There have been, of course, many accounts of the Roanoke ventures, but far too many of them rely on assessments of what the English did or did not do for their explanatory power. If only Raleigh’s men had done one thing, or avoided another, things might have turned out differently. Because the resulting story focuses on the English, historians attribute whatever successes and failures that occurred to their actions. All these explanations, as a result, overlook an important and fundamental truth: Raleigh’s Roanoke ventures failed because those native people in the region that they called Ossomocomuck, and who initially had welcomed the newcomers, decided to withdraw their support and assistance.1

In this paper I shall focus upon the native peoples who first encountered Sir Walter Raleigh’s explorers in 1584, and then again in 1585, 1586 and 1587. I would like to place them at the center of the story. While English settlers would later establish Jamestown in Virginia, and the Pilgrims would settle their plantation at Plymouth in New England, the men Raleigh sent across the Atlantic visited briefly Croatoan, Hatorask, Dasemunkepeuch, Secotan, and Roanoac. The land was not enough theirs to warrant renaming. When the first reconnaissance voyage arrived off of the Carolina Outer Banks in the summer of 1584 the English newcomers came ashore and performed the requisite ceremonies of possession, but they seemed to lack a precise plan for what to do next.2 Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe and their men hung about the Hatorask Inlet, waiting for something to happen. After three days, Barlowe tells us, scouts sent from Roanoke approached the Englishmen, initiating the processes of exchange and ritual Algonquians intended to transform the newcomers from strangers into kin. Ultimately Granganimeo, the ‘brother’ of the Roanoke werowance Wingina, and clearly a werowance in his own right, invited the English to visit the Algonquian village on Roanoke Island, a site there is no reason to believe that they would otherwise have found. The English, in this sense, did not discover Roanoke. They came as invited guests.3

At Roanoke Island, the ritual process continued, with confident Algonquians greeting, welcoming and sizing up nervous newcomers. Wingina, the werowance in charge of Roanoke and at least some other villages in the vicinity, could not meet with the newcomers: he was recovering from wounds suffered in battle. He had been shot through the body twice, Barlowe tells us. He may have suffered these wounds from his enemies at the mainland village at Pomeiooc.4 In any case, the Algonquians on Roanoke clearly saw the English as potential allies in their wars with their native neighbors. Granganimeo and his followers, Barlowe noted, ‘offered us very good exchange for our hatchets and axes, and for knives, and would have given any thing for swords’. When the English fired their guns, Granganimeo’s people ‘would tremble thereat for very feare, and for the strangeness of the same’. The Algonquians marveled at English weaponry that demonstrated tremendous power. It was loud, dramatic, and capable of immense damage on those occasions when it found its target.5

If the Indians perceived the English to have value as potential friends for a people at war, the source of this belief lay in the power Granganimeo’s people perceived in the objects and items that the English possessed. And by engaging in exchange with the Roanokes, even if the newcomers did not provide Granganimeo with all that he wanted, the English had transformed themselves into allies.6

Granganimeo put this new alliance to the test shortly before the departure of the English reconnaissance voyage. He attempted to persuade Barlowe to attack his and Wingina’s enemies at the village of Pomeiooc. The Roanokes, Barlowe noted, ‘promised and assured us that there will be found in it a great store of commodities’. The English did not take the bait, for Barlowe had too few men to engage in so risky a venture.7

Still, the Roanokes had achieved something. A small group of men in strange ships arrived off their shores. They brought with them a technology suggesting great power – a concept that Harriot later learned the natives called montoco – that intrigued and interested Granganimeo and Wingina particularly within the context of their rivalries with other native communities in Ossomocomuck. But they wanted to know more. The werowances thus selected two men, Manteo and Wanchese, to accompany the Englishmen to their homeland to learn what could be known about them, and to report back what they found.8

