CHAPTER TWO

Naturalizing Power: Land and Sexual Violence along William Byrd's Dividing Line

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Colonialism is about asserting dominance over far-flung lands; colonialism is about asserting dominance over far-flung peoples. These statements are commonplaces, though the connection between them is not. William Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line Between Virginia and North Carolina* and its companion *Secret History* reveal this interrelationship at work in the colonial South. Hailed as "the most literarily and historically valuable of southern colonial memoirs" and a "double masterpiece," these chronicles of the 1720s survey are unusually rich sources for exploring the workings of links between human beings and their environments.1 Byrd planted sex and scandal liberally throughout the *Secret History*, intended only for the eyes and ears of close friends. He weeded these lurid details out of his public *History*, replacing them with accounts of the region's flora and fauna. Through his own "creative censorship," Byrd replaced sex with nature.2

The relationship between these aspects of the two *Histories* is crucial to Byrd's works, yet it has long been overlooked. Although scholars have paid homage to Byrd's invaluable record of natural history, they have given his descriptions of sexual encounters literary rather than historical treatment, viewing them as superior examples of eighteenth-century satirical wit. Attempts, such as Kathleen Brown's, to treat Byrd's sex life as a historical rather than a literary event have prompted calls to return our attention to his narrative multiplicity and strategies of literary employment.3 This literary perspective has diverted attention away from the disturbing issues raised when we admit the sexual encounters as historical fact, for in his *Secret History*, Byrd chronicled a series of repeated sexual assaults on local women. The victims of these incidents varied from a "Dark Angel" who "struggled just enough to make her Admirer more eager," to a "Tallow-faced Wench . . . disabled from making any resistance by the Lameness of her Hand," to a farmer's "tall straight Daughter of a Yielding Sandy Complexion," to a kitchen maid who "would certainly have been ravished, if her timely consent had not prevented the Violence."4

Byrd addressed his account of these events to contemporaries of his own class. The *Secret History* was "designed for reading aloud around a colonial fireplace, where congenial gentlemen and ladies accustomed to ribaldry engaged the talk of a western adventure by people they knew."5 These were stories colonial elites told themselves about themselves and as such belong within a broader context of colonial politics, power, and culture. The image of Byrd and his peers reading the *Secret History* at a party or as part of a fireside chat confronts us with an elite culture where such acts were part of young men's training. For the elite women among the fireside audience, hearing about such acts must have reinforced both their sense of vulnerability as women and their sense of racial and class distance from the female victims of male "ribaldry."6

Byrd's accounts provide a privileged glimpse into the culture and ideology of an elite colonial class, a class for whom the manipulation of sex and nature, or more broadly of people and the environment, was not so much interchangeable as intertwined. His assumptions about class, sex, gender, and the environment combined to mandate joint manipulation of land and society. In his natural history, Byrd did more than itemize flora and fauna; he naturalized the power structures of colonial domination. He framed the *Histories* within a dual enclosure of environmental and human potential, evaluating the land and its inhabitants in terms of their susceptibility to colonial improvement and increased productivity.7 Throughout the *Histories*, Indians and settlers, as much as swamps and forests, were features of the landscape along the dividing line. Byrd described women in particular as akin to nature, not unlike soil or trees or animals, even describing them in similar terms. The assaults on women were closely associated with Byrd's other colonial goals, not aberrations from them. The social reform and social control that he craved necessitated transformations of landscape. At the same time, his vision of changes in the land necessitated human transformations. In the *Histories*, Byrd candidly displayed the ideological tools that men of his class used to create a dialectic of justification and necessity for their New World domination of land and people.

