

### **Welcome AP U.S. History!**

Hello! This course places emphasis on critical and evaluative thinking skills, essay writing, interpretation of original documents, and historiography. Your summer assignments reflect the nature of the course. In order to be fully prepared by the exam, you will need to devote a considerable amount of time to reading, homework, and studying. The course prepares students for intermediate and advanced college courses by making demands equivalent to those made by introductory college courses. Subsequently, student directed work is a component of each unit. You are responsible for managing your time to keep up with the pace of the class.

All students have the opportunity to purchase a copy of the book before leaving school for the summer from the current AP US students, please come to room 2 to obtain your books.

Your assignments are detailed below. Be sure to take effective notes while reading and prepare yourselves for in-depth discussion when you get back to school in September.

Please do not panic! I know that it looks like a lot of work (and it is!), but I guarantee that by next May you will be thankful that you got some of the work out of the way over the summer. You will also appreciate an introduction to the level of work expected of you. We have a lot to cover next year!!! Meanwhile, have a safe and relaxing summer and enjoy!!!

### **Textbooks:**

John J. Newman and John Schmalbach: AMSCO United States History: Preparing for the Advanced Placement Examination 2020 Edition

Jason Stacy, Stephen Heller: Documenting United States History

**Assignment #1:**

Watch *Many Rivers to Cross: The Black Atlantic, 1500-1800 (PBS)*

<https://youtu.be/rMJZCOxl7Jk> and complete the Documentary Review Sheet.

**Documentary Review Sheet**

<b>Title</b> What is the name of the Documentary?
<b>Place and Time</b> Where does the Documentary take place? When does the Documentary take place?
<b>Context and Background</b> What is the setting to the Documentary? What is happening before the Documentary begins? What is the context of the film?
<b>The Argument/Main Ideas:</b> What is the documentary trying to convey? What is the Thesis/Main Ideas?
<b>Evidence</b> How does the filmmaker support their argument/ideas? Please give at least three (3) specific examples supporting the Thesis/Main Ideas. (3 points)

**Significance/Synthesis**

What is the historical significance of the event(s) depicted in the film? Where is this historical event(s) located in a larger context? (1 point)

**Assignment #2:** Please read and annotate the following readings. Once you have finished reading complete the document-based analysis (DBA) sheet for each reading:

**Article Readings:**

Mann, Charles C. "1491." *The Atlantic*, March 2002.

Levine, Philippa. "Settling the 'New World.'" In *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*, 31-42. Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2007.

Evans, Sara M. "The Women Who Came to North America, 1607-1770." In *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, 21-43. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1997.

**DOCUMENT BASED ANALYSIS (DBA)  
APPARTS WORKSHEET**

**Directions:**

Read the given document and complete the APPARTS Worksheet to analyze the significance of the source in order to better understand the context of the time period we are studying. You may bullet point your answers.

<b>Document/Source (Title):</b> (1 point)	
<b>Author:</b> Who created the source? What is the author's point of view (POV - Historical)? (2 point)	
<b>Place and Time:</b> Where and when was the source produced? (1 point)	

**Prior Knowledge/Historical Background:**

What do you know that would help you further understand the source? Describe the historical events surrounding this source. Be Specific. (2 points)

**Audience:**

For whom was the source created? How might this affect the reliability of the source (Bias)? (2 points)

**Reason:**

Why was this source created at the time it was produced? How might this affect the meaning of the source? How might you locate the source in a wider historical context? Be specific. (2 points)

**The Main Idea/Argument:**

What argument is the source trying to convey? What is the Thesis/Main Idea(s)? How does the author support their argument/ideas? Please give at least two specific examples supporting the Thesis/Main Ideas. (3 points)

**Significance:**

Why is this source important in its larger historical context? What inferences can you draw from this document? Ask yourself, "So what?" (2 points)

### **Assignment #3**

**Textbook Readings:** Please read the assigned chapters and complete a study guide (example below.)

#### **AMSCO AP United States History**

- Read Introduction chapter highlight/jot notes or questions in copybook
  - Come prepared with these questions the first day of class we will have a discussion.
- Chapter 1: Read and take notes (in the format Dr. Derstine demonstrated) highlight/jot notes or questions in copybook.
  - Come prepared with these questions the first day of class we will have a discussion.

#### **Documenting United States History**

- Read Preface chapter and highlight/jot notes or questions in copybook
  - Come prepared with these questions the first day of class we will have a discussion.

### **STUDY GUIDE**

#### **Identifications**

Treaty of Tordesillas, Conquistadors, Encomienda System, Columbian Exchange, Sir Walter Raleigh, Pueblo Revolt, Spanish Armada, Jamestown, House of Burgesses, Indentured Servitude, Joint-Stock Company, Stono Rebellion, Bacon's Rebellion, Mayflower Compact, Plymouth Colony, Puritans, Glorious Revolution, Restoration Colonies, Mercantilism, Middle Passage, Salem Witch Trials, Walking Purchase, Great Awakening, Enlightenment

### **STUDY GUIDE EXAMPLE**

Chapter 34: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Shadow of War, 1933-1941

Identifications (*Make sure you number the ids & WHO< WHAT<WHEN<WHERE & WHY IMPORTANT, 3 to 5 sentences each, one space between each ID*)

**Dawes Plan:** The Dawes plan was the United State's feeble attempt at maintaining a global economic security. The United States gave money to Germany who in turn leant it to England and France who gave it back to the United States. This kept the money circulating but also increased the amount of devastation that occurred to the German economy, eventually giving Hitler more power.

## Historical Identifications

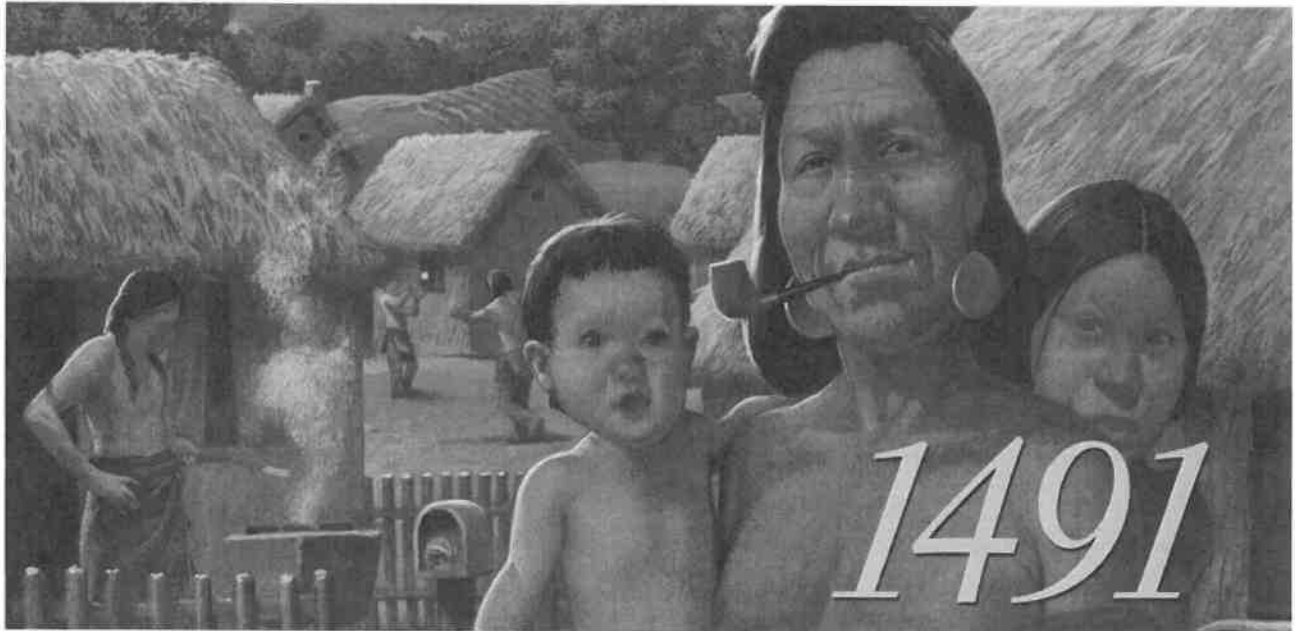
The historical identification question is a frequently used testing device in high school and collegiate history courses. Students are asked to identify major terms, concepts, persons, places or events in a concise paragraph (3-7 sentences). Historical identifications reveal more than just factual retention; they are indicators of a student's understanding of historical themes and significance. An identification must include five types of information: who, what, when, where and why (significance). The significance should be the last sentence of the ID paragraph.

1. **Who?** Who is involved? Include key details about the person or people related to the ID term and relevant to the time period being studied.
1. **What?** What happened? Include an accurate definition or summary of the ID term relevant to the time period.
1. **When?** When did the event take place? When did the person take action or impact the time period being studied? Include specific dates.
1. **Where?** Where did the event take place? Where did the person take action or impact the time period being studied? Include specific details.
1. **Why? (Significance)** This is the most challenging part of writing a historical ID because it demands analytical thinking rather than mere memorization and regurgitation. Explain how this person, event or term fits into the big picture context of history by making connections to key ideas, events or themes. Reflect on how the ID term illustrates important historical concepts. Just stating what happened or what someone did is not necessarily what makes the ID term important – the consequences of the action are what make the action/event significant.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns please email me directly at [kderstine@gmahs.org](mailto:kderstine@gmahs.org)



Before it became the New World, the Western Hemisphere was vastly more populous and sophisticated than has been thought—an altogether more salubrious place to live at the time than, say, Europe. New evidence of both the extent of the population and its agricultural advancement leads to a remarkable conjecture: the Amazon rain forest may be largely a human artifact



CHARLES C. MANN

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The plane took off in weather that was surprisingly cool for north-central Bolivia and flew east, toward the Brazilian border. In a few minutes the roads and houses disappeared, and the only evidence of human settlement was the cattle scattered over the savannah like jimmies on ice cream. Then they, too, disappeared. By that time the archaeologists had their cameras out and were clicking away in delight.

Below us was the Beni, a Bolivian province about the size of Illinois and Indiana put together, and nearly as flat. For almost half the year rain and snowmelt from the mountains to the south and west cover the land with an irregular, slowly moving skin of water that eventually ends up in the province's northern rivers, which are sub-subtributaries of the Amazon. The rest of the year the water dries up and the

bright-green vastness turns into something that resembles a desert. This peculiar, remote, watery plain was what had drawn the researchers' attention, and not just because it was one of the few places on earth inhabited by people who might never have seen Westerners with cameras.

Clark Erickson and William Balée, the archaeologists, sat up front. Erickson is based at the University of Pennsylvania; he works in concert with a Bolivian archaeologist, whose seat in the plane I usurped that day. Balée is at Tulane University, in New Orleans. He is actually an anthropologist, but as native peoples have vanished, the distinction between anthropologists and archaeologists has blurred. The two men differ in build, temperament, and scholarly proclivity, but they pressed their faces to the windows with identical enthusiasm.

Dappled across the grasslands below was an archipelago of forest islands, many of them startlingly round and hundreds of acres across. Each island rose ten or thirty or sixty feet above the floodplain, allowing trees to grow that would otherwise never survive the water. The forests were linked by raised berms, as straight as a rifle shot and up to three miles long. It is Erickson's belief that this entire landscape—30,000 square miles of forest mounds surrounded by raised fields and linked by causeways—was constructed by a complex, populous society more than 2,000 years ago. Balée, newer to the Beni, leaned toward this view but was not yet ready to commit himself.

Erickson and Balée belong to a cohort of scholars that has radically challenged conventional notions of what the Western Hemisphere was like before Columbus. When I went to high school, in the 1970s, I was taught that Indians came to the Americas across the Bering Strait about 12,000 years ago, that they lived for the most part in small, isolated groups, and that they had so little impact on their environment that even after millennia of habitation it remained mostly wilderness. My son picked up the same ideas at his schools. One way to summarize the views of people like Erickson and Balée would be to say that in their opinion this picture of Indian life is wrong in almost every aspect. Indians were here far longer than previously thought, these researchers believe, and in much greater numbers. And

they were so successful at imposing their will on the landscape that in 1492 Columbus set foot in a hemisphere thoroughly dominated by humankind.

Given the charged relations between white societies and native peoples, inquiry into Indian culture and history is inevitably contentious. But the recent scholarship is especially controversial. To begin with, some researchers—many but not all from an older generation—deride the new theories as fantasies arising from an almost willful misinterpretation of data and a perverse kind of political correctness. "I have seen no evidence that large numbers of people ever lived in the Beni," says Betty J. Meggers, of the Smithsonian Institution. "Claiming otherwise is just wishful thinking." Similar criticisms apply to many of the new scholarly claims about Indians, according to Dean R. Snow, an anthropologist at Pennsylvania State University. The problem is that "you can make the meager evidence from the ethnohistorical record tell you anything you want," he says. "It's really easy to kid yourself."

More important are the implications of the new theories for today's ecological battles. Much of the environmental movement is animated, consciously or not, by what William Denevan, a geographer at the University of Wisconsin, calls, polemically, "the pristine myth"—the belief that the Americas in 1491 were an almost unmarked, even Edenic land, "untrammelled by man," in the words of the Wilderness Act of 1964, one of the nation's first and most important environmental laws. As the University of Wisconsin historian William Cronon has written, restoring this long-ago, putatively natural state is, in the view of environmentalists, a task that society is morally bound to undertake. Yet if the new view is correct and the work of humankind was pervasive, where does that leave efforts to restore nature?

The Beni is a case in point. In addition to building up the Beni mounds for houses and gardens, Erickson says, the Indians trapped fish in the seasonally flooded grassland. Indeed, he says, they fashioned dense zigzagging networks of earthen fish weirs between the causeways. To keep the habitat clear of unwanted trees and undergrowth, they regularly set huge areas on fire. Over the centuries the burning

created an intricate ecosystem of fire-adapted plant species dependent on native pyrophilia. The current inhabitants of the Beni still burn, although now it is to maintain the savannah for cattle. When we flew over the area, the dry season had just begun, but mile-long lines of flame were already on the march. In the charred areas behind the fires were the blackened spikes of trees—many of them, one assumes, of the varieties that activists fight to save in other parts of Amazonia.

After we landed, I asked Balée, Should we let people keep burning the Beni? Or should we let the trees invade and create a verdant tropical forest in the grasslands, even if one had not existed here for millennia?

Balée laughed. "You're trying to trap me, aren't you?" he said.

### **Like a Club Between the Eyes**

According to family lore, my great-grandmother's great-grandmother's great-grandfather was the first white person hanged in America. His name was John Billington. He came on the *Mayflower*, which anchored off the coast of Massachusetts on November 9, 1620. Billington was not a Puritan; within six months of arrival he also became the first white person in America to be tried for complaining about the police. "He is a knave," William Bradford, the colony's governor, wrote of Billington, "and so will live and die." What one historian called Billington's "troublesome career" ended in 1630, when he was hanged for murder. My family has always said that he was framed—but we *would* say that, wouldn't we?

A few years ago it occurred to me that my ancestor and everyone else in the colony had voluntarily enlisted in a venture that brought them to New England without food or shelter six weeks before winter. Half the 102 people on the *Mayflower* made it through to spring, which to me was amazing. How, I wondered, did they survive?

In his history of Plymouth Colony, Bradford provided the answer: by robbing Indian houses and graves. The *Mayflower* first hove to at Cape Cod. An armed company staggered out. Eventually it found a recently deserted Indian settlement. The newcomers—hungry, cold, sick—dug up graves and ransacked houses, looking for underground stashes of corn. "And sure it was God's good providence that we found

this corn," Bradford wrote, "for else we know not how we should have done." (He felt uneasy about the thievery, though.) When the colonists came to Plymouth, a month later, they set up shop in another deserted Indian village. All through the coastal forest the Indians had "died on heapes, as they lay in their houses," the English trader Thomas Morton noted. "And the bones and skulls upon the severall places of their habitations made such a spectacle" that to Morton the Massachusetts woods seemed to be "a new found Golgotha"—the hill of executions in Roman Jerusalem.