By the time these two envoys returned to Roanoke Island in the summer of 1585, along with the men Sir Walter Raleigh had sent to establish an outpost on American shores, they each had arrived at very different interpretations about the meaning of the English. Manteo, impressed by the power of the English, remained steadfast in his connection to the newcomers, and saw in them a powerful ally. Wanchese, on the other hand, had concluded after his sojourn in England that these men posed a mortal threat to his people’s way of life. He would promptly abandon the English and return to Wingina once the newcomers arrived on the Outer Banks in the summer of 1585.9

Other Algonquians wavered between these two poles, as they attempted to learn about their allies. After the English arrived, the newcomers explored the Carolina Sounds. They attacked Wingina’s enemies at Aquascogoc over the theft of a silver cup and, perhaps, another hostile village somewhere along the northern bank of the Albemarle Sound.10 If the Aquascogoc attack seemed unnecessarily savage and violent, the burning of the town may as well have demonstrated to Wingina that he could find the English useful in his conflicts with his neighbors, an extremely dangerous weapon, if he could control them. He and Granganimeo met with Manteo, whose account of the English contrasted starkly with that of
Wanchese. Wingina announced that he would allow the English to establish a post on the northern end of Roanoke Island, close to the village there. Wingina thus kept the Englishmen near his people and effectively isolated from native rivals who may have wished to establish relations with the newcomers on their own. Wingina would attempt to control access to Raleigh's colonists.\(^\text{10}\)

It is, I would argue, an important point. The familiar image of stalwart European explorers, climbing from their boats, planting the flag, and claiming the New World, does not entirely fit the reality of what occurred at Roanoke. Once again, English colonists came to Roanoke not as discoverers but as guests. They settled on Roanoke because Wingina allowed them to do so. They did not have the power to dictate to native peoples the terms under which they took possession of American soil. They took what they were given.\(^\text{11}\)

The initial relations in 1585 were peaceful. Wingina and other Roanokes traded with the newcomers, acquiring the magical and otherworldly items – items infused with *montoac* – that allowed their English allies to do things that ordinary human beings could not. Yet if the English technology deeply impressed the Roanokes, and left them wondering whether the newcomers were, in Harriot's words, gods or men, the power of English disease perplexed and frightened them. English colonists as, in Harriot's words, gods or men, the power of English disease perplexed and frightened them. For Wingina and his followers tried to understand the sources of English power and to incorporate that power into their accustomed ways of living. They attempted to understand the reasons for the misfortunes that had befallen them. They joined the English in prayer. They learned to sing their psalms. They assessed carefully how best to protect the interests of their community when confronted by visitors who appeared to have the power to do things that Algonquians could not.\(^\text{12}\)

Doing so, of course, required a significant willingness to experiment. For Wingina, this effort was nothing less than profoundly disillusioning. Buffeted in a world of rapid change, Wingina experimented with English cultural forms and practices to secure the power that preserved and bestowed so many benefits upon the colonists. The English prayed, read from books, and gathered together to worship their God. They did not fall ill. They did not die. English power, however, provided few answers for Wingina's increasingly beleaguered people. Indeed, English *montoac*, it seemed, could manifest itself in malevolence, in death and in suffering. Wingina arrived at the conclusion that his people's problems stemmed from contact with the English.\(^\text{13}\)

So he changed his name and his identity and became Pemisapan. Less than two weeks later, Lane's colonists abandoned Roanoke Island.\(^\text{14}\)

It was this act – this event – the killing of a werowance, that in many ways determined the fate of Raleigh's Roanoke ventures. A small holding party left by Sir Richard Grenville on the island in the summer of 1586 was quickly wiped out by Wanchese and his followers.\(^\text{15}\) When John White returned in 1587 his colonists had been on the island for only a short time before one of his principal men, George Howe, was found stuck like a pincushion with dozens of Algonquian arrows, his head bashed to bits by the warriors' weapons.\(^\text{16}\) White's attempts to secure justice resulted in an uncomfortable encounter on Croatoan Island where the colonists confronted the legacy of the previous colony's violence – maimed Indians injured by Lane's men. No native attended the council White called to 'receive' the Indians and to forgive and forget past misdeeds. When he retaliated for the killing of Howe, White's misdirected wrath inadvertently fell upon the last Indians in the region willing to speak with the English, Manteo's Croatoan kin.\(^\text{17}\)