Byrd's own roots were deeply sunk in a landscape of class, race, and gender privilege. Born into the Virginia planter class in 1674, he was sent to school in England in the wake of Bacon's Rebellion. He subsequently
altered his home between England and Virginia until, in his early fifties, he settled in the colonies for good in 1726, residing there until his death in 1744. In 1728, he accepted an appointment as chief commissioner for Virginia on the survey expedition organized to settle a long-standing border dispute between his home colony and North Carolina. The survey party consisted of representatives from both sides of the border and totaled between forty and fifty men, organized into a strict hierarchy. The boundary commissioners, three from Virginia including Byrd and four from North Carolina, perched at the apex of the pyramid. All were men whose pedigree, education, political involvement, and landholdings imbued them with the status and authority of gentlemen. Below the commissioners were the four surveyors. Their status rested upon their technical knowledge of surveying, their familiarity with the landscape, and, for some, their large landholdings. These formally trained surveyors commanded the “woodsmen” who performed technical roles marking and measuring the land and handling the instruments. All three tiers rested upon the “base” of the pyramid: the black and white servants who toiled at the most physical and menial work. The hierarchy of the survey team replicated southern society at large, in which status, privilege, and landholdings were closely linked. At Byrd’s insistence, the assembled party was large enough to ensure that this social hierarchy survived the trials of travel over the unfamiliar territory from the north shore of Currituck Inlet through the Great Dismal Swamp to the foothills of the Appalachian mountains, two hundred and forty-one arduous miles west of the coast. In his survey team, Byrd assembled a microcosm of the social and political order he sought to extend to the unsocialized and, he was convinced, uncivilized people along the dividing line.

Sometimes the links between Byrd’s assessments of land and people are buried beneath the surface of his natural history entries. To find the connections, we have to dig a little. For Byrd, good land was either along a riverbank or wooded with large, deciduous trees. He wrote, for example, that the lands between Fountain Creek and the Roanoke River and between Caskade/Casquade Creek and the Dan River were especially fertile. In several other instances, he used “the largeness of the Trees,” particularly walnut, poplar, hickory, and white oak, as “certain Proofs of a Fruitful Soil.” These two standards were sometimes at odds with one another within Byrd’s text as well as with what we now know about the natural and human history of the area surveyed. Although his first standard resonates with current notions of land fertility, the second does not. Byrd’s preference for large deciduous stands was consonant with the contemporary English exaltation of the solid “heart of oak,” national symbol of English colonial power, liberty, and identity. Yet it was inconsistent

with the fact that much of the most fertile land would have been kept clear of deciduous stands by Native American agricultural and hunting practices, which included frequent burnings. This tendency was especially true along the coastal plain.

The larger Indian (and later settler) population in eastern North Carolina ensured that burnings were more frequent there than elsewhere, and the sandy soils and extensive peat bogs of the coastal plain meant burnings were more extensive and harder to control. Although many Native American agricultural fields and villages had been abandoned by Byrd’s time because of disease and warfare, such sites would not yet have reverted to large deciduous forests. They would instead have been characterized by the fire subclimax of longleaf pines. Byrd himself recognized that “Indian Towns... are remarkable for a fruitful Situation,” yet he still lauded the hardwood forests as superior land. The inconsistencies of his categorization are apparent again in his declaration that “the Land... had all the Marks of Poverty, being for the most Part Sandy and full of Pines. This kind of Ground, tho’ unfit for Ordinary Tillage, will, however, bring Cotton and Potatoes in Plenty.” Clearly, Byrd measured “good” land by more than mere fruitfulness.

When Byrd assessed land, he also implicitly assessed the inhabitants and their way of life. Indians situated their towns in fertile locales, he concluded, because “being by Nature not very Industrious, they choose such a Situation as will Subsist them with the least Labour.” He pronounced similar judgments upon the white and black inhabitants of these sandy pine-covered regions. Byrd claimed that land suited for growing potatoes and cotton was land suited for those who were “easily contented, and like the Wild Irish, find more Pleasure in Laziness than Luxury.” In this assessment, Byrd ignored the labor-intensive nature of cotton farming. And in his judgment of the potato, an archetypal New World product, he referenced widespread colonial associations between potatoes and Irish savagery.

