Smith vs. Wingfield: Remaking the Social Order in the Chesapeake

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One of the more well-known but less examined facts in the history of Virginia colony is that Edward Maria Wingfield detested John Smith. On February 22, 1607, during a halt in the Canary Islands Wingfield had Smith arrested and imprisoned in the *Susan Constant*'s hold "upon the scandalous suggestions of some of the chief (envying his repute) who feigned he intended to usurpe the government, murder the Council, and make himself king." A "paire of gallows" was built for Smith, although Wingfield was eventually dissuaded from putting them to use (3: 236). When the colonists arrived in the Chesapeake, Wingfield, a graduate of the Inns of Court who had captained infantry companies in the Low Countries and in the Nine Year's War in Ireland, was elected President of the colony at Jamestown. Wingfield now alleged – apparently without providing any evidence -- that Smith had "begged in Ireland like a rogue, without licence," adding that he would not allow his own name to "be a Companyon" to such a man. The insult placed Smith at the very bottom of the social order, among the Tudor era's "masterless men." Why was Wingfield so touchy?[1]

The most pertinent clues are in Gabriel Archer's comment that Smith "gaue not any due respect to many worthy Gentlemen," and George Percy's characterization of Smith as "an ambityous unworthy and vayneglorious fellowe, attempteing to take all mens authorities from them." This was a rigidly hierarchical society based on order, degree, and rank, a system of social stratification so all-pervasive that it seemed "self-evident, even natural." The language of social status involved what Sylvia Thrupp describes as "a conscious blending of moral, economic, and political considerations." The wealthiest were the more sufficient, the abler, or more powerful (*pluis sufficeauntz*, *potentiores*, *pluis vaillantz*). These conspicuously better people were "the more honest, the wiser, the more prudent, and the more discreet." The lower people were the less able, sufficient, and powerful: they were *de plebis*, *inferiors*. A "still vigorous" conception of honour based on "competitive assertiveness" made the social atmosphere in the early Jacobean period combustible. Dramatic fluctuations in personal wealth and more subtle gradations of status were putting gentlemen like Wingfield "under pressure," obliging them to issue challenges for "the most trivial of slips." The *Susan Constant* was early Stuart England in microcosm, a "power-laden" situation in which "a misplaced gesture or a misspoken word" could have "terrible consequences."[2]

Wingfield's haughtiness and Smith's insubordination indicate that the colonists transported a class society based on interlocking degrees of wealth, status, and power to the

Chesapeake. But the founding of the Jamestown colony came at an "uncertain moment" when mercantile wealth and property were beginning to displace rank as the preeminent markers of power and distinction, a process of social mobility that both "gave flexibility to and confirmed the established distinctions between men." Attention has tended to focus on the Virginia colony's "self-destructively overspending grandees," typified by Percy, the youngest son of Henry Percy, eighth earl of Northumberland, who insisting on keeping a "continuall and dayly Table for Gentleman of fashion" at Jamestown. But a critical point of social tension lay between the yeomanry -- a rising class of commercial farmers -- and "small, backward, declining gentry." It was the friction produced by these antagonistic social groups that was responsible for the flare up of hostilities between Smith and Wingfield. In order to clarify the social issues at stake in their contention this essay presents new knowledge about the family history and economic circumstances of both men, situating their personal struggle in the wider context of long-term changes in the class relations of early modern England.[3]

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Wingfield was descended from an ancient gentry family seated in Suffolk before the Norman Conquest. His father was Thomas Maria Wingfield, the second son of Sir Richard Wingfield, who in return for his military and ambassadorial services to the crown had been granted, in 1523, 5,000 acres of lands and woods at Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire as a knight's fee. Sir Richard thereby attained the pre-eminence sought by the landed gentry which was a mixture of economic and political power: the command over "rents, resources, and revenues" combined with "standing and dignity" that allowed a man to hold sway as a godly magistrate in his own locality. But the custom of primogeniture meant that the heir to Kimbolton was Sir Richard's first son, Charles. Wingfield's patrimony was a much more modest affair.[4]