To the Pilgrims' astonishment, one of the corpses they exhumed on Cape Cod had blond hair. A French ship had been wrecked there several years earlier. The Patuxet Indians imprisoned a few survivors. One of them supposedly learned enough of the local language to inform his captors that God would destroy them for their misdeeds. The Patuxet scoffed at the threat. But the Europeans carried a disease, and they bequeathed it to their jailers. The epidemic (probably of viral hepatitis, according to a study by Arthur E. Spiess, an archaeologist at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and Bruce D. Spiess, the director of clinical research at the Medical College of Virginia) took years to exhaust itself and may have killed 90 percent of the people in coastal New England. It made a huge difference to American history. "The good hand of God favored our beginnings," Bradford mused, by "sweeping away great multitudes of the natives ... that he might make room for us."

By the time my ancestor set sail on the *Mayflower*, Europeans had been visiting New England for more than a hundred years. English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese mariners regularly plied the coastline, trading what they could, occasionally kidnapping the inhabitants for slaves. New England, the Europeans saw, was thickly settled and well defended. In 1605 and 1606 Samuel de Champlain visited Cape Cod, hoping to establish a French base. He abandoned the idea. Too many people already lived there. A year later Sir Ferdinando Gorges—British despite his name—tried to establish an English community in southern Maine. It had more founders than Plymouth and seems to have been better organized. Confronted by numerous well-armed local Indians, the settlers

abandoned the project within months. The Indians at Plymouth would surely have been an equal obstacle to my ancestor and his ramshackle expedition had disease not intervened.

Faced with such stories, historians have long wondered how many people lived in the Americas at the time of contact. "Debated since Columbus attempted a partial census on Hispaniola in 1496," William Denevan has written, this "remains one of the great inquiries of history." (In 1976 Denevan assembled and edited an entire book on the subject, *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*.) The first scholarly estimate of the indigenous population was made in 1910 by James Mooney, a distinguished ethnographer at the Smithsonian Institution. Combing through old documents, he concluded that in 1491 North America had 1.15 million inhabitants. Mooney's glittering reputation ensured that most subsequent researchers accepted his figure uncritically.

That changed in 1966, when Henry F. Dobyns published "Estimating Aboriginal American Population: An Appraisal of Techniques With a New Hemispheric Estimate," in the journal *Current Anthropology*. Despite the carefully neutral title, his argument was thunderous, its impact long-lasting. In the view of James Wilson, the author of *The Earth Shall Weep* (1998), a history of indigenous Americans, Dobyns's colleagues "are still struggling to get out of the crater that paper left in anthropology." Not only anthropologists were affected. Dobyns's estimate proved to be one of the opening rounds in today's culture wars.

Dobyns began his exploration of pre-Columbian Indian demography in the early 1950s, when he was a graduate student. At the invitation of a friend, he spent a few months in northern Mexico, which is full of Spanish-era missions. There he poked through the crumbling leather-bound ledgers in which Jesuits recorded local births and deaths. Right away he noticed how many more deaths there were. The Spaniards arrived, and then Indians died—in huge numbers, at incredible rates. It hit him, Dobyns told me recently, "like a club right between the eyes."

It took Dobyns eleven years to obtain his Ph.D. Along the way he joined a rural-development project in Peru, which until colonial times was the seat of the Incan

empire. Remembering what he had seen at the northern fringe of the Spanish conquest, Dobyns decided to compare it with figures for the south. He burrowed into the papers of the Lima cathedral and read apologetic Spanish histories. The Indians in Peru, Dobyns concluded, had faced plagues from the day the conquistadors showed up—in fact, before then: smallpox arrived around 1525, seven years ahead of the Spanish. Brought to Mexico apparently by a single sick Spaniard, it swept south and eliminated more than half the population of the Incan empire. Smallpox claimed the Incan dictator Huayna Capac and much of his family, setting off a calamitous war of succession. So complete was the chaos that Francisco Pizarro was able to seize an empire the size of Spain and Italy combined with a force of 168 men.

Smallpox was only the first epidemic. Typhus (probably) in 1546, influenza and smallpox together in 1558, smallpox again in 1589, diphtheria in 1614, measles in 1618—all ravaged the remains of Incan culture. Dobyns was the first social scientist to piece together this awful picture, and he naturally rushed his findings into print. Hardly anyone paid attention. But Dobyns was already working on a second, related question: If all those people died, how many had been living there to begin with? Before Columbus, Dobyns calculated, the Western Hemisphere held ninety to 112 million people. Another way of saying this is that in 1491 more people lived in the Americas than in Europe.

His argument was simple but horrific. It is well known that Native Americans had no experience with many European diseases and were therefore immunologically unprepared—"virgin soil," in the metaphor of epidemiologists. What Dobyns realized was that such diseases could have swept from the coastlines initially visited by Europeans to inland areas controlled by Indians who had never seen a white person. The first whites to explore many parts of the Americas may therefore have encountered places that were already depopulated. Indeed, Dobyns argued, they must have done so.

Peru was one example, the Pacific Northwest another. In 1792 the British navigator George Vancouver led the first European expedition to survey Puget Sound. He

found a vast charnel house: human remains "promiscuously scattered about the beach, in great numbers." Smallpox, Vancouver's crew discovered, had preceded them. Its few survivors, second lieutenant Peter Puget noted, were "most terribly pitted ... indeed many have lost their Eyes." In *Pox Americana*, (2001), Elizabeth Fenn, a historian at George Washington University, contends that the disaster on the northwest coast was but a small part of a continental pandemic that erupted near Boston in 1774 and cut down Indians from Mexico to Alaska.

Because smallpox was not endemic in the Americas, colonials, too, had not acquired any immunity. The virus, an equal-opportunity killer, swept through the Continental Army and stopped the drive into Quebec. The American Revolution would be lost, Washington and other rebel leaders feared, if the contagion did to the colonists what it had done to the Indians. "The small Pox! The small Pox!" John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail. "What shall We do with it?" In retrospect, Fenn says, "One of George Washington's most brilliant moves was to inoculate the army against smallpox during the Valley Forge winter of '78." Without inoculation smallpox could easily have given the United States back to the British.

So many epidemics occurred in the Americas, Dobyns argued, that the old data used by Mooney and his successors represented population nadirs. From the few cases in which before-and-after totals are known with relative certainty, Dobyns estimated that in the first 130 years of contact about 95 percent of the people in the Americas died—the worst demographic calamity in recorded history.

Dobyns's ideas were quickly attacked as politically motivated, a push from the hate-America crowd to inflate the toll of imperialism. The attacks continue to this day. "No question about it, some people want those higher numbers," says Shepard Krech III, a Brown University anthropologist who is the author of *The Ecological Indian* (1999). These people, he says, were thrilled when Dobyns revisited the subject in a book, *Their Numbers Become Thinned* (1983)—and revised his own estimates upward. Perhaps Dobyns's most vehement critic is David Henige, a bibliographer of Africana at the University of Wisconsin, whose *Numbers From Nowhere* (1998) is a landmark in the literature of demographic fulmination.



"Suspect in 1966, it is no less suspect nowadays," Henige wrote of Dobyns's work. "If anything, it is worse."

When Henige wrote *Numbers From Nowhere*, the fight about pre-Columbian populations had already consumed forests' worth of trees; his bibliography is ninety pages long. And the dispute shows no sign of abating. More and more people have jumped in. This is partly because the subject is inherently fascinating. But more likely the increased interest in the debate is due to the growing realization of the high political and ecological stakes.

### **Inventing by the Millions**

On May 30, 1539, Hernando de Soto landed his private army near Tampa Bay, in Florida. Soto, as he was called, was a novel figure: half warrior, half venture capitalist. He had grown very rich very young by becoming a market leader in the nascent trade for Indian slaves. The profits had helped to fund Pizarro's seizure of the Incan empire, which had made Soto wealthier still. Looking quite literally for new worlds to conquer, he persuaded the Spanish Crown to let him loose in North America. He spent one fortune to make another. He came to Florida with 200 horses, 600 soldiers, and 300 pigs.

From today's perspective, it is difficult to imagine the ethical system that would justify Soto's actions. For four years his force, looking for gold, wandered through what is now Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas, wrecking almost everything it touched. The inhabitants often fought back vigorously, but they had never before encountered an army with horses and guns. Soto died of fever with his expedition in ruins; along the way his men had managed to rape, torture, enslave, and kill countless Indians. But the worst thing the Spaniards did, some researchers say, was entirely without malice—bring the pigs.

According to Charles Hudson, an anthropologist at the University of Georgia who spent fifteen years reconstructing the path of the expedition, Soto crossed the Mississippi a few miles downstream from the present site of Memphis. It was a

nervous passage: the Spaniards were watched by several thousand Indian warriors. Utterly without fear, Soto brushed past the Indian force into what is now eastern Arkansas, through thickly settled land—"very well peopled with large towns," one of his men later recalled, "two or three of which were to be seen from one town." Eventually the Spaniards approached a cluster of small cities, each protected by earthen walls, sizeable moats, and dead-eye archers. In his usual fashion, Soto brazenly marched in, stole food, and marched out.

After Soto left, no Europeans visited this part of the Mississippi Valley for more than a century. Early in 1682 whites appeared again, this time Frenchmen in canoes. One of them was René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle. The French passed through the area where Soto had found cities cheek by jowl. It was deserted—La Salle didn't see an Indian village for 200 miles. About fifty settlements existed in this strip of the Mississippi when Soto showed up, according to Anne Ramenofsky, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico. By La Salle's time the number had shrunk to perhaps ten, some probably inhabited by recent immigrants. Soto "had a privileged glimpse" of an Indian world, Hudson says. "The window opened and slammed shut. When the French came in and the record opened up again, it was a transformed reality. A civilization crumbled. The question is, how did this happen?"

The question is even more complex than it may seem. Disaster of this magnitude suggests epidemic disease. In the view of Ramenofsky and Patricia Galloway, an anthropologist at the University of Texas, the source of the contagion was very likely not Soto's army but its ambulatory meat locker: his 300 pigs. Soto's force itself was too small to be an effective biological weapon. Sickneses like measles and smallpox would have burned through his 600 soldiers long before they reached the Mississippi. But the same would not have held true for the pigs, which multiplied rapidly and were able to transmit their diseases to wildlife in the surrounding forest. When human beings and domesticated animals live close together, they trade microbes with abandon. Over time mutation spawns new diseases: avian influenza becomes human influenza, bovine rinderpest becomes measles. Unlike Europeans, Indians did not live in close quarters with animals—

they domesticated only the dog, the llama, the alpaca, the guinea pig, and, here and there, the turkey and the Muscovy duck. In some ways this is not surprising: the New World had fewer animal candidates for taming than the Old. Moreover, few Indians carry the gene that permits adults to digest lactose, a form of sugar abundant in milk. Non-milk-drinkers, one imagines, would be less likely to work at domesticating milk-giving animals. But this is guesswork. The fact is that what scientists call zoonotic disease was little known in the Americas. Swine alone can disseminate anthrax, brucellosis, leptospirosis, taeniasis, trichinosis, and tuberculosis. Pigs breed exuberantly and can transmit diseases to deer and turkeys. Only a few of Soto's pigs would have had to wander off to infect the forest.

Indeed, the calamity wrought by Soto apparently extended across the whole Southeast. The Coosa city-states, in western Georgia, and the Caddoan-speaking civilization, centered on the Texas-Arkansas border, disintegrated soon after Soto appeared. The Caddo had had a taste for monumental architecture: public plazas, ceremonial platforms, mausoleums. After Soto's army left, notes Timothy K. Perttula, an archaeological consultant in Austin, Texas, the Caddo stopped building community centers and began digging community cemeteries. Between Soto's and La Salle's visits, Perttula believes, the Caddoan population fell from about 200,000 to about 8,500—a drop of nearly 96 percent. In the eighteenth century the tally shrank further, to 1,400. An equivalent loss today in the population of New York City would reduce it to 56,000—not enough to fill Yankee Stadium. "That's one reason whites think of Indians as nomadic hunters," says Russell Thornton, an anthropologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. "Everything else—all the heavily populated urbanized societies—was wiped out."

Could a few pigs truly wreak this much destruction? Such apocalyptic scenarios invite skepticism. As a rule, viruses, microbes, and parasites are rarely lethal on so wide a scale—a pest that wipes out its host species does not have a bright evolutionary future. In its worst outbreak, from 1347 to 1351, the European Black Death claimed only a third of its victims. (The rest survived, though they were often disfigured or crippled by its effects.) The Indians in Soto's path, if Dobyns,

Ramenofsky, and Perttula are correct, endured losses that were incomprehensibly greater.

One reason is that Indians were fresh territory for many plagues, not just one. Smallpox, typhoid, bubonic plague, influenza, mumps, measles, whooping cough—all rained down on the Americas in the century after Columbus. (Cholera, malaria, and scarlet fever came later.) Having little experience with epidemic diseases, Indians had no knowledge of how to combat them. In contrast, Europeans were well versed in the brutal logic of quarantine. They boarded up houses in which plague appeared and fled to the countryside. In Indian New England, Neal Salisbury, a historian at Smith College, wrote in *Manitou and Providence* (1982), family and friends gathered with the shaman at the sufferer's bedside to wait out the illness—a practice that "could only have served to spread the disease more rapidly."

Indigenous biochemistry may also have played a role. The immune system constantly scans the body for molecules that it can recognize as foreign—molecules belonging to an invading virus, for instance. No one's immune system can identify all foreign presences. Roughly speaking, an individual's set of defensive tools is known as his MHC type. Because many bacteria and viruses mutate easily, they usually attack in the form of several slightly different strains. Pathogens win when MHC types miss some of the strains and the immune system is not stimulated to act. Most human groups contain many MHC types; a strain that slips by one person's defenses will be nailed by the defenses of the next. But, according to Francis L. Black, an epidemiologist at Yale University, Indians are characterized by unusually homogenous MHC types. One out of three South American Indians have similar MHC types; among Africans the corresponding figure is one in 200. The cause is a matter for Darwinian speculation, the effects less so.

In 1966 Dobyns's insistence on the role of disease was a shock to his colleagues. Today the impact of European pathogens on the New World is almost undisputed. Nonetheless, the fight over Indian numbers continues with undiminished fervor. Estimates of the population of North America in 1491 disagree by an order of magnitude—from 18 million, Dobyns's revised figure, to 1.8 million, calculated by

Douglas H. Ubelaker, an anthropologist at the Smithsonian. To some "high counters," as David Henige calls them, the low counters' refusal to relinquish the vision of an empty continent is irrational or worse. "Non-Indian 'experts' always want to minimize the size of aboriginal populations," says Lenore Stiffarm, a Native American-education specialist at the University of Saskatchewan. The smaller the numbers of Indians, she believes, the easier it is to regard the continent as having been up for grabs. "It's perfectly acceptable to move into unoccupied land," Stiffarm says. "And land with only a few 'savages' is the next best thing."

"Most of the arguments for the very large numbers have been theoretical," Ubelaker says in defense of low counters. "When you try to marry the theoretical arguments to the data that are available on individual groups in different regions, it's hard to find support for those numbers." Archaeologists, he says, keep searching for the settlements in which those millions of people supposedly lived, with little success. "As more and more excavation is done, one would expect to see more evidence for dense populations than has thus far emerged." Dean Snow, the Pennsylvania State anthropologist, examined Colonial-era Mohawk Iroquois sites and found "no support for the notion that ubiquitous pandemics swept the region." In his view, asserting that the continent was filled with people who left no trace is like looking at an empty bank account and claiming that it must once have held millions of dollars.