In the hands of “uncivilized” inhabitants, laziness was the lamentable by-product of natural bounty. “Surely there is no place in the World where the Inhabitants live with less Labour than in N Carolina,” wrote Byrd. “It approaches nearer to the Description of Lubberland than any other, by the great fecility of the Climate, the easiness of raising Provisions, and the Slothfulness of the People.” According to him, laziness was literally in the air. Simply living in the environs of the Great Dismal Swamp produced in settlers “Agues... which Corrupt all the Juices of their Bodies, give them a cadaverous complexion, and besides a lazy, creeping Habit, which they never get rid of.” Swamp “Borderers” subsisted on free-range cattle and hogs, a diet that Byrd believed left them riven with yaws and “hoggish in their Temper” to the
might produce a new social world. Would poor white and enslaved African-American men still submit to working his Eden if they believed they could become Adams of their own gardens?29

Byrd's Eden required not only laborers but also laborers who produced for commercial surplus rather than personal subsistence. "Valuable" land for Byrd was land that supported trade and commerce. As he wrote, the border region contained land that "would be a Valuable Tract of Land in any Country but North Carolina, where, for want of Navigation and Commerce, the best estate affords little more than a coarse Subsistence."30 His perspective was representative of contemporary mercantilist values that saw commercial people as the final products of "the natural advancement of human society."31 If England and Virginia were to display this superior state of civilization, workers had to be persuaded to produce goods to fuel the engine of colonial commerce.32 Poor immigrant settlers, whom elite colonists such as Byrd judged to be inferior, incapable of self-discipline, and barely civilized, were in particular need of persuasion.33

Byrd transformed these class-specific economic values into universal moral ones by invoking the biblical flood. He explained that "there is no climate that produces every thing, since the Deluge Wrencht the Poles of the world out of their Place, nor is it fit it shou'd be so, because it is the Mutual Supply one country receives from another, which creates a mutual Traffic and Intercourse amongst men." Trade and commerce were not only natural but also necessary aspects of the postdiluvian world. "And in Truth," he continued, "were it not for the correspondence, in order to make up for each other's Wants, the Wars betwixt Bordering Nations, like those of the Indians and other barbarous People, wou'd be perpetual and irreconcilable."34 Byrd thus naturalized the production of commercial surplus, conflating it with the Christian duty to prevent a Hobbesian war of all against all. Fertile land and independent folk whose self-sufficiency hindered the execution of this duty would have to be civilized, or coerced, into working.

Biblical precedent was a useful way for Byrd to promote his own commercial ventures, such as his plan to drain the Great Dismal Swamp.35 Though it could only be done at great expense to the "Publick Treasure," he claimed that the drainage project would improve the health of settlers and "at the same time render so great a Tract of Swamp very Profitable, besides the advantage of making a Channel to transport by water-carriage goods from Albermarle Sound into Nanismond and Elizabeth Rivers, in Virginia."36 Casting industriousness and trade as inherent moral goods allowed Byrd to argue that the general population would benefit from planting the colonial garden adjacent to a major transportation route under his control.

Byrd's personal concerns and interests mirrored those of the planter
class at large. From the beginning, colonial settlements in Virginia and North Carolina failed to reproduce some of the most important structures of English ruling class authority. The refusal of backcountry residents to marry formally through the church was but one example. Dispersion settlement patterns undermined effective centralized control, a problem the English upper class had confronted in Ireland. Still more problematic, as one historian has shown, was the fact that the poor settlers who were excluded from the benefits of elite English civility "did not accept the arguments of English social and cultural superiority that were expounded by their betters." The experiences of the survey team reproduced in microcosm the difficulties that this lack of deference caused for elite colonists in general. In these, as in other, colonial borderlands, elite knowledge was hopelessly inadequate. Unable to survive in the backwoods without the assistance of knowledgeable locals, the survey party was dependent upon local people for everything from directions to sustenance. Colonial elites who succeeded in establishing their authority relied on the appropriation rather than the replacement of indigenous knowledge to a far greater degree than men such as William Byrd would have been willing to admit. Much of the information he included in the History about medicinal herbs and plants, the uses of "Dogwood Bark" and "Seneca Rattle-Snake-Root," for example, probably originated with indigenous and other local sources including African slaves.

But many local residents were not so keen to share their knowledge of the terrain and environment with Byrd and his cohorts. When pressed for directions, residents sometimes fled and sometimes pleaded an unlikely degree of ignorance of local geography. Both strategies were risky, as Byrd's party threatened the uncooperative with imprisonment. Local inhabitants were aware that Byrd could use the knowledge they shared against them, just as he was aware that their lack of cooperation was symptomatic of larger issues of social control.