In 1552, Wingfield's parents purchased the manor of Stonely Priory, comprising seventy acres of land, forty acres of meadow, three hundred acres of pasture, and forty two acres of wood -- a total of 452 acres. Thomas Maria Wingfield sat as the member for Huntingdon in four Marian parliaments before dying suddenly and prematurely in 1557 when Wingfield was seven years old. Wingfield's mother married a Northamptonshire landowner, James Cruse, who became his legal guardian. The annuity provided by his father's estate provided enough to send Wingfield to university and to begin studying at the Inns of Court, but he did not pursue a legal, administrative, or business career. Without a fortunate marriage or

lucrative government office Wingfield chose the only route to honour, reward, and preferment that remained to him: the army.[5]

The extended Wingfield clan were "followers" or client gentry of the Norrises, a noble Oxfordshire family. In July 1585, Wingfield's younger brother Thomas Maria Wingfield joined the force assembled by John Norris for the relief of Antwerp as the captain of a company of foot soldiers. Wingfield for the moment stayed behind. In May of 1586, he was one of eight family members claiming to be captains in Ireland and in the Low Countries who petitioned for thousands of acres of land in the county of Limerick confiscated by the Crown for the Munster plantation. The petitioners included Wingfield's uncle, Jacques Wingfield, Master of the Ordnance and constable of Dublin Castle in Ireland. The bid was unsuccessful, probably because Jacques Wingfield had gained a reputation at Court for corruption and incompetence. The disappointment seems to have prompted Wingfield to heed the call of the Earl of Leicester for volunteers to aid the Dutch rebellion.[6]

The Low Countries campaign was an administrative and financial shambles, a series of "endless small skirmishes and sieges, mutinies and betrayals." The English army functioned as "an aggregate of mercenary companies, hiring themselves through their captains." The captain was responsible for arming, clothing, and feeding his company, with the costs reimbursed by the Treasurer-at-War. Delays in payment were frequent since there was disagreement between the allies over responsibility for financing troops as well as widespread corruption and fraud. If royal officials failed to provide funds a captain was forced to borrow on his own credit and settle with his men on his own discretion. From the spring of 1587 soldiers were paid directly, but in the form of reduced weekly advances or "lendings" rather than full pay. Captains were "caught between the chronic lack of cash and the expectation that they should look and behave like gentlemen." By January 7, 1588, Thomas was complaining that the money "appointed for their lendings" was spent, and that his company had "no further means." It would be another seven years before he received the money owed to him.[7]

Further misfortune followed when, on or about August 4, 1587, Wingfield was captured at Sluis along with two other gentleman volunteers, Ferdinando Gorges and Conyers Clifford. While Wingfield languished in prison at Lille, Thomas captured two Spanish soldiers, intending to use them in a prisoner exchange. When Leicester's replacement, Lord Willoughby, learned that one of the Spaniards was a marquis he refused to allow the exchange, since Wingfield was not of equivalent rank. Wingfield and Gorges were eventually exchanged for Spanish prisoners taken in the defeat of the Gran Armada in July 1588, but the incident probably ended the career of both Wingfield brothers in the Low Countries. Willoughby

alleged that Thomas had "despised the authority of a council at wars" and demanded an apology in terms that Thomas felt were "inconsistent" with his own "honour and reputation." Thomas was removed from his post and sent for trial at the Hague, but managed to leave on a passport for England.[8]