The low counters are also troubled by the Dobynsian procedure for recovering original population numbers: applying an assumed death rate, usually 95 percent, to the observed population nadir. Ubelaker believes that the lowest point for Indians in North America was around 1900, when their numbers fell to about half a million. Assuming a 95 percent death rate, the pre-contact population would have been 10 million. Go up one percent, to a 96 percent death rate, and the figure jumps to 12.5 million—arithmetically creating more than two million people from a tiny increase in mortality rates. At 98 percent the number bounds to 25 million. Minute changes in baseline assumptions produce wildly different results.

"It's an absolutely unanswerable question on which tens of thousands of words have been spent to no purpose," Henige says. In 1976 he sat in on a seminar by William Denevan, the Wisconsin geographer. An "epiphanic moment" occurred when he read shortly afterward that scholars had "uncovered" the existence of eight million people in Hispaniola. *Can you just invent millions of people?* he wondered. "We can make of the historical record that there was depopulation and movement of people from internecine warfare and diseases," he says. "But as for how much, who knows? When we start putting numbers to something like that—applying large figures like ninety-five percent—we're saying things we shouldn't say. The number implies a level of knowledge that's impossible."

Nonetheless, one must try—or so Denevan believes. In his estimation the high counters (though not the highest counters) seem to be winning the argument, at least for now. No definitive data exist, he says, but the majority of the extant evidentiary scraps support their side. Even Henige is no low counter. When I asked him what he thought the population of the Americas was before Columbus, he insisted that any answer would be speculation and made me promise not to print what he was going to say next. Then he named a figure that forty years ago would have caused a commotion.

To Elizabeth Fenn, the smallpox historian, the squabble over numbers obscures a central fact. Whether one million or 10 million or 100 million died, she believes, the pall of sorrow that engulfed the hemisphere was immeasurable. Languages, prayers, hopes, habits, and dreams—entire ways of life hissed away like steam. The Spanish and the Portuguese lacked the germ theory of disease and could not explain what was happening (let alone stop it). Nor can we explain it; the ruin was too long ago and too all-encompassing. In the long run, Fenn says, the consequential finding is not that many people died but that many people once lived. The Americas were filled with a stunningly diverse assortment of peoples who had knocked about the continents for millennia. "You have to wonder," Fenn says. "What were all those people *up* to in all that time?"

In 1810 Henry Brackenridge came to Cahokia, in what is now southwest Illinois, just across the Mississippi from St. Louis. Born close to the frontier, Brackenridge was a budding adventure writer; his *Views of Louisiana*, published three years later, was a kind of nineteenth-century *Into Thin Air*, with terrific adventure but without tragedy. Brackenridge had an eye for archaeology, and he had heard that Cahokia was worth a visit. When he got there, trudging along the desolate Cahokia River, he was "struck with a degree of astonishment." Rising from the muddy bottomland was a "stupendous pile of earth," vaster than the Great Pyramid at Giza. Around it were more than a hundred smaller mounds, covering an area of five square miles. At the time, the area was almost uninhabited. One can only imagine what passed through Brackenridge's mind as he walked alone to the ruins of the biggest Indian city north of the Rio Grande.

To Brackenridge, it seemed clear that Cahokia and the many other ruins in the Midwest had been constructed by Indians. It was not so clear to everyone else. Nineteenth-century writers attributed them to, among others, the Vikings, the Chinese, the "Hindoos," the ancient Greeks, the ancient Egyptians, lost tribes of Israelites, and even straying bands of Welsh. (This last claim was surprisingly widespread; when Lewis and Clark surveyed the Missouri, Jefferson told them to keep an eye out for errant bands of Welsh-speaking white Indians.) The historian George Bancroft, dean of his profession, was a dissenter: the earthworks, he wrote in 1840, were purely natural formations.

Bancroft changed his mind about Cahokia, but not about Indians. To the end of his days he regarded them as "feeble barbarians, destitute of commerce and of political connection." His characterization lasted, largely unchanged, for more than a century. Samuel Eliot Morison, the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, closed his monumental *European Discovery of America* (1974) with the observation that Native Americans expected only "short and brutish lives, void of hope for any future." As late as 1987 *American History: A Survey*, a standard high school textbook by three well-known historians, described the Americas before Columbus as "empty of mankind and its works." The story of Europeans in the New World, the book explained, "is the story of the creation of a civilization where none existed."

Alfred Crosby, a historian at the University of Texas, came to other conclusions. Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange: Biological Consequences of 1492* caused almost as much of a stir when it was published, in 1972, as Henry Dobyns's calculation of Indian numbers six years earlier, though in different circles. Crosby was a standard names-and-battles historian who became frustrated by the random contingency of political events. "Some trivial thing happens and you have this guy winning the presidency instead of that guy," he says. He decided to go deeper. After he finished his manuscript, it sat on his shelf—he couldn't find a publisher willing to be associated with his new ideas. It took him three years to persuade a small editorial house to put it out. *The Columbian Exchange* has been in print ever since; a companion, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, appeared in 1986.

Human history, in Crosby's interpretation, is marked by two world-altering centers of invention: the Middle East and central Mexico, where Indian groups independently created nearly all of the Neolithic innovations, writing included. The Neolithic Revolution began in the Middle East about 10,000 years ago. In the next few millennia humankind invented the wheel, the metal tool, and agriculture. The Sumerians eventually put these inventions together, added writing, and became the world's first civilization. Afterward Sumeria's heirs in Europe and Asia frantically copied one another's happiest discoveries; innovations ricocheted from one corner of Eurasia to another, stimulating technological progress. Native Americans, who had crossed to Alaska before Sumeria, missed out on the bounty. "They had to do everything on their own," Crosby says. Remarkably, they succeeded.

When Columbus appeared in the Caribbean, the descendants of the world's two Neolithic civilizations collided, with overwhelming consequences for both. American Neolithic development occurred later than that of the Middle East, possibly because the Indians needed more time to build up the requisite population density. Without beasts of burden they could not capitalize on the wheel (for individual workers on uneven terrain skids are nearly as effective as carts for hauling), and they never developed steel. But in agriculture they handily outstripped the children of Sumeria. Every tomato in Italy, every potato in Ireland,



and every hot pepper in Thailand came from this hemisphere. Worldwide, more than half the crops grown today were initially developed in the Americas.

Maize, as corn is called in the rest of the world, was a triumph with global implications. Indians developed an extraordinary number of maize varieties for different growing conditions, which meant that the crop could and did spread throughout the planet. Central and Southern Europeans became particularly dependent on it; maize was the staple of Serbia, Romania, and Moldavia by the nineteenth century. Indian crops dramatically reduced hunger, Crosby says, which led to an Old World population boom.

Along with peanuts and manioc, maize came to Africa and transformed agriculture there, too. "The probability is that the population of Africa was greatly increased because of maize and other American Indian crops," Crosby says. "Those extra people helped make the slave trade possible." Maize conquered Africa at the time when introduced diseases were leveling Indian societies. The Spanish, the Portuguese, and the British were alarmed by the death rate among Indians, because they wanted to exploit them as workers. Faced with a labor shortage, the Europeans turned their eyes to Africa. The continent's quarrelsome societies helped slave traders to siphon off millions of people. The maize-fed population boom, Crosby believes, let the awful trade continue without pumping the well dry.

Back home in the Americas, Indian agriculture long sustained some of the world's largest cities. The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán dazzled Hernán Cortés in 1519; it was bigger than Paris, Europe's greatest metropolis. The Spaniards gawped like hayseeds at the wide streets, ornately carved buildings, and markets bright with goods from hundreds of miles away. They had never before seen a city with botanical gardens, for the excellent reason that none existed in Europe. The same novelty attended the force of a thousand men that kept the crowded streets immaculate. (Streets that weren't ankle-deep in sewage! The conquistadors had never heard of such a thing.) Central America was not the only locus of prosperity. Thousands of miles north, John Smith, of Pocahontas fame, visited Massachusetts in 1614, before it was emptied by disease, and declared that the land was "so

planted with Gardens and Corne fields, and so well inhabited with a goodly, strong and well proportioned people ... [that] I would rather live here than any where."

Smith was promoting colonization, and so had reason to exaggerate. But he also knew the hunger, sickness, and oppression of European life. France—"by any standards a privileged country," according to its great historian, Fernand Braudel—experienced seven nationwide famines in the fifteenth century and thirteen in the sixteenth. Disease was hunger's constant companion. During epidemics in London the dead were heaped onto carts "like common dung" (the simile is Daniel Defoe's) and trundled through the streets. The infant death rate in London orphanages, according to one contemporary source, was 88 percent. Governments were harsh, the rule of law arbitrary. The gibbets poking up in the background of so many old paintings were, Braudel observed, "merely a realistic detail."

*The Earth Shall Weep*, James Wilson's history of Indian America, puts the comparison bluntly: "the western hemisphere was larger, richer, and more populous than Europe." Much of it was freer, too. Europeans, accustomed to the serfdom that thrived from Naples to the Baltic Sea, were puzzled and alarmed by the democratic spirit and respect for human rights in many Indian societies, especially those in North America. In theory, the sachems of New England Indian groups were absolute monarchs. In practice, the colonial leader Roger Williams wrote, "they will not conclude of ought ... unto which the people are averse."

Pre-1492 America wasn't a disease-free paradise, Dobyns says, although in his "exuberance as a writer," he told me recently, he once made that claim. Indians had ailments of their own, notably parasites, tuberculosis, and anemia. The daily grind was wearing; life-spans in America were only as long as or a little longer than those in Europe, if the evidence of indigenous graveyards is to be believed. Nor was it a political utopia—the Inca, for instance, invented refinements to totalitarian rule that would have intrigued Stalin. Inveterate practitioners of what the historian Francis Jennings described as "state terrorism practiced horrifically on a huge scale," the Inca ruled so cruelly that one can speculate that their surviving subjects might actually have been better off under Spanish rule.

I asked seven anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians if they would rather have been a typical Indian or a typical European in 1491. None was delighted by the question, because it required judging the past by the standards of today—a fallacy disparaged as "presentism" by social scientists. But every one chose to be an Indian. Some early colonists gave the same answer. Horrifying the leaders of Jamestown and Plymouth, scores of English ran off to live with the Indians. My ancestor shared their desire, which is what led to the trumped-up murder charges against him—or that's what my grandfather told me, anyway.

As for the Indians, evidence suggests that they often viewed Europeans with disdain. The Hurons, a chagrined missionary reported, thought the French possessed "little intelligence in comparison to themselves." Europeans, Indians said, were physically weak, sexually untrustworthy, atrociously ugly, and just plain dirty. (Spaniards, who seldom if ever bathed, were amazed by the Aztec desire for personal cleanliness.) A Jesuit reported that the "Savages" were disgusted by handkerchiefs: "They say, we place what is unclean in a fine white piece of linen, and put it away in our pockets as something very precious, while they throw it upon the ground." The Micmac scoffed at the notion of French superiority. If Christian civilization was so wonderful, why were its inhabitants leaving?

Like people everywhere, Indians survived by cleverly exploiting their environment. Europeans tended to manage land by breaking it into fragments for farmers and herders. Indians often worked on such a grand scale that the scope of their ambition can be hard to grasp. They created small plots, as Europeans did (about 1.5 million acres of terraces still exist in the Peruvian Andes), but they also reshaped entire landscapes to suit their purposes. A principal tool was fire, used to keep down underbrush and create the open, grassy conditions favorable for game. Rather than domesticating animals for meat, Indians retooled whole ecosystems to grow bumper crops of elk, deer, and bison. The first white settlers in Ohio found forests as open as English parks—they could drive carriages through the woods. Along the Hudson River the annual fall burning lit up the banks for miles on end; so flashy was the show that the Dutch in New Amsterdam boated upriver to goggle at the blaze like children at fireworks. In North America, Indian torches had their biggest

impact on the Midwestern prairie, much or most of which was created and maintained by fire. Millennia of exuberant burning shaped the plains into vast buffalo farms. When Indian societies disintegrated, forest invaded savannah in Wisconsin, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Texas Hill Country. Is it possible that the Indians changed the Americas more than the invading Europeans did? "The answer is probably yes for most regions for the next 250 years or so" after Columbus, William Denevan wrote, "and for some regions right up to the present time."

When scholars first began increasing their estimates of the ecological impact of Indian civilization, they met with considerable resistance from anthropologists and archaeologists. Over time the consensus in the human sciences changed. Under Denevan's direction, Oxford University Press has just issued the third volume of a huge catalogue of the "cultivated landscapes" of the Americas. This sort of phrase still provokes vehement objection—but the main dissenters are now ecologists and environmentalists. The disagreement is encapsulated by Amazonia, which has become *the* emblem of vanishing wilderness—an admonitory image of untouched Nature. Yet recently a growing number of researchers have come to believe that Indian societies had an enormous environmental impact on the jungle. Indeed, some anthropologists have called the Amazon forest itself a cultural artifact—that is, an artificial object.

### **Green Prisons**

Northern visitors' first reaction to the storied Amazon rain forest is often disappointment. Ecotourist brochures evoke the immensity of Amazonia but rarely dwell on its extreme flatness. In the river's first 2,900 miles the vertical drop is only 500 feet. The river oozes like a huge runnel of dirty metal through a landscape utterly devoid of the romantic crags, arroyos, and heights that signify wildness and natural spectacle to most North Americans. Even the animals are invisible, although sometimes one can hear the bellow of monkey choruses. To the untutored eye—mine, for instance—the forest seems to stretch out in a monstrous green tangle as flat and incomprehensible as a printed circuit board.

The area east of the lower-Amazon town of Santarém is an exception. A series of sandstone ridges several hundred feet high reach down from the north, halting almost at the water's edge. Their tops stand drunkenly above the jungle like old tombstones. Many of the caves in the buttes are splattered with ancient petroglyphs—renditions of hands, stars, frogs, and human figures, all reminiscent of Miró, in overlapping red and yellow and brown. In recent years one of these caves, La Caverna da Pedra Pintada (Painted Rock Cave), has drawn attention in archaeological circles.

Wide and shallow and well lit, Painted Rock Cave is less thronged with bats than some of the other caves. The arched entrance is twenty feet high and lined with rock paintings. Out front is a sunny natural patio suitable for picnicking, edged by a few big rocks. People lived in this cave more than 11,000 years ago. They had no agriculture yet, and instead ate fish and fruit and built fires. During a recent visit I ate a sandwich atop a particularly inviting rock and looked over the forest below. The first Amazonians, I thought, must have done more or less the same thing.

In college I took an introductory anthropology class in which I read *Amazonia: Man and Culture in a Counterfeit Paradise* (1971), perhaps the most influential book ever written about the Amazon, and one that deeply impressed me at the time. Written by Betty J. Meggers, the Smithsonian archaeologist, *Amazonia* says that the apparent lushness of the rain forest is a sham. The soils are poor and can't hold nutrients—the jungle flora exists only because it snatches up everything worthwhile before it leaches away in the rain. Agriculture, which depends on extracting the wealth of the soil, therefore faces inherent ecological limitations in the wet desert of Amazonia.

As a result, Meggers argued, Indian villages were forced to remain small—any report of "more than a few hundred" people in permanent settlements, she told me recently, "makes my alarm bells go off." Bigger, more complex societies would inevitably overtax the forest soils, laying waste to their own foundations. Beginning in 1948 Meggers and her late husband, Clifford Evans, excavated a chiefdom on Marajó, an island twice the size of New Jersey that sits like a gigantic stopper in the

mouth of the Amazon. The Marajóara, they concluded, were failed offshoots of a sophisticated culture in the Andes. Transplanted to the lush trap of the Amazon, the culture choked and died.