Facing hostile Indians and short supplies, White returned home to England. When he finally returned to Roanoke in the summer of 1590, on his granddaughter Virginia Dare's third birthday, his colonists were gone. White and his men saw in the sand the fresh footprints of Algonquians who had heard the Englishmen arrive. When these natives fled from the island they deprived White of his last, best, opportunity to find out what had happened. Surely they knew.\(^\text{18}\)

Instead of finding the people he had left behind, White found the famous signs carved by his countrymen. But Raleigh's colonists were lost only to those Europeans who failed to find them. Indian people knew what had happened to them, but only small traces of what they knew reached the Englishmen who wrote the documents on which historians

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Figure 1A
Werowance, possibly Wingina, John White. (BM 1906, 0509.1.21)
rely. Whether the colonists moved to the Chesapeake, to the north shore of the Albemarle Sound, or to the Chowan River Valley, there has emerged something of a consensus that wherever they found shelter, they fell victim to an attack by the Powhatan leader now most commonly called Wahunsonacock, but better known simply as Powhatan. Some of the colonists, the scant evidence suggests, survived this attack. If they were lucky they found shelter in native communities, into which they necessarily would have assimilated to survive. The descendants of these few survivors would have been socialized in native village communities in the Eastern woodlands. They became Algonquians and were no longer English men and women.  

The mystery of the Lost Colonists, then, disappears when we turn the story around. White’s surviving colonists shared in the fate of the Algonquian peoples who sheltered them. The native peoples of the land called Ossomocomuck, before it became Virginia, Carolina, and, ultimately, North Carolina, suffered the same sorts of dislocations and losses that Indians elsewhere in early America experienced: population loss from disease and warfare, the loss of their lands and the foundation of traditional economies and a resulting descent into poverty.  

As for Pemisapan’s people, they disappeared from the historical record for several decades after the killing of George Howe in 1587. In 1654, the Virginian Francis Yeardley traveled to Roanoke Island. ‘The great Commander of those parts’, Yeardley wrote, received the adventurer’s party ‘civilly, and showed them the ruins of Sir Walter Raleigh’s fort, from whence I received a sure token of their being there’. Yeardley acquired more than souvenirs. He purchased the island and a strip of the adjoining mainland from the ‘great Commander’, in return for payment and a promise to build the werowance a ‘fayr house’. The Roanoke werowance apparently respected Yeardley or hoped to benefit by his presence in the region. He visited the Englishman often, and left his only son to receive an education that would enable him ‘to speak out of a book and to visit the Englishman often, and left his only son to receive an education that would enable him ‘to speak out of a book and to 

The settlers believed that they lived ‘in such dayly jeopardy of the ‘great Commander’ who greeted Yeardley, or of his son. We can, however, reconstruct something of the community’s history. By the early 1700s they were part of the polyglot community known as the Machapunga or Mattamuskeet, after the town on the mainland where they lived. These survivors were few in number, but they were not willing to acquiesce in their own subjugation. They treated roughly those settlers who encroached on their lands. These settlers demanded that the colonial government take

some speedy and effectual method... for restraining the insolence and continued abuses of the Matchepungo Indians by killing and destroying our hoggs and beating one of our neighbours for endeavouring to prevent the same.

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These early North Carolina settlers failed to recognize what must seem obvious to those familiar with the long history of Anglo-Indian relations: what the colonists saw as aggression the Mattamuskeets saw as an attempt to protect a way of life that had come under siege. Encroachments on Mattamuskeet land by the English and their voracious livestock threatened Algonquian subsistence and Algonquian lives. Despite the periodic directives of colonial officials, the frontier population, according to one missionary, treated the Algonquians in a manner ‘more barbarous and unkind than the savages themselves’.  