In 1595, the brothers again followed Norris into military action, this time in Ireland where crown troops were dispatched to repress the insurgency of local potentates led by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone. Wingfield captained sixty men at the Drogheda garrison alongside Sir Henry Norris, but appears not to have seen any significant action. On May 8, 1597, Thomas was knighted by the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir William Russell, promoted to rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and made Governor and Commander of the garrison at Dundalk. On August 14, 1598, he commanded a regiment on the ill-fated Blackwater expedition, assumed command of the rear-guard on the death of the Marshall, Sir Henry Bagnall, and "made a stand" at Yellow Ford. Late in 1598, Thomas was at Wexford, complaining to the Earl of Ormonde, of "*want of money and apparel for the forces with him*." In November 1600, Thomas asked Sir Robert Cecil "that the money due to him may be paid," since he had "no means to discharge his brothers of such bonds as they have entered into for him."[9]

That Wingfield was borrowing in order to finance his brother's military career is one indication of the financial stresses he was under. Wingfield had failed to win promotion or preferment. Neither brother had managed to translate service to the Crown into landed property in the way that their ancestors had done. Time spent away from home on military service probably meant that Wingfield was not able to increase his rental income by pursuing capitalist agriculture: improving productivity through enclosure, land drainage, and techniques of convertible husbandry, moving to shorter leases and higher rents, keeping accurate profit-and-loss accounts. Among the decayed or *déclassé* gentry "creative financial fixes" were "the order of the day." Wingfield probably heard about the Virginia Company from one of its founders, his former cellmate, Ferdinando Gorges. Adventuring in a joint-stock company was Wingfield's effort to arrest his downward trajectory, a conscious decision to link his fortunes to "fluid, uncommitted capital" rather than real estate. Wingfield was one of the four patentees of the Company whose names appear in the first charter, subscribing the substantial sum of £88. Two days before setting sail from Blackwall, Wingfield mortgaged his remaining lands, tenements, and hereditaments to a group of Northamptonshire gentlemen, no doubt intending that the recipients would alienate the property back to him at a future date. Wingfield's demeanour -- "self-confident, pompous, puffed up with a sense of his own superior birth and position" -- disguised a deep-seated insecurity. Fifty seven years old and still far from being a

lord of land and men, Wingfield was perhaps the most frustrated and embittered of the adventurers who sailed for Virginia.[10]

Smith's birthplace, the village of Willoughby-juxta-Alford-on-Marisco, was off the beaten track, a cluster of farmsteads perched on a gravel island in the middle marsh, the strip of low-lying land running along the Lincolnshire coast. If properly drained, the boulder clay, silt, and peat soils of the marshland could be used for both grazing sheep and growing wheat, providing "a grazing ground for fat stock *and* a granary." Wheat required the richest soil but brought the highest prices of any cereal crop. This was a well-populated and prosperous country in which, as one contemporary observed, "it is hard to find a poor man though they sit at great rents." The Lincolnshire marshland presented an opportunity attractive enough to entice Smith's father, George Smith, away from his home in Cuerdley, Lancashire in order to lease a farm from Katherine Bertie (née Willoughby), duchess of Suffolk and twelfth Baroness Willoughby de Eresby.[11]

George Smith held the lease on his farm "by coppie of Court rowle" (3: 377). "Copyhold" or customary tenure was land held according to the custom of the manor for a term of years or lives. A fine was paid to the landlord at termination of the lease period, and rents and fines were either fixed or varied by the lord. Copyhold tenure was insecure and its legal status increasingly contested, with copyholders litigating for the right to will tenure to descendants and lease their land to other tenants. But George Smith was also a freeholder, a much rarer and highly prized form of tenure which provided secure title to the land as well as the ability to sell, lease, exchange, or devise it at will. He owned "[s]even acres of pasturage" lying nine miles to the north of his farm at Great Carlton, and "two tenements and one Little Close" in the nearby market town of Louth (3: 378). While his main source of income was probably the wheat he produced on his farm as well as the wool from his own pasture, George Smith had rental income from his other properties to insulate him against poor crop yields and price fluctuations. Like many commercially oriented yeoman farmers who produced for the market, he profited from the difference between his costs (low wages for farm labourers; fixed, long-term rents) and skyrocketing prices for wheat. At the time of his death in 1596, George Smith had estimated wealth in goods and lands of between £150 and £200, comparing favourably with the average wealth of marshland farmers of £70, and placing him among the wealthiest twenty five per cent of the community.[12]