Green activists saw the implication: development in tropical forests destroys both the forests and their developers. Meggers's account had enormous public impact—*Amazonia* is one of the wellsprings of the campaign to save rain forests.

Then Anna C. Roosevelt, the curator of archaeology at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, re-excavated Marajó. Her complete report, *Moundbuilders of the Amazon* (1991), was like the anti-matter version of *Amazonia*. Marajó, she argued, was "one of the outstanding indigenous cultural achievements of the New World," a powerhouse that lasted for more than a thousand years, had "possibly well over 100,000" inhabitants, and covered thousands of square miles. Rather than damaging the forest, Marajó's "earth construction" and "large, dense populations" had *improved* it: the most luxuriant and diverse growth was on the mounds formerly occupied by the Marajóara. "If you listened to Meggers's theory, these places should have been ruined," Roosevelt says.

Meggers scoffed at Roosevelt's "extravagant claims," "polemical tone," and "defamatory remarks." Roosevelt, Meggers argued, had committed the beginner's error of mistaking a site that had been occupied many times by small, unstable groups for a single, long-lasting society. "[Archaeological remains] build up on areas of half a kilometer or so," she told me, "because [shifting Indian groups] don't land exactly on the same spot. The decorated types of pottery don't change much over time, so you can pick up a bunch of chips and say, 'Oh, look, it was all one big site!' Unless you know what you're doing, of course." Centuries after the conquistadors, "the myth of El Dorado is being revived by archaeologists," Meggers wrote last fall in the journal *Latin American Antiquity*, referring to the persistent Spanish delusion that cities of gold existed in the jungle.

The dispute grew bitter and personal; inevitable in a contemporary academic context, it has featured vituperative references to colonialism, elitism, and employment by the CIA. Meanwhile, Roosevelt's team investigated Painted Rock

Cave. On the floor of the cave what looked to me like nothing in particular turned out to be an ancient midden: a refuse heap. The archaeologists slowly scraped away sediment, traveling backward in time with every inch. When the traces of human occupation vanished, they kept digging. ("You always go a meter past sterile," Roosevelt says.) A few inches below they struck the charcoal-rich dirt that signifies human habitation—a culture, Roosevelt said later, that wasn't supposed to be there.

For many millennia the cave's inhabitants hunted and gathered for food. But by about 4,000 years ago they were growing crops—perhaps as many as 140 of them, according to Charles R. Clement, an anthropological botanist at the Brazilian National Institute for Amazonian Research. Unlike Europeans, who planted mainly annual crops, the Indians, he says, centered their agriculture on the Amazon's unbelievably diverse assortment of trees: fruits, nuts, and palms. "It's tremendously difficult to clear fields with stone tools," Clement says. "If you can plant trees, you get twenty years of productivity out of your work instead of two or three."

Planting their orchards, the first Amazonians transformed large swaths of the river basin into something more pleasing to human beings. In a widely cited article from 1989, William Balée, the Tulane anthropologist, cautiously estimated that about 12 percent of the nonflooded Amazon forest was of anthropogenic origin—directly or indirectly created by human beings. In some circles this is now seen as a conservative position. "I basically think it's all human-created," Clement told me in Brazil. He argues that Indians changed the assortment and density of species throughout the region. So does Clark Erickson, the University of Pennsylvania archaeologist, who told me in Bolivia that the lowland tropical forests of South America are among the finest works of art on the planet. "Some of my colleagues would say that's pretty radical," he said, smiling mischievously. According to Peter Stahl, an anthropologist at the State University of New York at Binghamton, "lots" of botanists believe that "what the eco-imagery would like to picture as a pristine, untouched Urwelt [primeval world] in fact has been managed by people for millennia." The phrase "built environment," Erickson says, "applies to most, if not all, Neotropical landscapes."

"Landscape" in this case is meant exactly—Amazonian Indians literally created the ground beneath their feet. According to William I. Woods, a soil geographer at Southern Illinois University, ecologists' claims about terrible Amazonian land were based on very little data. In the late 1990s Woods and others began careful measurements in the lower Amazon. They indeed found lots of inhospitable terrain. But they also discovered swaths of *terra preta*—rich, fertile "black earth" that anthropologists increasingly believe was created by human beings.

*Terra preta*, Woods guesses, covers at least 10 percent of Amazonia, an area the size of France. It has amazing properties, he says. Tropical rain doesn't leach nutrients from *terra preta* fields; instead the soil, so to speak, fights back. Not far from Painted Rock Cave is a 300-acre area with a two-foot layer of *terra preta* quarried by locals for potting soil. The bottom third of the layer is never removed, workers there explain, because over time it will re-create the original soil layer in its initial thickness. The reason, scientists suspect, is that *terra preta* is generated by a special suite of microorganisms that resists depletion. "Apparently," Woods and the Wisconsin geographer Joseph M. McCann argued in a presentation last summer, "at some threshold level ... dark earth attains the capacity to perpetuate—even *regenerate* itself—thus behaving more like a living 'super'-organism than an inert material."

In as yet unpublished research the archaeologists Eduardo Neves, of the University of São Paulo; Michael Heckenberger, of the University of Florida; and their colleagues examined *terra preta* in the upper Xingu, a huge southern tributary of the Amazon. Not all Xingu cultures left behind this living earth, they discovered. But the ones that did generated it rapidly—suggesting to Woods that *terra preta* was created deliberately. In a process reminiscent of dropping microorganism-rich starter into plain dough to create sourdough bread, Amazonian peoples, he believes, inoculated bad soil with a transforming bacterial charge. Not every group of Indians there did this, but quite a few did, and over an extended period of time.

When Woods told me this, I was so amazed that I almost dropped the phone. I ceased to be articulate for a moment and said things like "wow" and "gosh." Woods



chuckled at my reaction, probably because he understood what was passing through my mind. Faced with an ecological problem, I was thinking, the Indians *fixed* it. They were in the process of terraforming the Amazon when Columbus showed up and ruined everything.

Scientists should study the microorganisms in *terra preta*, Woods told me, to find out how they work. If that could be learned, maybe some version of Amazonian dark earth could be used to improve the vast expanses of bad soil that cripple agriculture in Africa—a final gift from the people who brought us tomatoes, corn, and the immense grasslands of the Great Plains.

"Betty Meggers would just die if she heard me saying this," Woods told me. "Deep down her fear is that this data will be misused." Indeed, Meggers's recent *Latin American Antiquity* article charged that archaeologists who say the Amazon can support agriculture are effectively telling "developers [that they] are entitled to operate without restraint." Resuscitating the myth of El Dorado, in her view, "makes us accomplices in the accelerating pace of environmental degradation." Doubtless there is something to this—although, as some of her critics responded in the same issue of the journal, it is difficult to imagine greedy plutocrats "perusing the pages of *Latin American Antiquity* before deciding to rev up the chain saws." But the new picture doesn't automatically legitimize paving the forest. Instead it suggests that for a long time big chunks of Amazonia were used nondestructively by clever people who knew tricks we have yet to learn.

I visited Painted Rock Cave during the river's annual flood, when it wells up over its banks and creeps inland for miles. Farmers in the floodplain build houses and barns on stilts and watch pink dolphins sport from their doorsteps. Ecotourists take shortcuts by driving motorboats through the drowned forest. Guys in dories chase after them, trying to sell sacks of incredibly good fruit.

All of this is described as "wilderness" in the tourist brochures. It's not, if researchers like Roosevelt are correct. Indeed, they believe that fewer people may be living there now than in 1491. Yet when my boat glided into the trees, the forest shut out the sky like the closing of an umbrella. Within a few hundred yards the

human presence seemed to vanish. I felt alone and small, but in a way that was curiously like feeling exalted. If that place was not wilderness, how should I think of it? Since the fate of the forest is in our hands, what should be our goal for its future?

### **Novel Shores**

Hernando de Soto's expedition stomped through the Southeast for four years and apparently never saw bison. More than a century later, when French explorers came down the Mississippi, they saw "a solitude unrelieved by the faintest trace of man," the nineteenth-century historian Francis Parkman wrote. Instead the French encountered bison, "grazing in herds on the great prairies which then bordered the river."

To Charles Kay, the reason for the buffalo's sudden emergence is obvious. Kay is a wildlife ecologist in the political-science department at Utah State University. In ecological terms, he says, the Indians were the "keystone species" of American ecosystems. A keystone species, according to the Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, is a species "that affects the survival and abundance of many other species." Keystone species have a disproportionate impact on their ecosystems. Removing them, Wilson adds, "results in a relatively significant shift in the composition of the [ecological] community."

When disease swept Indians from the land, Kay says, what happened was exactly that. The ecological ancien régime collapsed, and strange new phenomena emerged. In a way this is unsurprising; for better or worse, humankind is a keystone species everywhere. Among these phenomena was a population explosion in the species that the Indians had kept down by hunting. After disease killed off the Indians, Kay believes, buffalo vastly extended their range. Their numbers more than sextupled. The same occurred with elk and mule deer. "If the elk were here in great numbers all this time, the archaeological sites should be chock-full of elk bones," Kay says. "But the archaeologists will tell you the elk weren't there." On the evidence of middens the number of elk jumped about 500 years ago.

Passenger pigeons may be another example. The epitome of natural American abundance, they flew in such great masses that the first colonists were stupefied by the sight. As a boy, the explorer Henry Brackenridge saw flocks "ten miles in width, by one hundred and twenty in length." For hours the birds darkened the sky from horizon to horizon. According to Thomas Neumann, a consulting archaeologist in Lilburn, Georgia, passenger pigeons "were incredibly dumb and always roosted in vast hordes, so they were very easy to harvest." Because they were readily caught and good to eat, Neumann says, archaeological digs should find many pigeon bones in the pre-Columbian strata of Indian middens. But they aren't there. The mobs of birds in the history books, he says, were "outbreak populations—always a symptom of an extraordinarily disrupted ecological system."

Throughout eastern North America the open landscape seen by the first Europeans quickly filled in with forest. According to William Cronon, of the University of Wisconsin, later colonists began complaining about how hard it was to get around. (Eventually, of course, they stripped New England almost bare of trees.) When Europeans moved west, they were preceded by two waves: one of disease, the other of ecological disturbance. The former crested with fearsome rapidity; the latter sometimes took more than a century to quiet down. Far from destroying pristine wilderness, European settlers bloodily *created* it. By 1800 the hemisphere was chockablock with new wilderness. If "forest primeval" means a woodland unsullied by the human presence, William Denevan has written, there was much more of it in the late eighteenth century than in the early sixteenth.

Cronon's *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983) belongs on the same shelf as works by Crosby and Dobyns. But it was not until one of his articles was excerpted in *The New York Times* in 1995 that people outside the social sciences began to understand the implications of this view of Indian history. Environmentalists and ecologists vigorously attacked the anti-wilderness scenario, which they described as infected by postmodern philosophy. A small academic brouhaha ensued, complete with hundreds of footnotes. It precipitated *Reinventing Nature?* (1995), one of the few academic critiques of postmodernist philosophy written largely by biologists. *The Great New Wilderness*

*Debate* (1998), another lengthy book on the subject, was edited by two philosophers who earnestly identified themselves as "Euro-American men [whose] cultural legacy is patriarchal Western civilization in its current postcolonial, globally hegemonic form."

It is easy to tweak academics for opaque, self-protective language like this. Nonetheless, their concerns were quite justified. Crediting Indians with the role of keystone species has implications for the way the current Euro-American members of that keystone species manage the forests, watersheds, and endangered species of America. Because a third of the United States is owned by the federal government, the issue inevitably has political ramifications. In Amazonia, fabled storehouse of biodiversity, the stakes are global.

Guided by the pristine myth, mainstream environmentalists want to preserve as much of the world's land as possible in a putatively intact state. But "intact," if the new research is correct, means "run by human beings for human purposes." Environmentalists dislike this, because it seems to mean that anything goes. In a sense they are correct. Native Americans managed the continent as they saw fit. Modern nations must do the same. If they want to return as much of the landscape as possible to its 1491 state, they will have to find it within themselves to create the world's largest garden.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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CHARLES C. MANN, an *Atlantic* contributing editor, has been writing for the magazine since 1984. His recent books include *1491*, based on his March 2002 cover story, and *1493*.

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# The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset

## By Philippa Levine

### CHAPTER 3

## Settling the 'New World'

The Atlantic colonies that would, in time, become America were developing at roughly the same time as those of the Caribbean, and indeed the histories of these two sets of colonies were closely linked until the end of the eighteenth century. Some early settlement attempts in the 1580s, in what is now Virginia and, much further north, in Newfoundland, were succeeded in the seventeenth century by settlements that proved more durable. The colony of Virginia was founded in 1607, named after Queen Elizabeth (the so-called 'Virgin Queen'). Over the course of the seventeenth century more and more settlers left Britain, some seeking work, some seeking land, and some to gain religious freedom in the new American colonies. These new American colonies were founded, and in the early days peopled, in large part by white settlers choosing to migrate. This has led to some characterizations of the colonization of America as a phenomenon achieved by migration rather than conquest, one in which colonial peoples enjoyed a good deal of political freedom. That view is accurate only if we choose to ignore three important groups: the convict and indentured labour so important to early American prosperity; the native American peoples whose subjection and marginalization by settler society was necessary for the new population to enjoy the freedoms and successes they sought; and the growing body of slaves carried to the region and forced to work there.

Early settlers frequently thought of themselves as British, and of the native indigenes they encountered in the colonies, as well as slaves brought forcibly from Africa, as foreign. The effects of colonization on America's indigenous peoples were colossal, affecting their health, their wealth, their social structures, their customs and traditions, and their habitat. Most notorious was the impact of previously unknown diseases brought to

the continent by Europeans. With no prior exposure to diseases such as smallpox, measles, influenza, tuberculosis and diphtheria, Native Americans were highly vulnerable, having no immunity. When epidemic disease spread through a Native American settlement, it could easily fell almost every member; in the early days of settlement, epidemics were the most common killer. New forms of land use and the enclosure of land for settlement considerably altered the local ecology over time, often depleting resources such as the wild game that local peoples had traditionally relied upon for food. Changes in land use led also to a gradual shift from subsistence agriculture among Native American tribes to a dependence on trade and commerce. It was a change that made tribes more reliant on settlers, as well as changing radically the seasonal settlement and movement that many tribes had traditionally followed. Fur trading, especially, became a critical source of Native American revenue, but the large-scale trapping of animals affected the environment, often in destructive ways. The introduction of European-style firearms was also destabilizing; the power of guns made them a valuable commodity, and Native American groups competed with one another for possession of them. Such competition led to an increase in inter-tribal conflict, itself made deadlier by the growing use of guns. Still, inter-tribal warfare was less significant in the destruction of an older Native American way of life than were the wars of European settlers. These affected Native Americans even though they were concerned with issues far removed from indigenous life. The rivalry between Britain and its imperial competitors in Europe, and the hunger for large tracts of land, put considerable strain on Native Americans drawn in to these conflicts, weakening their ability to survive in the face of settler America.

Those who did survive, however, not only adapted to the changes around them, but quickly learned the ways of European-style diplomacy. By the eighteenth century, especially as refugees from weakened tribes joined together, their communities became increasingly diverse. Native Americans learned to play the various European rivals off against one another for their own advantage, and there was also a good degree of cross-cultural exchange. The modern American Thanksgiving table owes much to what settlers learned from the locals: turkey, corn on the cob, maple syrup and pumpkins were all foodstuffs that settlers learned how to prepare from Native Americans. Nonetheless, and despite this tough determination to survive in a hostile world, by the time of the American Revolution American Indians along the Atlantic seaboard were largely dependent economically on the European settlers, and this meant they had little political muscle.

