to England were enough to inspire immediate follow-up voyages. This trade proved the possible profits in the Atlantic and enticed powerful merchant syndicates in London to finally begin investing in the Atlantic. The wealthy syndicate formed around Garrard, Castilin, and Chester had enough power and influence to force Mary I to cover their financial losses when, in an attempt to appease the Portuguese ambassador, she prevented them from sending out a voyage to west Africa. There is no other instance in the sixteenth century of such a concession being made for a trading expedition. These London merchants continued to trade with west Africa, and it is the profits which they brought back from the south Atlantic which first enticed Queen Elizabeth to invest in Atlantic enterprise. Thus, it was the south Atlantic, more specifically the Guinea trade, which drew royal funds and interest back into the Atlantic world. It was the Guinea voyages which opened the Atlantic for many of the famous Elizabethans who are often seen as being the progenitors of the British Atlantic. While there are just as many failed voyages to the Guinea coast as successful ones that we know of, these failures and the lack of permanent trading posts do not negate the fact that the English had a near constant presence in the Guinea trade for

¹³⁶⁹ For the details of these voyages see chapter seven.

decades before John Hawkins' foray into the transatlantic slave trade. Nor does it diminish the impact these voyages, and the financial wealth generated from them, had on England. These voyages, exemplified by those of Wyndham, Locke and Towerson, revealed the profits that could be had in the Atlantic. However, these voyages and expeditions have been overshadowed by the focused study of English participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

The question can be asked, if the English did have a consistent and active presence in the Atlantic world throughout the sixteenth century, then why have these early voyages and the entangled nature of the Atlantic been all but forgotten? Perhaps it has something to do with the main propagator of sixteenth century maritime history. Richard Hakluyt only discussed two of the Henrician north Atlantic voyages which were looked at in this dissertation; Richard Hore's voyage and John Rut's voyage, through its incorrect connection to Robert Thorne's proposal for a northern voyage. Hore's voyage was published in only one edition of Hakluyt's works and is easy to miss. A voyage in which sons of honorable families resort to cannibalism is not a story that many would want to glorify. Rather, it is an anomaly that many would rather forget, and so they have. As for Thorne's proposition, this is very well known and well-remembered. Hakluyt published this account three times, and referred to it often in his push for northerly voyages. As such, it has been well studied and discussed by historians ever since, despite the fact that there is no hard evidence to connect Thorne's proposition to any of the northerly voyages which occurred in the next two decades. However, this letter is remembered and celebrated because Richard Hakluyt made it famous.

Thorne's compatriot and the first Englishman to write a first-hand account of the Americas, Roger Barlow, also argued for a northerly route. In fact, he did so in a much more eloquent and logical manner than Thorne, and he submitted his argument to Henry VIII and his

court. However, Barlow has been all but forgotten by history. Not until 1932, when E.G. Taylor published Barlow's *A Brief Summe of Geographie* for the Hakluyt Society, did his account leave the archives for public consumption.¹³⁷⁰ Even then, despite a few brief mentions in careful studies of England's Atlantic ventures, such as those by Quinn and Connell-Smith, Barlow remained a lesser known figure to those who study exploration and discovery.¹³⁷¹ Unlike Thorne, Barlow was not praised by Hakluyt. In fact, Hakluyt seems to purposefully omit any reference to this merchant, one of the first Englishmen to explore South America and sail up the Rio de la Plata. While there are several possible reasons for this, such as personal animosity towards the Barlow family, the most obvious and likely reason is that Barlow sailed under the Spanish flag as part of a transnational venture that had official papers from Spain.¹³⁷² This partnership with Spain flies in the face of Hakluyt's main purpose, to build a nationalistic argument for England's right to the North Atlantic Ocean. Hakluyt's narrative is an "us vs. them," with the English pitted against the Spanish in a war for the conquest of the New World and the souls of its inhabitants. In fact, Hakluyt does not mention any of the sixteenth century voyages that could have been seen as being in partnership with Spain. This omission leaves a gap in the narrative of English activity in the Atlantic world, one which this dissertation strives to fill. By revisiting the English participation in the dawn of transatlantic activities, the consistent presence of Englishmen in the Atlantic during the sixteenth century is revealed. The English actively contributed to the opening of the Atlantic world throughout the early sixteenth century. They participated in transatlantic discussions, exploration, and commerce throughout

¹³⁷⁰ Taylor, *A Brief Summe*, vii.

¹³⁷¹ While Dalton's book focuses on Barlow, its recent publication date limits its effect on the historiography at this time. While it will undoubtedly have a profound effect on future historiography it remains to be seen how far this work will reach.

¹³⁷² For a discussion of the animosity between Hakluyt and the Barlows see Dalton, *Merchants and Explorers*, 210-14.

Henry VIII's reign. The English did not lose interest in the Atlantic during the reign of Henry VIII. Instead, there was a continuation of English transatlantic activity throughout the sixteenth century. These discussions and activities reveal the fluid nature of the Atlantic world during Europe's early encounters with the New World. The opening of the Atlantic World did not take place within defined nationalistic/imperialistic parameters, rather, it was a European moment as from multiple nations and provinces came together, shared knowledge and worked together in both private and state ventures to expand their understanding of the Atlantic world and to open new trade routes. Instead of each nation having its own, defined moment of first contact with the Atlantic, there was a European moment of first encounter, exploration and discovery.

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Ledger of John Smyth 1534-1550

Probate Records

British Library.

Add. MS

Barlow's *Briefe Summe of Geographie*, Royal MS. 18 B XXVIII : 1535-1543.

Cotton MS Augustus

Cotton MS Caligula

Cotton MS Cleopatra

Cotton MS Nero

Cotton MS Vespasian

Cotton MS Vitellius

Egerton MS

Harleian MS

Landsdowne MS

Queen Mary's Atlas, Add MS 5415A.

Rotz, *Boke of Idography*, Royal MS. 20 E IX.

Sloane MS 117 84 E.

Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, UK.

Reinel portolan, c. 1535, G 213: 2/4.

Verrazzano World Map, c. 1540, G 201: 1/15.

Cambridge Library

Corrie, George E. "A list of Books presented to Pembroke College, Cambridge, by different donors" (1860) Cam.C.860.33.

Rare books room

London Metropolitan Archives

COL/CA/01/01/005

Trinity House Records

National Archives at Kew, UK.

Chancery Court Records

Court of Requests (REQ)

Court of Star Chamber Records (STAC)

Exchequer Records

High Court of Admiralty Records

Patent Roll 8 Henry VIII, pt. in C

Probate Records

State Papers

Pepys Library, Magdalene College Cambridge

Missilariam of Matters Historical and Naval Vol 1, (2869), (2878).

Virginia Garrett Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington

Münster, Sebastian. (1598) Gift of Dr. Jack Franke.

Ortelius, Abrham. (1570-1581) Gift of Dr. Jack Franke.

Rotz' *Boke of Idrography*, Facsimile copy.

Worshipful Company of Drapers, The Draper's Hall, London,

MS Minutes and Records 1515-1529.

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