George Smith belonged to the class of yeoman farmers, men with "a certeine prehiminence, and more estimation than labourers & artificers," who "commonle live wealthilie, keepe good houses, and travel" (i.e. work), "to get riches." A substantial yeoman

like George Smith occupied an ambiguous position in "the temperate Zone" between "greatness and want." The yeoman was "a *plain Man of a plentiful estate*," but one "undignified with any *title of Gentility*," constituting a uniquely English "*medium*" between the gentlemen and the peasant. He was a "Gentleman in Ore," one who "may," in the next generation, be "refined." An heir was "a Phenix in a Family," but there could be "but one of them at the same time." The future of George Smith"s eldest son was an open question, but it was linked to both his own success in the market and to the favour and notice of his lord.[13]

In 1580, the year of Smith's birth, Peregrine Bertie became 13th Baron Willoughby of Willoughby, Beck, and Eresby. In 1589, when Bertie was appointed Lieutenant General of the forces sent to Normandy he offered to take George Smith's nine-year-old son with him. Copyholders had traditionally been "thrust out to service" in war, but although they joined a lord's trained bands "the richer sort of yemen and their sones," were no longer being "sent out of the land." George Smith had other plans for his son. First, he made him "a Scholar in the two Free schools of Alford and Louth" (3: 153). By sending Smith to the local grammar schools George Smith was signalling "the clear intention of promoting the family's standing and enlarging its range of economic interests." At the age of fifteen Smith was bound as an apprentice to Thomas Sendall, a wealthy Kings Lynn merchant who probably acted as the factor for George Smith's wool and wheat (3: 154). Lynn conducted a busy coastal trade, importing coal from Newcastle and exporting wheat to London in exchange for dry goods and groceries. A promising new mercantile career was taking shape for Smith, except that, early in 1596, his father became ill and died.[14]

Smith had been left "a competent meanes" by his father but was still only sixteen (3: 153). Peregrine Bertie continued to take a protective interest in his tenant's son, arranging for his wife's cousin, George Metham, to act as Smith's legal guardian (3: 154). Granted the sum of ten shillings from his father's estate by Metham, Smith took the opportunity to break the terms of his indentures with Sendall and joined in the war against Spain, serving in the Austrian forces of Prince Zsigmond Bàthory, for which he was rewarded with a passport describing him as "an English gentleman," the right to display the heads of three beheaded Turks on his own coat of arms, and fifteen hundred gold ducats. Back in England by the winter of 1604–5, Smith had achieved martial honour but he still lacked means. Now that he was of age, Smith was able to inherit the Great Carlton pasture, which would have meant dealing with his former guardian George Metham and with the new Baron Willoughby, Robert Bertie. It was probably through Robert Bertie that Smith heard of the colonizing venture being organized in London by Robert Bertie's nephew, Bartholomew Gosnold and Edward Maria Wingfield.[15]

Smith's description of the founders of the Virginia Company as "Nobilitie, Gentrie, and Marchants" indicates how well he understood that, in early modern England, "[t]he really important category was status" (1: 204). But there were fault lines within the Company's class alliance. A "recurrent social pattern" across Europe, noted by Fernand Braudel, was the resistance of "landed wealth and traditional power" to the rise of merchant families and a corresponding denigration of trade. In England, "[m]en of qualitie" were warned not to "disbase themselves" by talking "of things done in the Cittie in the market place." Private traders were known as shrewd, unsentimental men, and were regularly accused of "covetous and hard dealing." The "competitive and rapacious" yeoman was a stock figure of social commentary, regularly denounced for the sin of covetousness. The Essex soldier-turned-satirist Barbabie Rich turned up his nose at men that "live by the plow and the cart, that can gather gold out of the durt, and can reape commoditie from the very excrements of filth itself." Thomas Wilson reserved his most scathing commentary for the son of the prosperous yeoman in "velvett breches and silken dublett" who gains admittance to the Inns of Court and begins his career as a "mongrel" gentleman.[16]