Rejection of elite superiority and resistance to elite domination were closely linked to the style of agriculture that took root on the colonial frontier. Dispersed settlement patterns that facilitated the evasion of elite control went hand in hand with the practices of extensive agriculture and free-range grazing. To elites, landscapes marked by such practices looked more like "barbaric" Native American or even Irish patterns than the English tradition of intensive agriculture and enclosed pastures.

Byrd knew how to read the human relations imprinted upon physical landscapes. Swidden agriculture and free-ranging livestock bespoke the presence of independent (and, from his perspective, uncooperative), backcountry inhabitants, settlers who produced for personal subsistence rather than commercial surplus. Byrd's New World Eden, by contrast, would require neatly planted orchards, crops in orderly monoculture fields, and enclosed livestock. Land would be brought under control through "Ordinary Tillage." Forests could (and indeed should) be cleared to obtain pastures or fields or wood products because after all Eden itself had only two trees. Domesticated animals—cattle, sheep, goats—were an integral component of his pastoral vision. Just as ordered, agricultural fields represented "civilized" land, so sheep, goats, and cattle represented "civilized" animals. Of course, this re-created Eden was to be planted not in virgin soil, but on top of an age-old Native American landscape, whose inhabitants presented still other obstacles to colonial domination. Eden would have to be very carefully constructed and managed.

Changes in the land were integral to the process of civilizing and controlling its inhabitants. Byrd's vision required reorienting the relationship not only between people and land but also between men and women. He wanted to transform the Virginia and Carolina wilderness into a garden comparable to the one where Adam delved and Eve span. In this endeavor, women had less distance to travel than men. Byrd noted that local women "spin, weave and knit, all with their own hands, while their Husbands, depending on the Bounty of the Climate, are Slothful in every thing but getting of Children." Throughout the Histories, he largely exempted women from the environmentally induced infection of lassitude, claiming that "the Distemper of Laziness seizes the Men oftener much than the Women." The fact that women worked hard was less a sign, for Byrd, of their own virtue than it was of the savagery and laziness of the men who forced them into this unnatural role.

Judging men by how they treated women, Byrd wrote that "the Men for their Parts, just like the Indians, impose all the work upon the poor Women." Male lassitude and female drudgery inverted his view of the natural order and were therefore signs of savagery. Although men were savages if they didn't work enough, women were savages if they worked too much or if they worked at "male" tasks such as agriculture. Byrd inherited the dual images of the "squaw drudge" paired with that of the "indolent brute" from his seventeenth-century Virginia predecessors. Countless colonizers before him used this stereotype to attack Native American rights, and many others would continue to draw upon it as a "prime index of savagism" through the turn of the twentieth century. In Byrd's Eden, landscape and humanscape would be mutually transformative; civilized inhabitants would be producers and products of the civilized environment.

The survey team was the vanguard of this mission to "civilize" the savage along the dividing line. In this respect too, it was a microcosm of broader colonial experience. The labor force Byrd sought to recruit through
his rhetoric of human and environmental “civilization” was primarily male, and the lessons he derived from the Garden of Eden were purely patriarchal. The implications for women were chilling. Local women felt the impact of this civilizing mission through sexual violence; they experienced the dividing line as a frontier of sexual fear.

Members of the survey party assaulted women at least nine times during the expedition. Byrd took obvious pleasure both in observing and recounting the sexual assaults on white, African-American, and Native American women. His Secret History often made the dividing-line expedition seem like one great sexual romp, more reminiscent of soldiers pillaging a captured city by assaulting its women and girls than anything as high-minded and officially sanctioned as a survey mission. On March 9, for example, members of Byrd’s party occupied a man’s house without permission and “endulged themselves so far as to lie in the house. But it seems they broke the Rules of Hospitality,” he continued, “by several gross Freedoms they offered to take with our Landlord’s Sister.”

Two days later Byrd and another member of the party were surprised by the “Charmas” of a “Dark Angel” who “struggled just enough to make her Admire more eager.” Byrd described the encounter: “Her Complexion was a deep Copper, so that her fine Shape & regular Features made her appear like a Statue en Bronze done by a masterly hand. Shoebrush [Byrd’s pseudonym for John Lovick, commissioner for North Carolina] was smitten at first glance, and examined all her neat Proportions with a critical Exactness.” This woman was a member of a mulatto family, whose “Master” avoided the survey party, perhaps fearing they would doubt his free status, as indeed they did. In the History, Byrd expressed a measure of sympathy for the family, implying that their neighbors took economic advantage of their tenuous claim to freedom, “well knowing their Condition makes it necessary for them to Submit to any Terms.” But the sexual assault in the corresponding entry of the Secret History reveals that Byrd’s party likewise took advantage of vulnerable backcountry residents. Being forced to submit to “any Terms” also meant enduring sexual violence at the hands of men like Byrd, against whom local people had no hope of recourse.