The significant support that Native Americans gave to the British during the Revolutionary War was not repaid, and many at the time thought the failure of the peace settlement of 1783 (discussed below) even to make mention of their future was a shabby return for Native American loyalty. Yet the British cultivated Native Americans after white America won its independence from the Empire, although they consistently refused to help them during the wars that erupted between the new American republic and the native population in the 1780s and 1790s. Their support for the British during the war did not endear American Indian populations to their new masters, and the treaties America increasingly enacted with numerous tribes were seldom generous to the indigenous peoples.

If Amerindian populations were dwindling in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the wake of contact, the settler population was growing fast. Around 20,000 migrants arrived in the New World between 1620 and 1640, in 1730 the population was around 629,000, and by 1783 almost 1½ million white Europeans had settled there. By 1800, the population totalled more than 5 million. The earliest migrants were predominantly young, male and single, a typical pattern in settler colonies. In the later period, as the colonies became established, families began to migrate. By the 1630s some 500 miles of coastline along the north-eastern seaboard of North America was British, and by 1759 there were 13 colonies, mostly thriving. The largest populations by the mid-eighteenth century were to be found in the tobacco-growing colonies of Virginia and Maryland, whose combined population totalled some 372,000 by 1750. The New England colonies had the next largest concentration of population.

What made the American colonies so attractive? The story most often told is, of course, that of the 1629 voyage aboard the *Mayflower* that signals freedom of conscience and of religion, and certainly the Puritans do figure significantly in the early history of the American colonies. The bulk of white settlers who came to the Americas were non-Anglican Protestants, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the colonies became known as places where small religious sects could flourish. One important feature of American life was that, overall, there was no majority religion, which partially explains the strong strand of religious toleration that made America so distinctive. Only two of the 13 colonies – Massachusetts and Connecticut – ever had formal state churches, a radically different situation from Britain where the power of the Anglican Church prevented Christian non-Anglicans as well as Catholics and Jews from enjoying full political participation.

Religion, however, was only a part of the complex of reasons why settler colonialism was so very successful in America. In the growing commercial environment that by the eighteenth century was so clearly definitive of Britain, these colonies offered goods unavailable in Britain as well as becoming an increasingly valuable depot for supplying the nearby slave colonies of the West Indies to their south. By the late eighteenth century, North Atlantic markets were of crucial importance for a host of goods: sugar, tobacco, coffee, cotton, cocoa and rum. In the more northerly colonies, timber with which to build and fit ships was equally important and the fur trade, too, was highly profitable. By the middle of the eighteenth century, settler capitalism was well established, and many of the restrictions theoretically imposed by Britain's mercantilist policies were routinely ignored by American merchants and traders with little fear of retaliation.

Land was perhaps the most important factor in colonial advancement, as well as a source of considerable strife between settlers drawn by its availability and cheapness and Native Americans increasingly required to abide by property laws utterly alien to their culture. Much of the struggle between the newcomers and the indigenous population reflected a fundamental difference in attitudes and relationship to the land. Both settlers and Native Americans complained constantly about the other's trespass. This persistent tension led to frontier violence and raids, the killing and stealing of livestock, the burning of crops and of compounds; none of this was sanctioned by colonial governments, but it was a fact of life on the frontier. There was no single form of land acquisition in colonial America; different colonies had different methods of parcelling out land. In some colonies, particularly in the north, land was largely allotted to groups and communities, while further south it was more likely to be sold to individuals. In the south, a system known as headright offered free land to those who would pay their own passage there. But land was, by British standards, cheap and plentiful and migrants came not just from England (the larger number in pre-Revolutionary America) but from Germany and Switzerland, Scandinavia, Holland and Ireland. The larger proportion of the earliest Irish migrants were not Catholic, but Ulstermen who would come to be known in America as Scotch-Irish. They were Scottish Protestants who had left Scotland for northern Ireland, and came to America in large part because they felt adrift in predominantly Catholic Ireland. Between the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 and the start of the War of Independence in 1775, some 55,000 Protestant Irish, 40,000 Scots, 30,000 English and 12,000 Germans arrived in the 13 colonies, as did around 84,500 African slaves.

Although land was a significant attraction, at least half of all migrants who landed in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came not to purchase land but as indentured labourers, tied for a fixed term to an employer who paid their passage and guaranteed them food and lodging for the duration of their contract. Although American history is full of grand tales of the poor made good – the 'rags to riches' stories of the popular press – few who started out in America as indentured servants ever saw fabulous wealth. Most stayed poor, and would continue to work outside indenture for wages rather than eventually acquiring land. This suited a society that was increasingly commercially oriented, for the cheapness of land made labourers sometimes hard to find, since so many could afford to buy modest plots of land. Although such a situation sounds as if it would be favourable to workers since they were in short supply, that was not so: indenture and the mercantilist imposition of maximum wages in many of the colonies served to keep firm the distinction between those who owned property and those who worked for wages. As the next chapter will show, this critical relationship between landownership and labour would re-emerge in colonial Australia.

Eighteenth-century America can, however, be characterized as a largely middle-class place, in that there was a large population of landholders, a small wage-earning working class and no significant aristocracy. The preponderance among this landholding class of non-Anglican Protestants, wedded to a stern work ethic and fervently believing in the importance of the individual, would help shape the new republic in myriad ways.

Settler colonies enjoyed a degree of political freedom that was only ever extended to those colonies where a white migrant population came to dominate. The system of 'representative government' we see in the American Atlantic colonies operated via elected assemblies. As in Britain, the franchise was based on property ownership and limited to adult men. Women and landless men were excluded, along with Native Americans; the British usually chose not even to regard the latter as British subjects. Whereas issues such as defence and taxation – which would both prove contentious in the 1770s – remained in the hands of the imperial government in London, the local assemblies in the colonies had the power to pass laws specific to the locale. In the early years of colonization, and until the mid-eighteenth century, the British government was mostly uninterested in the operation of internal colonial politics unless they interfered with revenue. It was trade that they wished to control, and it was only when trade and politics began to clash that British politicians paid attention to matters of governance in the American colonies.

In part this lack of interest is typical of the eighteenth-century Empire, overwhelmingly concerned with commerce and revenue. But in the case of the American colonies in the earlier years of the eighteenth century, as in the preceding century, it was also because they were regarded as ultimately less profitable than the West Indian colonies. Their main role was to supply the West Indies with foodstuffs, livestock, timber and cloth so that the slave colonies could focus their attention on the products for which they were renowned and on which the returns were so attractive. In return, the West Indies supplied the American colonies with sugar, rum and molasses in a classic example of how the British wanted colonial trade to work: Britain and its colonies linked in a complex network of production and supply, and excluding goods from outside the British world. The steady growth of the settler population in North America boosted this system, making the American colonies increasingly important, but also growingly restive about the limitations imposed from Britain on their trade. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had moved from relatively lacklustre economic units to become critical markets for both export and re-export, alongside their growing role as suppliers both to the West Indies and to Britain.

It was, however, impossible to insulate commerce from the political ferment of an era in which Britain was so often sparring with its European competitors in these very regions. Much of the Anglo-French conflict in the Atlantic and the Caribbean was commercial rivalry, especially with regard to sugar. And it was here that trouble really began to brew between the American colonists and the British government, most especially in and after the Seven Years War, which ended in 1763. The lure of wealth often proved greater than the pull of patriotism, and during that war, New England colonists had resolutely refused to cease their trade with Britain's enemies, sometimes provisioning the very ships that were fighting against Britain. This disregard of wartime loyalties for business reasons may represent an extreme example, but the flouting or ignoring of such sanctions, laws and duties was far from uncommon in the Atlantic economy. For most of the eighteenth century, and despite laws in 1763 and 1764 designed to prevent it, North American traders purchased French as well as English sugar. The impossibility of enforcement in the North American sugar trade became something of a legend in rebel circles; as the economic historian Eric Williams put it, 'lawlessness was erected into a cardinal virtue of American economic practice.'<sup>1</sup> Trouble was brewing between Britain and its American colonists, and that unrest drew as much on the role of the West Indies in the Empire as it did on local dissatisfactions

within the 13 colonies. After the Seven Years War, right at the moment of swelling restlessness in the American colonies, they became even more important as part of the defence and protection of the neighbouring sugar colonies. Though Britain had gained Caribbean territory as a result of the war, the fighting had been costly and the French still dominated sugar production. Britain's territorial acquisitions and victory had to be carefully balanced against the financial strains they inevitably spawned.

But the war also had another cost, one that would become increasingly apparent in the 1770s. It fuelled the resentments already being expressed by American colonists regarding the restrictions by which they felt themselves hampered, restrictions that the burden of war had made more apparent. There is no doubt that the Seven Years War affected the American colonies adversely, even given the deals New England merchants were striking with the enemy French. The war reverberated in America after 1763 in two ways. It spilled over into colonial frustration with taxation by the British. Not wholly unfairly, many colonists argued that they had contributed both soldiers and money to the war effort, and that further taxation was a burden, and though this did not flare into a major issue it burned steadily and rancorously in the background. More pressingly, there was deep resentment not only of the presence of increased troops garrisoned in the colonies, but of being taxed for their maintenance. The British sought a greater military presence in the region to deter their European rivals and to have troops closer to hand in case of trouble in the West Indies. The Americans did not fully trust British motives, and felt that the troops were a symbol of imperial and authoritarian rule. British insensitivity and obduracy in the following years intensified such suspicions as well as fuelling the dissatisfaction of the Americans, hastening increasing rebellion. The extensive disregard of the many economic restrictions that we have already noted is a good index of American discontent with mercantilism.

But alongside the suspicion engendered by the presence of British troops and a resentment of what they regarded as economic inequalities, the colonists also chafed at political restrictions. The elective assemblies were frequently stonewalled by colonial governors loyal to the English and appointed by the Crown. Rebel colonists felt that their interests – political and economic – were consistently overridden by and subservient to those of far-away Britain. The actions of the imperial parliament in the late 1760s and early 1770s did little to appease them. Shortly after the war, in 1764, the Plantation Act (sometimes called the Sugar Act) raised American hackles by calling for the return of sugar duties. Although the



rate of duty was lowered, this was the same duty that had angered Americans in 1733 (in the Molasses Act discussed in Chapter 2), and which they had largely ignored. The difference, however, was that this time around there were signs that the duty would actually be enforced. A year later the infamous Stamp Act, levying duties on business and legal transactions, ramped up the level of American anger. Twelve of the thirteen colonies protested against the Act, and although the British quickly repealed it, their subsequent actions were guaranteed to inflame existing discord. In 1766, a Declaratory Act similar to that relating to Ireland in 1720 (discussed in Chapter 1) asserted parliament's right to impose upon the colonies any taxes it chose. Despite this strong talk, however, by 1768 virtually all duties had been repealed in the face of vigorous resistance. The only duty retained was on tea, and it would prove fateful. Ironically, tea was not an important revenue-raising commodity in the Atlantic colonies, and the duty had been retained mostly as a symbol of the principles of the Declaratory Act, of Britain's right as an imperial authority to control taxation. But though tea was of little fiscal importance in this region of the world, it was a major trading commodity elsewhere. Its intrusion into American colonial politics in the 1770s underscores the links between different parts of a growing, and growingly diverse, British Empire in the later years of the eighteenth century.

Across the globe in South Asia, tea was among the most important assets of the fast-growing East India Company, which, while Britain was waging war in and near British Caribbean territories, was increasing its territorial and political clout in India. At the heart of the Company's Indian holdings was the province of Bengal in eastern India, and Bengal in the late 1760s was in the grip of a vicious famine that was annihilating both the local population and the East India Company's assets. More concerned with the Company's loss of profits than the hunger of the local population, Britain decided that the Company would benefit from selling its tea exports in America directly rather than through American importers. In reality, the Tea Act of 1773 was really not an American revenue measure at all, but rather a scheme to reduce duties by selling directly to the consumer in the hope that an expanded market across the Atlantic would help the East India Company overcome its serious fiscal problems in the East. The East India Company was much disliked by the American colonists, for whom it was a symbol of the monopolistic mechanisms of trade that so irked them. The result of the Tea Act, which favoured the East India Company over America, was the famous Boston Tea Party of December 1773 in which disgruntled colonists stormed three ships

carrying cargoes of tea, and docked in the Boston harbour, throwing the tea overboard in protest. This colourful episode has popularly been seen as the fuse that lit the Revolutionary War, but in fact many Americans were appalled by what they regarded as the extremism of the rebel action.

It was the British response, however, that proved the more troubling. Not only did the British retaliate by closing the ports, putting the livelihood of many unassociated with the action in jeopardy, but parliament withdrew colonial civil and political rights. Early in 1774 they imposed the punitive Coercive Acts and the constitution-changing Massachusetts Government Act. The Massachusetts law substituted a nominated assembly for the elected one, articulating Britain's political supremacy over the colonies. These actions alone would have been inflammatory given the tense state of the colonies, but another law passed at the same time aroused further American suspicion and displeasure. In the 1763 treaty ending the Seven Years War, the British had acquired tracts of French-speaking Canada that they combined into the colony of Quebec. The Quebec Act of 1774 laid down the political system that would govern the new colony, and it was one that the Americans did not like at all. Not only did it guarantee religious toleration for Catholics, the majority population there, but it established a nominated rather than an elected assembly in which Catholics outnumbered Protestants. Already dubious about Britain's motives, Protestant Americans worried that such political arrangements would migrate south. The American Mutiny (Quatering) Act of 1765, which enlarged the power of colonial governors with respect to the quartering of troops, did nothing to quell American notions that their political liberties were potentially under threat from the imperial centre. The British clearly had little interest in substantive appeasement, and this slew of aggressive decisions suggests both a certain misplaced confidence in their power and rather poor judgement.

It was in this tense and difficult atmosphere that the two Continental Congresses of 1774 and 1776 convened, the latter producing America's Declaration of Independence. There were plenty of skirmishes between British troops and American rebels in the 1770s before war was formally declared in 1775. The British would have preferred a war waged solely on land, and though that would seem to contradict the clear dominance Britain enjoyed in naval terms, there were good strategic reasons for this that serve as another valuable reminder of the interconnection of imperial sites and concerns. The British knew that using their navy would attract the attention of the French, given the proximity of the West Indian colonies over which Britain and France had no second-hand interest.

fought. The error in judgement the British made was that it would be naval activity that would motivate French interest. In the event, land war did nothing to deter the French from seeking an advantage over their imperial rivals. In early 1778, a Franco-American alliance gave the American rebels increased military muscle, and expanded the war from a purely local if serious conflict to one also directly and deeply affecting other colonial sites, principally the West Indies.

To the disappointment of the American rebels, the West Indians did not rally to the cause of independence, remaining loyal to the British. Their loyalty may well have been strategic; as chains of small islands, they were highly vulnerable and had over the years experienced many wars. Since three-quarters or more of the population was under slavery, the question of political freedom was far more restricted than in the American colonies. Planters already enjoyed a good deal of influence in Britain and were generally supportive of mercantilist trade, as we saw in Chapter 2. Dominica, St Vincent and Grenada fell to the French during the Revolutionary War, but were later restored to Britain. Other colonies experienced considerable disruption both to their trade and to obtaining supplies; it was, of course, most often and most forcefully the slave population who paid the price of this hardship.

By late 1781, it was becoming apparent that the British could not win this war. Spain had joined the forces pitted against Britain in the summer of 1779, laying siege to the British colony of Gibraltar on their southern tip, a long way from America but symbolic of imperial connections. The surrender to the Americans of Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown in October of that year signalled defeat; Lord North, as a result, lost control of the British parliament. In February 1782 a motion asserting the impracticability of war passed in the House of Commons, and within the month North had resigned as prime minister. By November, the basic outline of a peace agreement was in place, and in September 1783 the Treaty of Versailles finally ended all hostilities, and returned to Britain most of the colonies seized by Spain and France during the conflict, as well as returning those French colonies Britain had captured. In that year, Britain also agreed to a policy of free trade with the new United States. By 1800 trade with the USA was running at £40 million a year. Hostility was buried as commerce reasserted its hold; there was a rapid rise in British imports from its former colonies and the loss of the American colonies barely affected British prosperity.