Fifty nine of a known total of the ninety-three colonists who sailed for Virginia were listed as "gentlemen," the most vexed and ambiguous social category of all. Sitting somewhere between the lower reaches of the nobility and the upper reaches of the gentry, gentlemen were not created by the king or given a title like knights or esquires; they were simply "those whome their blood and race doo make noble and knowne." Ultimately it was a matter of appearances: a gentleman was any man who could "live without manuell labour" and "beare the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman." A common ruse was to pay the College of Heralds to devise a coat of arms, and so "pretend antiquity and service, and many gay things." Since "every Jacke would be a Gentleman," the suspicion of imposture hovered over aspirants to gentility. Contrary to Leo Lemay's assertion, Smith had not "achieved gentry status" by virtue of his feats as a soldier. He had paid the minimum subscription of £9 in order to join the adventurers to Virginia. His military rank of captain was an informal one, claimed by anyone who had commanded men in the field or at sea, while his coat of arms came not from the College of Heralds but his own hand. Smith, the phoenix of his yeoman family, was to Wingfield a covetous mongrel gentleman, precisely the kind of upwardly mobile individual able to cast his own decayed fortunes in sharp and shameful relief.[17]

In his various accounts of the Virginia colony, Smith makes it clear that he had no time for "projecting, verbal and idle contemplators" (2: 129), or the "Gallants" sent by the Company, "loyterers without victuals" who would "rather starve than worke" (3: 273). The dedication to

A Map of Virginia (1612) declares that "[v]ertue" is "the soule of true Nobilitie," while in *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England* (1631) Smith offers the historical argument that "[t]hose that were the founders of those great Monarchies and their vertues, were no silvered idle golden Phariseies, but industrious honest hearted Publicans, they regarded more provisions and necessaries for their people, than jewels, ease and delight for themselves" (1: 133; 3: 277). The class critique is insistent and impressive, but the situation is a complex and nuanced one. Smith is engaged in an ongoing struggle between the higher yeomanry and the lower gentry precisely for the status of gentleman. Smith rose to prominence in the Virginia colony because he had the bargaining skills acquired as the eldest son of an enterprising yeoman farmer. Petty huckstering might have been "beneath the dignity of a gentleman" but the very survival of the Virginia colonists depended on it.[18]

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The Virginia Company's instructions to its adventurers were clear in one respect: they were to send "wares, goods and merchandizes" to England. Englishmen came to North America, in other words, as entrepreneurs -- "as middlemen, not settlers." But, as Martin Quitt points out, "the first American market" turned out to be not oceanic trade but "a face-to-face frontier exchange economy" involving Englishmen and Powhatan Indians. Rather than a search for gold, a trade route to the east, or valuable exports, economic life in the colony became focussed on the subsistence needs of the colonists, consisting almost entirely in exchanges of English copper for Powhatan corn. Since the Algonquian paramount chief, Powhatan, possessed a plentiful surplus and knowledge of the colonists' greater need he was able to "set the terms of exchange." Smith, as Cape Marchant, and Newport, as fleet admiral, improvised contrasting trading tactics.[19]

Newport had spent fifteen years in the service of London merchants conducting privateering raids on the Spanish Main. His years of maritime plunder had also given him experience of trading with circum-Caribbean Indians, whether bartering for tobacco, fowl, and potato roots with Dominican Caribs, or trading precious metals for tools with the Calusa Indians of Florida. As Daniel Richter points out, Newport knew something of how to conduct "chiefly exchanges," how to "behave at a feast and to distribute prestige goods." Acts of everyday kindness and liberality were central to the patronage culture of English landed society, "blending thoughtfulness and solicitude with a concern for exterior display and form." It was incumbent on manorial lords to display hospitality to guests and charity to the needy,

while village communities had their own rituals for the relieving of want and distress. A noble man ought to be liberal. "To give is the most honourable & proper use of your goods," James Cleland advises, "[b]estow your benefit willinglie, and with a good heart."[20]