The following day Byrd’s party took advantage of another woman who was both injured and intoxicated.

In the Gaiety of their Hearts, they invited a Tallow-faced Wench that had sprain’d her Wrist to drink with them, and when they had raise’d her in good Humour, they examined all her hidden Charms, and play’d a great many gay Pranks. When Firebrand [Byrd’s pseudonym for Richard Fitz-William, commissioner for Virginia] who had the most Curiosity, was ranging over her sweet Person, he pick’t off several Scabs as big as Nipples, the Consequence of eating too much Pork. The poor Damsel was disabled from making any resistance by the Lameness of her Hand.

On March 15, a farmer’s daughter became the next victim. Byrd described her in the Secret History in terms much like those used for the natural environment. She was “tall” and “straight” rather like the pine trees that took root in the region’s sandy soils, of which her “ Yielding Sandy Complexion” was reminiscent. Byrd’s writings imply that it was more than the girl’s complexion that was “yielding.” He claimed it was her own curiosity that led to her encounter with Puzzaleause (William Little, commissioner for North Carolina), who took her inside one of the tents where the Parson (the Reverend Peter Fontaine) also awaited “to keep him honest, or peradventure, to partake of his diversion if he should be otherwise.” Byrd alluded to this incident in the History by stating simply that at this locale, the men in his party “were furnish’d with every thing the Place afforded.” Read in conjunction with the corresponding portion of the Secret History, this comment suggests Byrd’s inclination to include women among a region’s natural resources. He counted women and nature alike among the things “the Place afforded.”

On March 25, Firebrand, dissatisfied with the supper he received, “endeavour’d to mend his Entertainment by making hot Love to honest Ruth, who would by no means be charm’d either with his Perswasion, or his Person. While the Master was employ’d in making Love to one Sister, the man made his Passion known to the other, Only he was more boisterous, & employ’d force, when he could not succeed by fair means.” Master and servant alike attempted to exercise sex privileges along the dividing line. And on April 1, Byrd seemed to interpret the smile of his “Landlord’s” daughter as indication that she would welcome his kisses: “I discharg’d a Long Score with my Landlord, & a Short one with his Daughter Rachel for some Smiles that were to be paid for in Kisses.”

Byrd described an assault on a kitchen maid in both histories. In the History, he recounted how brantly caused some men to be “too loving; Insomuch that a Damsel, who assisted in the Kitchen, had certainly Suffer’d what the Nuns call Martyrdom, had she not capitulated a little too soon.” He elaborated in the Secret History: “A Damsel who came to assist in the Kitchen wou’d certainly have been ravish’t, if her timely consent had not prevented the Violence.” Feeling similarly threatened, the landlady of the house hid in her bedroom, armed with a chamberpot of “Female Ammunition.” Byrd claimed not to know the assailant’s identity, though “Firebrand & his Servant were the most suspected, having been engag’d in those kind of Assaults once before.”

On still another occasion, Byrd described how Meanwell (William
Dandridge, commissioner for Virginia) and Captain Smith "pretended to go a hunting, but their Game was 2 fresh colour'd Wenchses, which were not hard to hunt down."70 This rhetoric of women as game again reflected Byrd's conflation of the natural and female resources along the dividing line.