The loss of America clearly did not lead to the demise of the British Empire, or to any significant loss of British imperial power. Britain rapidly

acquired new territories elsewhere in the world and would, over the course of the nineteenth century, go on to increase its imperial holdings substantially. Why, then, is the American War considered important? In some ways, it was precisely because it shifted the focus of British imperial interest in new directions that would be sustained into the mid-twentieth century. There are, however, other reasons too. Britain's defeat in the American Revolutionary War was one of only very few defeats that the country sustained over the course of the eighteenth century-and, given the considerable fighting in which Britain engaged in that time, this alone is remarkable. Moreover, while in the earlier wars of the eighteenth century Britain had been fighting against other nations and national interests, this war was between Britons, and pitted Britain against a British and Protestant adversary (albeit one enjoying substantial aid from Britain's Catholic rivals). The loss of America and the growing interest in the colonies of Asia made Britain's Empire far less Anglophone, far less Protestant, far less white and less self-governing. And with the French and the Spanish supporting the American colonies against Britain, the war also isolated Britain within Europe.

The outcome of the war affected not just the direction of future growth within the British Empire, but also the fortunes of the West Indies. The decline of the sugar islands was not sudden, but over the course of the next 20 years or so, their wealth and power diminished. Competition with the powerful French sugar industry, a declining share of American trade and, in 1807, the abolition of the slave trade spelled the end of West Indian predominance within the British Empire. The shift in imperial interest in a largely easterly direction also unquestionably hurt the fortunes of the sugar islands.

Not all of Britain's Atlantic holdings were lost in 1783, of course. American colonists who remained loyal to the English Crown often fled north to the Canadian colonies, and these became an important site for various experiments in colonial governance. It would be in British Canada that the new code of 'responsible self-government' would first be instituted. Canada posed some awkward problems for the colonial state, however, since so many of its settler inhabitants were French and Catholic, France having gained a considerable foothold in the north Atlantic by the eighteenth century. Catholicism for the British was still, at the time of American independence, tied symbolically to disloyalty; it was not even a hundred years since the English state had secured a Protestant succession to the throne and passed laws that prevented non-Anglicans of all persua-

constitution on separating Church and State was a reaction to Britain's restrictive and unequal religious divisions.

In the Canadian context, the loyalty of Catholics living under British rule proved very important, and the constitutional arrangements we see in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Canada reflect the attempt of imperial politicians to deflect French separatism in the region. Using the experience of America as a guide, Britain granted a limited form of representative government to the Canadian colonies in 1791, with a franchise based on freehold property and with governors who enjoyed a power of veto. By encouraging British emigration to Canada and awarding land grants to loyalists who left America, the government also quietly hoped to increase the British proportion of this mixed population. Lower Canada (Quebec), however, remained predominantly French and by the 1830s rebellion threatened to dissolve the fragile truce between British and French colonists in British Canada. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the need to find a system that would quell this tension would result in a solution that would be transported to white settler colonies throughout the Empire during the nineteenth century. Although the system of representative self-government did little to deflect the tensions between British Canada and French Canada, it would prove to be the system that sustained white settler colonialism for the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Canada would prove an important resource within the Empire. From a population of some half a million in 1815, Canada had almost 19 million people in 1911, and was responsible for 16.5 per cent of British trade. Often neglected in histories of the British Empire, Canada was a significant arena for political experiment as the Empire matured in the nineteenth century.

## Reference

- 1 Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 119.

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## After America

At the end of the eighteenth century, although it had a good deal of its North American possessions, Britain was not a major colonial power, with territorial possessions spread far and wide, which there were a multitude of languages, customs and religions. The century of recurrent warfare – mostly with the French and the Spanish – the British had established their supremacy among European powers. In part, this was due to Britain's considerable maritime developed because, as a small island, Britain needed to protect its sea lanes. With the loss of the American colonies and the decline in the influence of the West Indian colonies, British imperial interests began to turn from the Atlantic world towards the Pacific and Asia, which had been steadily developing as colonial sites of interest since at least the mid-eighteenth century. The new forms of white settlement that would emerge in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century were politically different from those of the 13 American colonies. By the 1860s the colonies of settlement, Australia and New Zealand, had followed the Canadian colonies in being granted 'responsible self-government', a development that would remain central to the growing idea of a British Commonwealth.

Exploration in the Pacific preceded actual settlement, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were particularly active decades of maritime exploration. The motives for the many voyages to the Pacific region in these years varied. There was, of course, the constant search for resources and lands that had long prompted entrepreneurs and explorers to set sail for the Pacific. There was also a keen interest in finding good ports and harbours where ships could dock, rest and resupply on long sea voyages. At the same time, we might note a revitalized attention to science in the eighteenth century, linked to imperial exploration's revealing of new flora and

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## The Women Who Came to North America, 1607-1770

Toward the end of her 91 years (1665-1754) in Ipswich, Massachusetts, Elizabeth Rogers Appleton drew up the following stark account: "Here is an account of all my posterity: 6 sons and 3 daughters, 20 grand son and 20 grand daughters, 58 in all." Only five of her nine children had lived to adulthood, however, and less than half of her grandchildren survived. "I often look over this list with sorrow," she continued, but she took comfort in her faith that "I shall mett them all att Christ's rit hand among his sheep and lambs." Concerned about the spiritual health of her descendents and convinced of her own right to direct their lives, this good Puritan also admonished her survivors to "remember their creator in the days of thire youth, and fear God betimes."

In the years since her birth, the Massachusetts colony had grown into a thriving commercial community. From the outset the constant cycle of pregnancy, birth, and death shaped the lives of women like Elizabeth Appleton. And yet, the inner meanings of those webs of kinship and the kinds of power women could exercise would be different for Appleton's granddaughters than they had been for her. On the one hand, family life was growing more emotionally expressive and religious experience more inward, one could say even more "feminine." On the other hand, women's informal power to control behavior through networks of communication and gossip was in decline by the 1750s as men's and women's work began to occupy increasingly different spaces and a new public life emerged from which women were excluded.

Born for Liberty: A History of Women  
By Sara M. Evans



From the beginning the gendered world of the North American colonies was infused with strong notions about women and men. European immigrants explicitly believed in female inferiority. Even Protestants, in revolt against a male Catholic hierarchy and convinced of the equality of souls before God, nevertheless insisted on women's proper subordination within the family. As John Calvin asserted: "Let the woman be satisfied with her state of subjection, and not take it amiss that she is made inferior to the more distinguished sex."<sup>2</sup> While still aboard the *Arabella* when he described the Puritan mission in the New World, John Winthrop began with an assertion of divinely ordained hierarchy: "God Almighty in his most holy and wise providence hath soe disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjection." John Milton's famous line in *Paradise Lost*—"he for God only, she for God in him"—explained how the subjection of woman to man paralleled that of man to God. Thus the subjection of wife to husband, like that of man to God, could function metaphorically to describe a range of hierarchical social relationships within the broader political and social order.<sup>3</sup>

Women were inferior not only religiously but also legally. Under English common law a married woman was "covered" by her husband. The name given to her status was *feme covert* and as such she had no independent legal standing. She could neither own property nor sign contracts; she did not even own the wages she might earn. Her legal existence merged into that of her husband. Only single women over the age of twenty-one, and widows, with a status known as *feme sole*, had legal rights to make contracts and hold property in their own names. Widows in particular exercised considerable legal rights as the agents of their deceased husbands.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, images and myths of female power were very much in the minds of seventeenth-century Europeans. They knew, for example, that it was possible for women of the aristocracy to control nations and armies. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I over England remained in living memory. Although ordinary women could never aspire to such positions, they had other powers unique to their sex: Women were disorderly, sexual, and lusty. Their cold and wet humors (in contrast to the hot and dry humors of men) made them deceptive. A woman's womb, without sufficient sexual and reproductive activity, might leave its moorings and

wander about the female body producing hysteria. With woman's intellect at the mercy of her lower nature, she would be prone to the evil powers of witchcraft. Her very sensual and disruptive power, in fact, dictated the necessity of her subordination within marriage.<sup>5</sup>

In real communities women could and did exercise considerable social power through informal channels. Working together, sharing childbirths and funerals, selling and buying milk, butter, or thread, they knew intimate details about most people in the community. Privacy was virtually nonexistent and social control of matters from sexuality to economic transactions remained primarily external—often in the hands of neighborhood women whose gossip could create or destroy reputations. Sometimes even the overt power of male-dominated governmental and religious institutions paled before the informal powers of female voluntary association and gossip.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Migrations of European and African Women*

Women were an integral part of the massive migrations into North America beginning in the seventeenth century. Once the purpose of travel shifted from male-dominated exploration and fortune-seeking to permanent settlement, women joined in large numbers. Like men, women came from a variety of backgrounds and for very different reasons. With hope, and sometimes out of desperation, English Puritans and Quakers, Irish Catholics, Dutch farmers, and Scottish Presbyterians came for religious freedom and economic opportunity.<sup>7</sup> Women's roots in the Old World shaped not only their expectations but also the repertoire of female responses with which they coped in a New World.

A combination of religious disorder and socioeconomic change in England and Europe drove settlers to set out on small, unstable sailboats for the three-month voyage across the Atlantic. Women, like men, came because they saw the New World as an opportunity for a better life or because they had little other choice. In New England and the middle colonies they usually arrived with their families. In the southern colonies they more often came alone as indentured servants and prospective wives for male settlers.

Whether women migrated in families or alone, by choice or by force, they arrived in a wilderness whose climate and terrain was unknown except to the native peoples whom they rapidly

displaced. Its chief attribute, in contrast to crowded Europe, was space. The land seemed endless. For Puritans this meant an opportunity to create a godly society that could serve as a beacon to the rest of the world. For Quakers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania it meant an escape from persecution. For leaders in every colony it meant financial opportunity. In these wide spaces women's lives were shaped by the demographic imbalance between women and men, by high fertility and mortality, by a social world in which the boundaries between family and community, private and public spheres remained highly permeable, and by a culture that prescribed specific tasks and subordinate status to women.

Anne Dudley spent her British childhood on the lush estates of the Earl of Lincoln, where her father served as a steward, managing the property and household. Private tutors and access to the earl's extensive library fed her eager mind through her fifteenth year. She absorbed the strong beliefs of Nonconformist Protestants who increasingly believed that the Church of England had become corrupt and heretical. At sixteen she married twenty-five-year-old Simon Bradstreet; two years later, in 1630, she embarked with her husband and parents on the *Arabella* with a company of Puritans determined to create a godly community in the New World. Boston—a few muddy roads and makeshift houses clinging to the edge of the harbor—shocked the eighteen-year-old wife. Her “heart rose” within her. “But after I was convinced it was the way of God, I submitted to it and joined to the church at Boston.”<sup>8</sup> For the rest of her life she was an active and devout member of her community, bearing and raising eight children. Although her life in many ways followed the pattern of most Puritan women, the fact that Anne Dudley Bradstreet wrote poems sets her apart. Her poetry offers us a glimpse of the daily trials and inner life of a Puritan woman. Suffused with an abiding faith in God, she wrote of her warm love for her husband, her sorrow at the deaths of children, and fears of death in childbirth. The night her house burned down she traced out her loss as a map of the familiar artifacts of daily life:

Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest;  
There lay that store I counted best:  
My pleasant things in ashes lye,  
And them behold no more shall I.  
Under thy roof no guest shall sitt,  
Nor at thy Table eat a bitt.<sup>9</sup>

Four years after Anne Dudley Bradstreet arrived in Boston, an older Puritan woman disembarked with her family. Forty-three-year-old Anne Hutchinson came with her husband and twelve children as followers of Puritan minister John Cotton, who had been hounded from his pulpit in England. Although Anne Bradstreet traveled as a daughter and wife, making the best of her life once she arrived, Anne Hutchinson and her husband clearly made a joint decision to emigrate on religious grounds. She immediately immersed herself in the religious life of the Boston community, discussing theology with the women she served as a nurse and midwife and holding meetings in her home to interpret the sermons of her mentor, Reverend John Cotton.

In the middle colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, women arrived with their families as had Anne Bradstreet and Anne Hutchinson, though some also came individually as indentured servants or slaves. From Holland, Sweden, Germany, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Switzerland they came primarily seeking economic opportunity. Quakers, Mennonites, and French Huguenots sought freedom from religious persecution and an opportunity to live a godly life as they understood it. During the seventeenth century they tended to live in scattered agricultural settlements where the contacts with Indians often prevented starvation.<sup>10</sup> However, colonial women observed that European diseases were even more devastating to Indian people than firearms in the ongoing conflict over land. Mary Smith, a Pennsylvania Quaker, wrote in the early eighteenth century that “God’s providence made room for us in a wonderful manner, in taking away the Indians. There came a distemper among them so mortal that they could not bury all the dead. Others went away, leaving their town.”<sup>11</sup>

Further south in the region around the Chesapeake Bay colonies of Virginia and Maryland, women rarely immigrated in family groups. Instead of tight-knit self-governing communities, southern colonies were money-making enterprises focused on staple crops such as tobacco in the Chesapeake region and, later, rice in Carolina. Women, like men, emigrated primarily as indentured servants, obliged to work for four or five years to repay the cost of their travel. The opportunity these women sought was not religious freedom but a chance to marry and, therefore, ensure their economic survival.

Few of these women were literate and even fewer wrote about



their experiences. In the eighteenth-century a young servant's lament to her father described conditions similar to those in the previous century: "What we unfortunat English People suffer here is beyond the probability of you in England to conceive." She went on to enumerate her woes, "toiling almost Day and Night" while her master yelled "you Bitch you do not [do] halfe enough . . . tied up and whipp'd . . . scarce any thing but Indian Corn and Salt to eat . . . almost naked no shoes nor stockings to wear . . . what rest we can get is to rap ourselves up in a Blanket and ly upon the Ground, this is the deplorable Conditions your poor Betty endures."<sup>12</sup>

Women who worked on tobacco farms scattered along the bay and rivers of the Chesapeake region faced harsh conditions of labor and new diseases: malaria, influenza, dysentery. Men died young, most by the age of forty-three; women, even younger. But three men immigrated for every woman. If women survived their indentures, they invariably married.

The demographic and environmental setting in the Chesapeake region contrasted sharply with women's experiences in England; the New World was harsh and more precarious.<sup>13</sup> Uprooted from family and community, they worked in households and tobacco fields and once their indentures were finished they chose their marriage partners without parental supervision. Once married, they began bearing children relatively late. Unsupervised by close neighbors and vulnerable to sexually abusive masters, one in five female servants wound up in court, pregnant before her term of servitude was up. If she or her lover could not buy out her term, she could be sentenced to pay a fine, receive a whipping, and serve one to two additional years for breach of contract. Furthermore, her child could be taken from her by the court and bound out to another family. If women exercised new prerogatives in their choice of husbands or their management of estates, they did so in a context of high mortality and social isolation. One in four children died before the age of one, and nearly half died before reaching adulthood. Women were also likely to experience widowhood as the odds for marriages lasting as long as ten years were only one in three. Even though they often outlived their husbands, they were usually left with two or three children.<sup>14</sup>

Another group of uprooted women also began to arrive in the colonies in the late seventeenth century, but the conditions

of their emigration from Africa involved no elements of choice or of future hopes. African slavery had begun in the Caribbean. It spread in the southern colonies, where labor-intensive cash crops such as tobacco created an intense demand for a highly controlled labor force.