So when the Iroquoian Tuscaroras began their attacks on the colony in September 1711, the Mattamuskeets joined them. At first the colony’s leaders felt they had little to fear from the small coastal bands. That soon changed. Early in 1713, according to acting governor Thomas Pollock, 50 Mattamuskeets attacked ‘the inhabitants of Alligator River,
and, as they conjectured had killed and taken 16 or 20 of the inhabitants the rest having escaped'. The Mattamuskeets killed or carried away another 20 English colonists on Roanoke Island. English forces from South Carolina, aided by their much more numerous Indian allies, pursued the hostile Mattamuskeets, but Pollock feared that 'it may be to no purpose, they having advantage of such dismal swamps to fly into'.

The Mattamuskeets fought longer than the Tuscaroras, enduring destructive raids by the English and their native allies in 1713 and 1714. Not until February 1715 did the Mattamuskeets arrive at a peace with the colonists, through which they were guaranteed a reservation near Mattamuskeet Lake, the former Lake Paquippe. There they lived on the margins of Carolina society. They fished in coastal waters, hunted in the wetlands and planted corn and other crops where they had sufficient land. As a community they struggled to survive. Under the leadership of John Squires, described in the surviving English records as 'King' or 'Chief' of the Mattamuskeet Indians, and his two close advisers John Mackey and Long Tom, they asserted their right to preserve their lands along the Carolina coast, and, in effect, to continue to exist as a separate people.

Squires probably helped mediate disputes between members of his community. He represented the Mattamuskeets in their relations with outsiders. Though we cannot tell how his followers viewed him and what community functions he performed, we do know that the very small number of Mattamuskeets respected him deeply. His plantation of 150 acres along New Mattamuskeet Creek, where he grew rice, tended his orchards and his other crops, fished and hunted, became the center of Mattamuskeet life, not unlike the central villages depicted by John White a century and a half before.

Squires and the Mattamuskeets faced nearly constant pressure from neighboring whites to sell their reservation. Squires sold 640 acres to Henry Gibbs in 1731 for and in consideration of the Sum of Tenn pounds good Lawfull money of the Province of North Carolina'. In 1738 and 1739, more sales took place, a couple of hundred acres here and a couple of hundred there. Despite the deeds Squires, Mackey and Long Tom signed, they preserved a small central core of the Mattamuskeets' land base, approximately 10,000 acres. Charles Squires succeeded his father at some point late in 1746 or early in 1747, but he clearly was not his father's equal. In 1752, along with George, Joshua, and Timothy Squires, 'chief men of the Malimuskeet Indians', he deeded the Mattamuskeet reservation in its entirety to 'William Stevenson, Pedlar & trader', in return for the sum of 83 pounds. The community repudiated the transaction, and forcefully rejected the variety of leadership offered by John Squires' sons, but no effective alternative emerged. Nine years later, Charles Squires sold for 100 pounds the remaining 10,000 acres of the reservation.

Significant cultural changes followed on the heels of the loss of the reservation. Only a handful of Mattamuskeets continued to reside in the area. By early in the 19th century, women headed the households that remained. Mattamuskeets likely took the dangerous jobs deemed suitable for men on the margins. They fought in colonial and revolutionary armies, or put to sea as whalers, mariners and marines. Many of these men did not return home.

The women who remained behind faced a new assault. Their families were now under siege. The story of Joshua Longtom can help to illustrate the point. The 'base born' son of 'Jane alias Jenny Longtom Indian', 10-year-old Joshua was 'supposed to have been begotten by a wight father'. Stephen Fletcher, a white sea captain who coveted the boy's labor, told the Hyde County Court in 1804 that the boy 'is going at random with out that control & nutrition So essential to his own future good & that of the Community at large'. Offering to take Joshua in by 'Lawfull Indenture', the county court bound the boy to Fletcher 'to learn the art of Seaman & mariner... Untill he attains the age of Twenty one years'.