Almost the first view we have of Newport in Smith's *True Relation* (1608) is of Newport "kindely requite[ing]" the "least favours" of the Indians encountered in the James River expedition with "Bels, Pinnes, Needles, beades or Glasses" (1: 29). In Gabriel Archer's account, we see Newport sitting with the werowance or district chief Arrohattoc on a reed mat being feasted with mulberries, wheat, beans, and cakes, and – in an extraordinary gesture of generosity -- receiving Arrohattoc's "Crowne" from him, "which was of Deares hayre dyed red." Newport reciprocates by presenting Arrohareck with "gyftes of dyvers sortes, as penny knyves, sheeres, belles, beades, glasse toyes & c. more amply then before." Newport, described by James Axtell as a "one-armed, one-time pirate," presented himself to the Indians as a superior, English weroance, the colonists' "father," "King of all the waters" (1: 55; 57). But Newport's strategic error was not to requite the gifts of neighbouring tribes, apparently accepting that conflict with them was inevitable and choosing instead to form alliances with groups further afield. He particularly offended the Paspaheghs, on whose hunting grounds the colonists had built their fort, leading to the combined Indian attacks on James Fort in May, 1607. The failure of Newport's aristocratic "liberallitie" as a trading strategy created an opening for Smith (1: 29).[21]

Smith came of age in a period when "new methods of private bargaining were gradually breaking down the protective barriers of the customary marketing system." In November 1594, a Devon farmer named John Slade sowed his land with wheat and rye; in May of the following year he sold the unharvested crop to Humphrey Morley, who agreed to pay him £16 on the next Feast of St. John the Baptist. When Morley failed to pay, Slade took him to court. Instead of bringing the more common action for recovery of a debt, Slade brought an action of *assumpsit* for the recovery of damages, caused by the breach or non-performance of a contract. Morley's counsel, Francis Bacon, argued that there had been no "express promise" made to honour the contract, which was executory or based on an exchange to be completed at a later date. Edward Coke argued for the plaintiff that, although men might not "always use apt words" in any given undertaking, their promises were legally binding. In 1602, Sir John Popham – one of Wingfield's Northamptonshire creditors -- ruled from the King's Bench that "every contract executory implies in itself a promise," and that Slade was entitled to damages. The case is significant because it establishes two related points: the legal enforceability of promises and the ubiquity and normality of private bargains in an expanded market. England is becoming a

society in which men arrange themselves not according to traditional duties and obligations but according to "the things they own and exchange."[22]

Slade's case marks a crucial moment in the historical transition "from status to contract," from "intrinsic authority" to "the functional world of negotiated power," with aristocratic notions of "fealty and honor" displaced by "the shifting impulses of commoner." After 1602, "social prominence" could no longer "compel performance." In a contract society "binding social relations" become, in Joseph Fichtelberg's words, "contingent," established "locally and continuously in a myriad of individual encounters that cannot be strictly prescribed." This idea needs to be stated more strongly. In Smith's hands, private bargaining becomes a practice and a discourse of legitimation, a means of actively overcoming the subordinate and derogated position in the social hierarchy assigned to him by Archer and Wingfield. Jamestown quickly became a competitive arena of private bargains in which a mongrel gentleman might flourish.[23]