Snatched from their homes in what are now Nigeria, Angola, and Biafra, African women who survived the forced march to the coast were herded onto slave ships for the infamous "middle passage" from Africa to the New World. Surrounded by strangers, naked, prone in the dark and crowded hold of the ship (or on the deck, exposed to weather and sexual assault), up to a fifth of them died on the trip. Others died soon after landing, whether in the sugar-producing colonies of the West Indies or the mainland colonies. Slave ships carried women and men in a ratio of about one to two. On arrival, any friendships formed en route were sundered as Africans marched one by one to the auction block where strange-looking people stared at them, spoke unintelligible words, poked their bodies, inspected their teeth and the women's breasts, and bought them. At her master's home, a new slave would be lucky to discover that the plantation was large enough to employ several slaves and even luckier if some of them spoke her native language. With them she would live in the slave quarters and work in the fields. African women began an African-American community and culture as they taught their American-born children the memories of their homeland.<sup>15</sup>

### *Work and Family in the Seventeenth Century*

To capture the rhythm of a colonial woman's daily work, it helps to envision the environment in which she accomplished her tasks. Imagine a large room, fifteen by twenty feet, dominated by a cavernous seven-foot-wide fireplace on one wall. Along the walls are a bed or two, a table, perhaps a chair, and several chests. In the earliest years, houses consisted entirely of this single room. Over time the loft reached by a ladder might become sleeping as well as storage space, or a second large room could be built with a fireplace sharing the original chimney. Out back would be a lean-to shed providing more storage and smaller buildings for washing, storing milk, keeping hens, or brewing cider and beer. The main room or "hall," however, continued to be the center of household activity. The lack of differentiation in this

space reflected the unity of the family economy within which tasks were clearly allocated by gender.<sup>16</sup>

Building and maintaining the fire and processing and preparing food for the household were endless tasks for Euro-American women just as for American Indian women. Throughout the day the housewife would find herself banking the fire, coaxing a blaze, setting dough to rise, baking bread, and boiling meat. In between she turned to the most pressing tasks that varied by season: dairying (milking and making cheese and butter), gathering eggs and feeding chickens, brewing cider or beer, slaughtering, smoking bacon, or managing her vegetable garden. She sewed clothes and quilts for the family though she relied on others to spin thread, weave cloth, and grind wheat. In turn, she might sell surplus cheese, eggs, or butter in the village. The resulting networks of trade among women played a critical role in village life. Because such networks were local and personal and transactions tended to be oral, not written, these economic activities remain largely undocumented.<sup>17</sup>

In cities housewives drew even more heavily on trade to provide for their families. They became experts at procuring the items they needed rather than personally manufacturing or processing them, yet their households retained the undifferentiated quality of more rural farmhouses. If their husbands were artisans or shopkeepers, women managed the family business whenever necessary. Like their rural counterparts, city women spent hours boiling laundry and later ironing clothes with heavy irons heated on the fire. Wealthy women had servants to help with such chores, and in southern cities like Charleston, S.C., they supervised the labor of slaves. Though household manufacture was less critical in urban areas, some women occupied themselves and their children with spinning to bring in additional money.

Few colonial women received any formal education, though in New England it was common to bind young girls out as apprentices and servants to other families who promised to teach them reading as well as household tasks. Beginning at about the age of six, these children learned the basic skills of housewifery and sometimes the rudiments of reading from their mothers. Their brothers were far more likely to be literate as well as to receive training in a variety of artisanal crafts. Women's skills were acquired in the daily rounds of activities in the household, the family business, and the marketplace.

Women on the outer edges of white settlement most closely approximated the image of the self-sufficient colonial housewives who—with their husbands—produced and manufactured virtually everything their families used. Distance and poverty gave them little choice and their manufacturing was often of a crude sort. When Magdalen Wear's husband died in York, Maine, he left her and their six children with an estate of 7£ in household goods: "some old pewter, a pot, two bedsteads, bedding, one chest, and a box."<sup>18</sup>

On hardscrabble farms in both the north and south, women worked in the fields as well. On the southern frontier women pounded and ground corn, gardened, milked cows and made butter and cheese, sewed and laundered clothes. Few spun or wove cloth until later in the century, nor did many manufacture items such as candles. Larger planters' emphasis on cash crops and the constancy of trade with England and the Indies made such items available except when the tobacco economy experienced a recession. The necessity of female labor, and the clearly understood divisions of tasks, appeared in contracts such as one signed by a tenant farmer specifying that he would work the land with one servant and that his wife would "Dresse the Viduals milk the cowes wash for the servants and doe allthings necessary for a woman to doe upon the s[ai]d plantation."<sup>19</sup>

Slave women, on the other hand, primarily worked in the fields cultivating tobacco, rice, and, later, indigo. A few moved into household work gradually as the pressing need for field laborers abated. Within the slave quarters, where huts often were built on an African model, they processed food for their households late at night and early in the morning. When possible they supplemented their diets with produce from small garden plots as well. It may well be that South Carolina planters learned to cultivate rice successfully from West Africans familiar with rice culture, especially those from Sierra Leone. These women knew the basic methods of raising and harvesting rice, and their ancient mortar-and-pestle technique for separating the grains from the husks became the standard procedure in South Carolina after Europeans failed to devise another means.<sup>20</sup> In the Chesapeake region African women labored in the tobacco fields and barns, hoeing, picking, stripping, and drying.<sup>21</sup>

As women pursued their daily rounds, they were likely to be pregnant or nursing. Although the first generation of southern



women—both black and white—married late, they immediately began a cycle of pregnancy, birth, and breast-feeding that recurred every two to three years. Their daughters, in turn, married much younger—often as young as sixteen—and bore children at the same rate until their forties if they lived that long. Similarly, women in New England bore an average of eight children.<sup>22</sup>

Childbirth, in a village or town, was a female ritual. The expectant mother would lay in a store of “groaning cakes” and “groaning beer” for the women who would gather when labor began. Midwife, neighbors, and kin stayed with her through her travail and for several days afterward, while her husband for once remained on the periphery in his own house. Women knew that they faced death with each birth. Ministers reminded them that this was the price for the sin of Eve. The presence of others who had also suffered and survived was a deep comfort.<sup>23</sup> Imagine then the fears of women on isolated farms and frontier settlements where childbirth was less communal. Wherever possible, however, women were attended by other women, and midwives like Anne Hutchinson held an honored position in the community. Indeed, with their knowledge of herbal medicines, they served as doctors as well.

Children, born with such frequency, were highly vulnerable to disease and accidents in their early years. Motherhood involved loss and grief. In seventeenth-century Maryland 25 percent of infants died before their first birthdays and 40 to 55 percent died before the age of twenty.<sup>24</sup> Huge fireplaces, pots of boiling meat or laundry, agricultural tools and implements lying about, open wells—all awaited the hapless child who wandered momentarily out of sight. With so many children and a life of constant physical labor, motherhood itself had a different emotional quality. Many documents testify to women's love for their children and grief at their deaths, but the intensive time and emotional investment in individual children that would characterize relationships in the nineteenth-century middle classes was simply not possible for most colonial women.<sup>25</sup>

Women who bore children outside the bonds of marriage faced additional burdens. They could be hauled before the courts by neighbors (themselves frequently female) and tried for fornication or adultery. In most cases, extended family networks appear to have provided some support, perhaps even forcing the legitimating marriage. The continuing presence of infanticide, however,

indicates that for a variety of reasons such support was sometimes inadequate or absent. The reasons for infanticide varied from the shame and terror of a lonely young woman fearing community condemnation to episodes of temporary (or permanent) insanity. Based on British precedent, the law ruled infanticide murder; prior to 1730, those convicted were invariably put to death. Puritan ministers railed against the “uncleanness,” “whore mongers,” and “mothers of bastards” for whom the “fire of lust” led to the “fire of hell.”<sup>26</sup>

Colonial courts were filled with cases involving accusations against women ranging from infanticide to adultery, “lewd carriage,” heresy, and witchcraft. The presence of women as both the accusers and the accused indicates not only the extent of women's informal role as guardians of communal morality but also the absence of any formal power in both church and state courts, where women could be witnesses but never judges, lawyers, or prosecutors. Two prominent New England cases of social and political conflict in the seventeenth century revolved around women, and they illustrate the strains introduced by the Protestant emphasis on spiritual equality in a society based on female subordination.

The first occurred between 1636 and 1638 when the Massachusetts settlement was still new and many future colonies had yet to be settled by Europeans. Anne Hutchinson, mother of fifteen (three of whom died in England and the last born since her arrival), midwife, and follower of John Cotton, drew large numbers of women, and later men as well, to her home where she expounded on the doctrine of “grace.” Extending Cotton's teachings, she charged that most Puritan ministers failed to espouse the true gospel by advocating a “covenant of works” emphasizing outward signs of salvation such as good works and worldly success. In contrast, she emphasized the inner experience of God's grace, which could in no way be “earned” by works.

The tension between good works and grace runs through Puritan theology, and settlers in Massachusetts were familiar with the heretical possibilities of each. In Hutchinson's hands, however, the radical potential of the doctrine of grace for women became compelling even as it undermined clerical authority. The inner experience of grace offered women divine sanction for voicing their own religious experience and rejecting the judgments of earthly authorities. This liberating possibility for women no doubt

contributed to Hutchinson's large female following, even though she also drew influential men as well.

In a religiously based community the boundary between theological and political difference hardly exists. Both clerical and civil authorities found Hutchinson's activities alarming and they set out to silence her. In the course of her trials Hutchinson was effectively isolated from her supporters including, finally, John Cotton. Governor John Winthrop and a series of clerics engaged her in a brilliant defense in which she responded to them Biblical citation for Biblical citation. Winthrop, however, was mortified to be intellectually embattled with a woman. "We do not mean to discourse with those of your sex," he admonished this most "disorderly" woman.<sup>27</sup> Another interrogator, Hugh Peter, charged "you have stept out of your place, you have rather bine a Husband than a Wife and a preacher than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject."<sup>28</sup> Her rebellion, in other words, threatened all hierarchies: familial, religious, and political. Hutchinson's accusers were unable to win the argument conclusively until she announced that she had received a direct revelation from God. With that, she was excommunicated, and she left with her family to join a small settlement in Rhode Island. Following her husband's death in 1642 she moved with her six youngest children to a Dutch colony near Long Island Sound where, in 1643, she and five children were killed in an Indian raid.

The second crisis was the famous Salem witchcraft trial in 1692, when fourteen women and six men were executed as witches. Witchcraft was thought to be widespread in the seventeenth century. Virtually everyone believed in it and knew many of the signs proving allegiance to the devil. Outbreaks of witchcraft accusation punctuated the seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> The Salem episode, however, was both the largest and the last of these. The events in Salem mirrored many of the social tensions that existed elsewhere in the colonial world.

The Salem terror began when several young women in the Putnam household asked the West Indian servant, Tituba, to divine their futures. Soon the girls began to claim that they were bewitched and tortured and to accuse women on the margins of Salem society: older, cantankerous women known for squabbles with neighbors; Tituba, a West Indian; a scandalous woman known for her red bodice and rowdy parties. But they also accused Sarah Nurse, elderly and deaf, with her husband a newcomer to Salem.

The accused were brought to trial where the testimony of hysterical girls convinced observers that the devil was at work in their community. The trials ended abruptly when the charges shifted toward increasingly prominent and powerful individuals, seeming wild even to firm believers, and several of the young women confessed that the whole thing had been a fabrication.

The association between witchcraft and women was pervasive, and most accused witches were seen to threaten the established order in some way. Some were women who inherited money directly because they lacked brothers or sons, thus upsetting the orderly transmission of property through the male line. Others were older women whose aggressive and contentious behavior (itself not so unusual) was interpreted by their neighbors as an unwillingness to accept their proper place. Still others were newcomers who had not yet found a familiar niche in the order of things. Women were often convenient scapegoats for vague anxieties about economic uncertainty and underlying fears of female power and unruliness.<sup>30</sup>

The young Putnam women who accused their mothers' generation of abnormal powers embodied some of the social and economic tensions of seventeenth-century life. In contrast to their mothers' experience, for example, this younger generation faced a shortage of marriageable suitors as young men migrated to the frontier rendering the young women's futures less secure.<sup>31</sup> Their accusations also exposed political and economic conflicts between those related to the accusers, the powerful Putnam family, and those who were accused, many of whom like the Nurses were encroaching on the Putnams' land. Young women in the Putnam household knew who the family's enemies were. They also knew very well the powers of the supernaturally possessed, and in this case they used them to act out broader social conflicts. In seeing visions and becoming possessed, for a moment young women placed themselves outside the hierarchies of age, gender, and clerical authority. "The possessed could command their minister, speak in the church, and comment on the sermon as no other child, servant, or female adult could have done."<sup>32</sup>

More than half a century before the Salem witch trials, Anne Hutchinson demonstrated the enormous influence of female networks by using them as a channel for her religiously and politically threatening ideas. The Salem witch trials illustrated again the potentials and the limits of women's informal power. As accusers,



accused, and witnesses, women were central to this major social upheaval, and yet they remained outsiders to the formal power of male political and religious elites. They remained economically dependent and vulnerable.

### *Class and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century*

Economically the colonies proved to be a great success as the boom in trade across the Atlantic by the late seventeenth century fostered the growth of cities, merchant elites in northern and middle colonies, and slave-based planter elites in the tobacco and rice-growing south. The evolution of class in the eighteenth century meant greater and greater social differentiation for both women and men. As some grew wealthy, increasing numbers of people, especially in the cities, owned no property at all.

As commerce reshaped colonial economies, demographic changes, in particular the emergence of a majority born in North America, transformed colonial populations. The Puritan emigration to New England had stopped abruptly in 1640, but other colonies continued to receive large numbers of immigrants for many decades. Gradually, however, the populations of most colonies came to be composed predominantly of the native born rather than of immigrants. This was accomplished not only by a slowed rate of new arrivals but also by extremely high fertility rates among Euro-Americans. The exception to this demographic pattern in the early eighteenth century was the population of African slaves. African-Americans were overwhelmed by new arrivals in several decades of the first half of the eighteenth century as the tobacco boom generated an insatiable demand for slave labor. Only after 1740 or 1750 did births consistently outnumber recent immigrants.

The emergence of a native-born population gradually transformed the sexual imbalance of the immigrant population. By the eighteenth century there were about the same numbers of women as of men, and indeed as younger men pushed out into the frontier seeking new land some communities experienced as much as a 15 percent surplus of women. The result was gradually rising marriage ages and a declining rate of remarriage for widows. As young men moved to the frontier and young women married at more mature ages, parents found that they could not control their children's decisions as tightly as they once had. Even though young women had more say-so about their choices of marriage

partners, they had few real means of controlling their economic fortunes. External controls were weakening, but the consequences for women were mixed. In terms of sexual behavior, for example, the greater freedom of young people can be documented in the number of premarital pregnancies that rose with each decade of the eighteenth century. Women's futures, as the young women in Salem Village may have sensed, were no longer so secure.<sup>33</sup>

By the early eighteenth century, as second and third generation settlers constructed a more permanent life-style, household inventories indicated an increasing number of homes with the accoutrements of gentility: table linens, forks, chairs, and looking glasses.<sup>34</sup> Whether merchants' wives in Philadelphia or planters' wives in Virginia, the women who managed such households found their duties changed, multiplied, and somewhat narrowed at the same time. Consumer goods required their own care. Gentility meant a leisured social life, taking tea with friends or in the south entertaining large numbers of friends or relatives who might arrive at any time and stay for a week or two. It meant cultivation of decorative skills such as fine needlework and acquaintance with more refined social rituals associated with eating and entertaining.