Joshua Longtom's experience was not unique. Nine-year-old Jordan Longtom was apprenticed to Captain Little John Pugh at the same 1804 session of the County Court. Simpson Mackey, 'a base born person of Cullor', was bound to Thomas Spencer. His brother, Shadrach Mackey, found himself bound to a planter named Washington Gibbs. The labor of children, the mixed-race descendants of Algonquians, Africans and Englishmen, became a commodity distributed by county leaders to those willing to mouth the requisite platitudes about educating and training their servants. Removed from the care and the protection, and the love, of their parents, and isolated from each other and whatever there was that remained of the Mattamuskeet community, these children, and scores of others, found themselves in a poor position to carry on and sustain a culture. Aboriginal cultures did not disappear in early America; they were destroyed.

We know that some Mattamuskeets remained in Hyde County. In 1843 Marina Mackey, a descendant of one of the boys apprenticed in 1804, was brought before the Hyde County Court on the charge that she 'did unlawfully intermarrry with a certain male slave named Riley'. Mackey, as a 'free woman of colour', could not legally marry the black slave with whom she 'did unlawfully cohabit and live together as man and wife'. Her case was unique. Those Mattamuskeets who remained, classified legally as free people of color, attempted to remain invisible. They had few rights and few legal protections. Despite laws against marrying slaves, they intermarried with others on the margins, poor whites and free blacks, so that by the early 20th century, according to the anthropologist Frank Speck, the appearance of the members of the community ranged 'from individuals with pronounced Indian characteristics, through people with noticeable white or Negro features, the latter sort predominating in the younger generations'. They were, in Speck's view, a 'remnant', a lost tribe.

Because of the community's isolation, Speck hoped to find traces of Algonquian culture still in practice. He hoped to find a people, remote from the modern world, living elements of an earlier existence. Perhaps they were. They were fishing, hunting fowl, getting by. They had changed. There was no doubt about that. Change has been one of the few constants in Native American history. Speck knew this, but still he was disappointed. Speck found that not one member of the community 'knew a single word of the Indian language and not one knew of any definite Indian customs or traditions, not even the name of their tribe'. All that, Speck believed, had been lost.

We choose the stories that we want to tell, and there is no reason why we cannot alter our focus. We can write, if we choose, about the efforts of the English to plant colonies on
American shores. These are worthwhile stories. But we must recognize that there is a flip side to stories such as these. There are the Indians, the ‘natural inhabitants’ who confronted these colonizers. They welcomed the English. They saw the English newcomers as useful, as trading partners and as prospective allies in their wars against their native enemies – wars that according to Arthur Barlowe left the country devastated. They learned, in time, that the English brought destruction and death with them as well, and they withdrew their support. That difficult decision, in turn, emerged from the anguished conversations and rich debates that took place in the Algonquian village communities that lined the waters of the Carolina Sounds, among those awed and those in mourning; amongst those who had come to hate the Englishmen and those who merely looked forward to a better day, one which they hoped might dawn on a world without newcomers.

Notes
4 Ibid., 100.
5 Ibid., 112.
7 Quinn, supra n. 3, 113–14.
10 Quinn, supra n. 3, 101.
11 Oberg, supra n. 1, 66–7.
12 Ibid., 67.
14 Quinn, supra n. 3, 377–8; Oberg, supra n. 6, 380–1.
15 Quinn, supra n. 3, 378; Oberg, supra n. 6, 382–3.
18 Quinn, supra n. 3, 528–9.
19 Ibid., 525–6; Oberg, supra n. 1, 115.
20 Quinn, supra n. 3, 531; Oberg, supra n. 8, 163–5.
21 Oberg, supra n. 1, 125–6; Quinn, supra n. 3, 611–16.
25 Ibid., and Oberg, supra n. 1, 155–6.
29 See the records of the Executive Council, for its meetings held on 11 November 1718, and for 16 April 1724, in The Records of the Executive Council, 77, 142. See also Leffler and Powell, supra n. 27, 79.
31 Ibid., 54–70, Appendices 6–33.
32 Ibid., 72–3, Appendices 36–37.
33 Ibid., 75, Appendix 39.