Survival for the colonists depended on successfully exchanging copper trade goods for Indian corn. Corn, or maize, was the most widely planted staple and the most important source of wealth, cultivated in special fields and offered to the paramount chief. On a journey forty miles upriver to Moysonicke, the yeoman farmer's son noticed "more plaine fertile planted ground" than he has ever seen (1: 43). In *A Map of Virginia* Smith assesses the soil of Virginia to be "lusty and very rich," sometimes resembling "*bole Armoniac*," "*terra sigillata*" and "*lemnia*" (varieties of astringent clay used as a styptic), at others Fullers earth and marl (1:145). He compiles a detailed record of how the Indians raise and consume corn, providing both averages and ranges of productivity. "Every stalke" of Indian corne "commonly beareth two eares, some 3, seldome any 4," while every ear "ordinarily hath betwixt 200 and 500 graines" (1: 157). The "waters, Isles, and shoales" of the James River, he notes, are "full of safe harbours for ships of warre or marchandize," the Bay and its rivers filled with "much marchandable fish" (1: 159).[24]

In November, 1607, after his appointment to the position of Cape Marchant, the Company official in charge of the colony's store, Smith made three successful voyages, taking the pinnace twenty miles north of James Fort to trade for corn with the Chickahominy Indians, who were not part of Powhatan's empire. On each of the first two voyages Smith was so "kindly used" by the Chickahominies that he was able to return with seven hogsheads of corn for the colony's store (1: 41). Smith acknowledges that Newport's methods made the Indians "respect us," but he is alarmed by his "liberality" (1: 29). With his background as a yeoman farmer's son and apprentice merchant, Smith sought balanced or equal exchange. Smith proved himself

more adept and flexible at the arts of bargaining – higgle-haggling, dickering, chaffering, -- than any other colonist, to the extent that he functioned as a distinctly modern individual, the "full-time trader, a non-producing middleman," deriving his "livelihood or sustenance" entirely from the skills and practices of the marketplace.[25]

Along with corn, Powhatan leaders also distributed prestige-goods -- crystals, minerals, copper, shells, and ritual artefacts -- invested with ancestral, divine, or primordial powers. Without natural sources of copper within his own territory, Powhatan relied on exchange with neighbouring peoples, and was particularly irked by his dependence on the hostile Monacans. The English had brought plentiful supplies of copper with them in the form of scrap metal from domestic manufacturing. The Chickahominies had no werowance, so Smith set the terms of trade with individual families, showing them his copper and hatchets, each family "seeking to give me most content" (1: 39). "What I liked I bought," Smith concludes, with the self-assurance of the skilled trader (1: 39). In their first face to face encounter, Powhatan promises to give Smith "Corn [and] Venison" in return for "Hatchets and Copper," as well as two large canons and a grindstone (1: 57). The success of this exchange allowed Smith to act as the colony's "market clarke," setting the price of food items in hatchets and copper (1: 215).[26]

Wingfield and the other councillors were so envious of Smith's "estimation amongst the Savages" that they began to conduct their own private trades with the Indians, giving four times as much for their commodities as the rate set by Smith (1: 215). An additional problem was that Newport stayed for fourteen weeks, during which time his crew consumed vital supplies meant for the colonists. Worse still, they turned the *John and Francis* into a floating "tavern," where those with "mony, spare clothes, credit to give bils of payment, gold rings, furres, or any such commodities" were able to buy provisions "at 15 times the valew" (1: 218). Smith makes the class conflict in the colony clear. The "authoritie" in the colony consisted of gentlemen and nobles who were selling off the store's commodities in order to enhance the value of "their estates" as "inheritable revenews" (1: 210).

On September 11, 1607, Smith and the council accused Wingfield of taking supplies for his own use, while giving the colonists short measures of food and drink (1: 210). Sack, aquavitae, "and other preservatives" for the colonists" health were "kept onely in the Presidents hands, for his owne diet, and his few associates" (1: 33). Wingfield's defence was that he had taken delivery of the colony's supplies from Smith, as Cape Marchant, without making a "noat of the pertycularyties," since Smith had "received them in grosse." Wingfield admitted that he "spent" some of the supplies "in Trade, or by guift amongst the Indians," as the occasion moved him. But when Newport "went up to discover the kings river" he also failed to make a record

of the supplies he took with him, meaning that Wingfield was unable to provide proper accounts. Wingfield was dismissed from the council, imprisoned, and, on Smith's complaint, fined £200 for slander. On April 10, 1608, Wingfield and Archer left the colony, "we not having any use of Parliaments, Plaies, Petitions, Admiralls, Recorders, Interpreters, Chronologers, Courts of Plea, nor Justices of the peace" (2: 158). Smith's class victory was complete.[27]