The emergence of the "pretty gentlewoman" in the eighteenth century marked a differentiation in life-styles between the well-to-do city woman whose energies were focused on the upkeep of her home and family and her rural or lower-class sisters who continued to assume more diverse social and economic roles. The gentlewoman was less likely to know about, or assist in, the management of her husband's affairs or to be involved in trade or business of any sort. Her servants were members of a different class, not the daughters of peers training in the skills of housewifery, and she was less enmeshed in that tight world of gossip and mutual support that surrounded networks of female trade and barter.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time, an increase in single women—spinsters and widows—accounted for increasing numbers of women who had to support themselves in cities. Commercial growth provided employment opportunities for a few though their existence remained precarious. Single women most likely entered domestic servitude or entered a traditional female trade like millinery. Some widows continued the artisanal trades of their husbands. Others ran taverns and inns such as the Plume of Feathers, the Blue Anchor, or the Rose and Crown in Philadelphia or opened "dame schools" in hopes of attracting a few young scholars. An impressive number

of women operated printing presses. And in commercial districts retail goods were often sold by "she-merchants," especially when the goods were clothes, hats, and other items consumed by women.<sup>36</sup> One such group of shopkeepers wrote to the *New York Journal* in 1733:

Mr. Zenger, We, the widows of this city, have had a Meeting, and as our case is something Deplorable, we beg you will give it Place in your Weekly Journal, that we may be relieved, it is as follows.

We are House keepers, Pay our taxes, carry on Trade, and most of us are she Merchants, and as we in some measure contribute to the Support of Government, we ought to be Intitled to some of the Sweets of it; but we find ourselves entirely neglected, while the Husbands that live in our Neighborhood are daily invited to Dine at Court; we have the Vanity to think we can be full as Entertaining, and make as brave a Defense in Case of an Invasion and perhaps not turn Taile so Soon as some of them.<sup>37</sup>

Beneath the ironic, jesting tone of their letter lay an implied battle of the sexes. Such women could rib men about masculine pretensions, but they were also acutely aware, and resentful, of their own secondary status.

Commercial opportunities also changed the lives of rural women. In the Brandywine valley, a Quaker-dominated area near Philadelphia, farm women shifted their work from spinning and weaving to the production of butter. First they sold their surplus to exporters trading with the West Indies. Then as Philadelphia grew into a major city, they found a ready urban market. The income from women's butter production brought a new affluence to "middling" farm families, allowing women to buy goods they had previously produced themselves and sustaining the family economy in the face of rising costs.<sup>38</sup>

Southern plantation mistresses also presided over households growing in size and complexity, but the sources of their wealth in staple crop, slave-based agriculture shaped a very different environment for their activities. Early in the eighteenth century the emerging Virginia gentry began to construct palatial houses to demonstrate their status and growing dominance over a violent and unruly society. The towering "great house" emphasized patriarchal power flanked by subordinated wings, smaller out buildings, and, at some distance, the slave quarters. Public spaces—stores, taverns, and courthouses—were for men only. Even in church people sat by rank and by gender: After the women and

poorer men were seated in ranked family pews, the gentlemen tropped into church "in a Body" as the service began and left "in the same manner," as if everyone else was simply an audience for their display.<sup>39</sup> Within the great house specialized uses of space—dining rooms, parlors, and libraries—marked a shift away from the crowded, undifferentiated homes of smaller farms and increasing separation of male and female spheres of activity.

Despite the increasing segregation of women and their work, in at least one remarkable case the combination of wealth and southern frontier conditions provided an arena for female assertion and creativity. As a teenager in the 1740s, Eliza Lucas moved with her family from the West Indies to a plantation on Wappoo Creek in South Carolina. Educated in England, she was unusually literate and well-read in the classics. With her father away serving as governor of Antigua and her mother in ill health, energetic Eliza found herself managing several plantations alone. She loved growing things and she had a good eye for economic advantage. After experimenting with new crops, in 1744 she succeeded in producing the first successful crop of indigo in the colonies and devised a workable method for extracting the bright blue dye. By 1747 the colony was exporting 100,000 pounds of indigo per year, and it rapidly became the agricultural base of the South Carolina economy until the Revolution.

While Eliza Lucas's indigo experiments were under way, she rejected numerous suitors, finding most men boring. Of one suitor whom her father urged on her she wrote, "the riches of Peru and Chili if he had them put together could not purchase a sufficient esteem for him to make him my husband."<sup>40</sup> Later she fell in love with Charles Pinckney, a Charleston widower twenty years her senior, who encouraged her intellectual pursuits. Following their marriage in 1745, Eliza Lucas Pinckney bore four children, raising the three that survived infancy with intense attention to their educations. She also continued to exercise administrative responsibility for her father's plantations and, widowed at thirty-five, took over the responsibility for her husband's property. Her scientific and administrative achievements were unique for her time, but the setting in which they occurred—a southern plantation—was one that shaped the lives of many thousands of women, most of them black.

To shift one's perspective from the woman in the elegant great house to the women in the slave quarters requires an imaginative



leap. The contrast between the two environments could hardly have been greater. In the slave quarters, huts were clustered together communally, housing a variety of familial arrangements, two- and one-parent households with children or various combinations of unrelated people who treated one another as if they were related. Domestic activity in the early mornings, evenings, and holidays involved beating or grinding corn into meal, cultivating small plots of corn, cooking over an open fire in rude pots and pans furnished by the master, laundering clothes, carrying water from a well for cooking and laundry, and maintaining a small household furnished with straw beds and barrels for seats.<sup>41</sup> As the eighteenth-century economy grew more diverse and prosperous, owners on larger plantations began to assign a few tasks specifically to male or female slaves. Some men learned artisanal skills. Some women went to work in the "big kitchen," but most men and women worked side-by-side in the fields.

African-American mothers provided the first link in a chain of kinship around which an Afro-American community began to develop. Male slaves frequently lived on plantations separated from their wives and children. Women were less likely than men to lose their children through sale, though that remained a constant possibility. Wherever large numbers of slaves lived together for a significant period of time and where the black population grew more from natural increase than from the importation of Africans, communities began to grow. They were marked by extensive webs of kinship in which siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and even great-grandparents lived on the same or adjacent plantations. In these networks, daily survival grew into shared language, values, and ritual despite the cruel harshness of the slave system.<sup>42</sup> The power of kinship as a source of definition for community and mutual obligation was reflected in the development of numerous "fictive kin" relationships modeled on kinship and treated as if they were kinship relations. Calling one another "auntie," "uncle," "cousin," or "sister," for example, and assuming the obligations of kinship that go with such titles are common examples of fictive kinship relations which have continued within Afro-American culture.

For a time there were probably many Afro-American cultures, just as the setting of each colony harbored a distinctive European-based culture. The weaving together of various African traditions and European patterns shows up in distinctive patterns of sociabil-

ity, especially singing and dancing, the persistence of some African religious and magical practices even among Christian converts, marital patterns that prohibited first-cousin marriage (a common practice among the white upper classes), and marriage and funeral ceremonies. In the constricted spaces of slave quarters and the networks of roads and paths that bound one plantation to another, Afro-Americans claimed autonomy and built a community about which their masters knew very little.<sup>43</sup>

The patriarchs of the plantation system, however, feared the resentment and possible revolt of their slaves. Slavery had to be constantly enforced with violence. White owners perceived their slaves not only as dangerous but also as strangely "other."<sup>44</sup> Blackness in Elizabethan England had symbolized evil and sin while whiteness represented good, beauty, and purity; the moral judgment implicit in that association was deeply rooted. Africans were seen as heathens, potentially dangerous and decidedly immoral. As such, their passions and sexuality were exotic and forbidden, arousing desire in the very people who debated their humanity. From the beginning, sexual danger and appeal wove through the racist attitudes and violent acts of slave traders and slave owners.

Sexual domination of African women reenacted white men's power, just as rape has historically served conquering armies. One group of men demonstrates their control over another by forced sexual access to their women. Where the proportion of slaves was extremely high and the numbers of white women very low, as in the West Indies and in South Carolina, liaisons between white men and black women were common and occasionally even consensual. This was publicly acknowledged especially in humor. In 1732 the *South Carolina Gazette*, for example, published a verse speculating on the consequences of a chameleon's changing to the color of whatever it touched:

No Wonder then, that the *Amours* of such  
Whose *Taste* betrays them to a close Embrace  
With the *dark* Beauties of the *Sable* Race  
(Stain'd with the Tincture of the *Sooty* Sin)  
Imbibe the *Blackness* of their *Charmer's* Skin.<sup>45</sup>

For most English slaveholders in North America, however, sexual relationships with Africans also threatened to undermine their own sense of identity as civilized, Christian—that is, white—people.

White males engaged in these sexual relationships while publicly denying and condemning such behavior.

White women, however, could not do the same. For one thing, their relationships with African men carried the terrifying implication of black male dominance, if only momentarily, over white women; this undermined white patriarchy. For another, the products of such unions were far harder for a woman to deny. White women who gave birth to mulatto children received harsh physical punishments, and the black men involved might face death. Black women who bore mulatto children, on the other hand, simply provided more slaves, as the child's status followed that of the mother. The denial of any "in-between" status to mulatto children marked the extreme degree to which Euro-Americans divided their world into black and white. For African-American women, sexual violence added immeasurably to the pain and humiliation of enslavement.

With the initial differentiation of women's work and space from men's as the economy flourished in the eighteenth century, a new construct of ideal roles emerged. The idea of the "pretty gentlewoman" in the north and the "lady" in the south each drew intellectual substance from publications in England and the older definitions of the upper-class woman. Such images commanded attention, however, because they made sense of changing realities in the upper and middling classes.

Economic success separated women's and men's religious as well as economic activities during the eighteenth century. With each generation Euro-American men had become less religious and more attentive to economic opportunity. Laments about the decline in church membership began among Puritans in the mid-seventeenth century; in fact, the decline took place primarily among men. By the late seventeenth century women outnumbered male church members by a ratio of three to two. Loss of male piety also meant loss of power for the male clergy.

Thus, women became a majority of churchgoers just as churches moved from the center to the margins of colonial political life. The goals of religion—to create a godly society—often conflicted with the goals of commerce and commerce generally won, but not without creating considerable anxiety. Many colonials, men and women alike, found the clash of values troublesome. They resolved it for a time by placing the burdens of religious responsibility on women under the leadership of male ministers, making

the passive female a symbol of Christian virtues, and associating men and manliness with the materialistic and competitive world of trade.<sup>46</sup>

Female passivity had been the product of the earlier rigorous suppression of dissent and lay activism among women like Anne Hutchinson in the seventeenth century. The eighteenth century association of women and spirituality, however, shifted theological ground away from earlier Protestant understandings of spiritual equality—Eve was Adam's "helpmeet," made like him in the "image of God"; both had sinned, though Eve's was the more grievous. Now, as in the widely praised and influential work of English poet John Milton, Eve became a ravishing beauty, object of Adam's adoration. The detectable shift "from a harmony built upon sameness to a harmony built upon difference" echoed in verses and essays throughout the eighteenth-century colonies and established women's body and soul as a distinct and different creation of God.<sup>47</sup>

The Great Awakening, a religious revival movement starting in England and sweeping up and down the colonial coast in the 1730s and 1740s, offered women and ministers, in their different ways, an opportunity to reassert their influence and win men back to the church. In the beginning most converts were males whose female relatives—wives, mothers, and sisters—were church members. As revivals spread, female converts also came forward in roughly equal numbers.<sup>48</sup>

For both women and men the Great Awakening offered an opportunity to challenge clerical authority by following itinerant preachers and to begin to forge a more inward-looking religious mode. Although women's and men's conversion experiences followed essentially the same pattern, in either case it involved an emotional expressiveness and a submission to God's will and grace that white colonial culture increasingly defined as "feminine." Female conversion was often precipitated by the confrontation with death that childbearing women experienced every two to three years. One woman described her conversion after several years of "consideration about my soul" that "would wear off again 'till the time of my first Lying in; and then I was in my own apprehension brought to the very brink of eternity; and that night I received comfort."<sup>49</sup>

The association of women with spirituality and of spiritual experience with emotion meshed with increasing emotional expressive-



ness within families. Female emotionality, regarded as a source of disorder in the seventeenth century, could in a sentimentalized version be considered a source of order. Affection, nurture, and piety represented the emotions that provided social glue rather than social disruption. Greater solicitude for mothers and maternal sentiment, for example, made judges and juries more willing to consider evidence of stillbirth or accidental death even when an illegitimate pregnancy had been concealed. As a result, after 1730 convictions for infanticide declined markedly.<sup>50</sup>

Emotional expressiveness similarly changed expectations of marriage relations. Mutual attraction and love replaced parental choice in marriage arrangements, and a new rhetoric emphasizing partnership and companionship in marriage influenced a rising number of divorce cases as well. In 1766 for the first time divorce cases appeared in which "alienation of affection" was one of the charges.<sup>51</sup> For some at least, rising expectations of affection within marriage met with bitter disappointment.<sup>52</sup>

Most women in the years preceding the American Revolution continued to experience their lives as their mothers and grandmothers had, shaped most powerfully by the constantly recurring cycles of birth and pregnancy and by the arduous physical labor of housewifery. Even though literacy increased, women lagged far behind men. Most of the new schools were closed to them. Some legal rights established in the seventeenth century in part because of the extreme scarcity of women—dower rights, the ability of some women to sign contracts or to be consulted regarding the sale of property—continued, though in the context of a burgeoning commercial economy and increased emphasis on individual rights they had less and less meaning. Women in the wealthiest families, for example, had less and less family business knowledge with which to exercise such rights.<sup>53</sup> The social and political power that flowed through women's informal networks also appeared strong, but the conditions supporting it were undergoing rapid change. Martha Air's story illustrates both the force of women's judgment and intimations of the new world that was beginning to emerge.

Mary Angel and her friend Abigail Galloway took a walk together in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1773. As they strolled past an open window they spied a neighbor, Adam Air, "in the act of copulation" with Pamela Brichford. Knowing that Air was a married man,

they intervened without a second thought. As Mary later told the Boston court when Martha Air sued for divorce:

on Seeing this we went into the House, & stood behind them as they lay on the Floor, and after observing them some time, the said Abigail Galloway spoke, & asked him if he was not Ashamed to act so when he had a Wife at home, he got up & answered, one Woman was as good to him as another he then put up his nakedness before our faces, & went away, and she on his getting off her, jumped up & ran away into another part of the House.<sup>54</sup>

Colonial Americans, including New England Puritans, were hardly repressed about sexuality. They watched and reported on one another with avid interest. Social control remained primarily external—often in the hands of neighborhood women—and privacy was virtually nonexistent. That Martha Air could sue for divorce, however, marked a dramatic change from the previous century and from European practice, but her chances of success for the charge of adultery alone remained dim. Her divorce required other grounds. The law appeared evenhanded, yet a double standard decreed that it would not be in practice.<sup>55</sup>

By the time of the Revolution, even the informal powers of gossip and neighborly oversight had begun to change in towns and cities as expanding trade disrupted rooted communities, undermining social networks, separating women's and men's activities, and shaping a new family life. The bustling commercial worlds of eighteenth-century cities and plantations were a long way from the muddy little colony that Anne Bradstreet had joined in the previous century. Private and domestic concerns seemed increasingly separate, marginal to the rough and tumble of transatlantic commerce or colonial political affairs. The evolution of colonial society offered men new arenas for activity. Colonial men began the creation of a public arena distinctly separate from the domestic realm, as county courts met in regular session, town meetings grew, and colonial legislatures held elections and heated debates. Such places became the locus of community decision making as well as schools for participants in the practices and skills of public life. In an earlier time, though different and unequal, women and men inhabited similar worlds. Though personal concerns remained subject to communal supervision, everyone knew that *politics* was the province of men alone. Yet, the upheaval of the Revolution generated debate about the proper place of women in public life and gave a new, political meaning to domesticity.