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The popular culture of early modern England contained plentiful evidence of how men's authority might be taken from them. Wingfield might have known the proverb inspired by the English raid on Cadiz or Cales:

> *A Knight* of CALES, and a *Gentle-man* of WALES, and a Laird of the *North Countree*.
> *A Yeoman* of KENT with his *yearly Rent* will buy them out all *Three*.

In John Earle's *Micro-Cosmographie* (1628) the figure of the decayed gentleman versus the thriving yeoman become the material of fully-developed satire. The yeoman, a "plaine Country Fellow," works hard and manures his ground, conversing only with his beasts. He is "a niggard all the Weeke" except for market-day when "if his Corne sell well, hee thinks hee may be drunke with a good Conscience." The impoverished gentleman is "sent to the Vniversity" on a meagre annuity and, on graduating reluctantly "takes vpon him the Ministry." His last refuge is the Low Countries, "where rags and lice are no scandall, where he liues a poore Gentleman of a Company, and dies without a shirt."[28] John Donne, in his poem "An Anatomy of the World," claims to be appalled at the spectacle of the upwardly mobile individual, the man who not only asserts but recreates himself, in the process unsettling and overturning the social order:

"Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all relation:
Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinks he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that then can be,
None of that kind, of which he is, but he.
This is the world's condition now.

In Herbert Grierson's paraphrase, "[e]very man thinks that he has come to be a Phoenix (preferring private judgement to authority) and that then comparison ceases, for there is nothing of the same kind with which to compare himself. There is nothing left to reverence."

This irreverence was apparent to Sir Walter Ralegh, the West-Country gentleman who preceded Smith at the vanguard of England's colonizing effort. The husbandmen and yeomen, Ralegh wrote in his *History of the World* (1614),

> are more free now than ever, and our nobility and gentry more servile; for since the excessive bravery and vain expence of our grandees, hath taught them to raise their rents; since by inclosures, and dismembering of manors, the court-baron, and the court-leet, the principalities of the gentry of England have been dissolved; the tenants having paid unto their lords their rack-rent, owe them now no service at all, and (perchance) as little love.

From Ralegh's *History* to Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) a historical vision develops of the progressive loosening of fixed social relations under the impact of subterranean forces roiling the English polity, transforming land from an ancient and perdurable locus of powers and obligation into, in Tawney's words, "an income-yielding investment." For Harrington it is "the yeomanry, or middle people" who are the agents of this historical change, becoming "much unlinked from dependence upon their lords" and producing an "alteration in the root of property." In the Virginia colony, it was money in the form of trade goods and commodities that, placed in the hands of the thrifty yeoman, proved "the most destructive solvent of seigniorial power." John Smith brought free trade, free bargaining, and free enterprise to America by paying no heed to one particular worthy gentleman.[29]

Notes

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23. Joseph Fichtelberg, *Risk Culture: Performance and Danger in Early America* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010), 22; 23. Fichtelberg reads Smith's extravagant tales of adventure and personal risk-taking as an "attempt to preserve the old insularity of honor amid the new conditions of promiscuous trade" (45). Fichtelberg's reading leaves Smith stranded in an oddly indeterminate space between status and contract, insisting on "locating authority in

the act of legitimate bargaining" while at the same time seeking honour "in a ceaseless contest with fortune" (49). For a discussion of how class and status necessarily involve practices of legitimation see Michael Braddick and John Walter, "Early Modern Grids of Power," *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland,* eds. Michael Braddick and John Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 9-16.

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