The survey party treated Native American women similarly. Describing a visit to a village of Nottoway Indians, Byrd reported that the survey team "visited most of the Princesses at their own Appartments, but that the Smoke was so great there, the Fire being made in the middle of the Cabins, that we were not able to see their Charms."71 Again linking women with the natural world, he explained that he "could discern by some of our Gentlemen's Linen, discolor'd by the Soil of the Indian Ladies, that they had been conviving themselves in the point of their having no fur."72 Byrd's words suggest that he and the survey team viewed these women as akin to animals and that they treated them accordingly. The "Volley of small Arms" fired at Byrd's party when they "march'd out of the Town" suggests that Nottoway communities knew the difference between sexual assault and their own traditions of "trading girls."73

In several instances, Byrd claimed to have stopped in at the last moment to save the women from rape, a contention that seems incredible when set in the context of his own sexual history.74 He was a man accustomed to having power over the lower classes. Repeatedly rejected by women of his own class, Byrd lorded sexual power over women of lesser status long before the dividing-line expedition. His London diaries include explicit descriptions of nonconsensual sexual encounters. Describing a morning visit to a friend, he recalled that he "committed uncleanness with the maid because the mistress was not at home," then "when the mistress came I rogered her."75 According to one of Byrd's admiring editors, he "was not above picking up a stray wench in St. James's Park and consuming the affair in the weeds nearby."76 From the days of his youth, Byrd had struggled to control his sexual urges.77 As he aged, his sexual encounters were characterized more frequently than not by gross imbalances of class position and power, and toward the last years of his life, his sexual partners regularly included female slaves.78

The expedition's sexual violence sheds disturbing light on Byrd's exemption of women along the dividing line from the immoral indolence of men. The inverted sexual division of labor seems part of a twisted rationale for a different form of "civilizing" action for women than for men. Byrd's acceptance of the "squaw-drudgee" stereotype provided ideological justification for assaults on "savage" women supposedly in need of European rescue from Native American men. A vocal advocate of intermarriage between white men and Native American women, he argued that "a sprightly Lover is the most prevailing Missionary that can be sent amongst these or any other Infidels."79 Byrd may have been aware that these views echoed those previously espoused by other prominent southern colonists, including his brother-in-law, Robert Beverley II, and John Lawson; he did not know how well they anticipated the assimilation policies proposed for Alaskan Natives by Catherine the Great and for Native Americans by Thomas Jefferson.80

Regardless, Byrd was blunt in linking sex with colonial policy. Perhaps recalling the legendary story of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, he wrote that "the poor Indians would have had less reason to Complain that the English took away their Land, if they had received it by way of Portion with their Daughters."81 Although not official policy, intermarriage between white traders and Indian women was commonplace on the eighteenth-century southern frontier. The specter of sexual violence in the Secret History complicates our picture of these relationships, problematicizing the notion of consent between colonizer and colonized.82 It suggests the need to locate intermarriage along a continuum of sexual interaction that includes sexual assaults and rape. And it suggests the need to bind our understanding of the appropriation of land to the appropriation of women.

Sexual relations served Byrd as a justification not only for land appropriation but also as further means to coerced labor from the male inhabitants along the dividing line. The threat of sexual violence demonstrated to fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands that the act of voluntarily conforming to the prescriptive vision for land and society that men like Byrd propounded. Men feared that the cost to their families would be more than economic if they chose to ignore the surplus goods Byrd urged them to produce. The sexual threat ensured a human cost for environmental inadequacy. Here again, Byrd's frontier paralleled other colonial settings. Colonizers employed gendered coercion to obtain labor in the pelagic sea otter trade in Russian Alaska and in the rubber industry in Colombia, where traders took women and children hostage until the men returned with pelts or rubber.83 One anthropologist has identified a "culture of terror" in Colombia, where indigenous men as well as women were subjected to horrific sexual and other physical violence in the name of procuring rubber.84 Although the records do not suggest a "culture of terror" of the same degree in Virginia and North Carolina, the sexual violence detailed in Byrd's Secret History begs a reassessment of commonalities across colonial frontiers. And it again complicates our notion of consent: the consent not only of women but of men who gave their labor under conditions tainted by the perverse coercion of sexual fear.85

Through acts of sexual violence elite men reaffirmed their power not only over women but also over entire classes and races of people they deemed beneath them as well as over vast tracts of land they deemed un-
Byrd may well have been, as scholars have argued, a representative Virginia gentleman of his day. The convergence of environmental and colonial enterprise. This convergence masked, justified, and facilitated the brutality of colonialism in general and of Byrd’s survey expedition in particular. The survey team was indeed a microcosm of colonial relations. We must move beyond viewing Byrd as a “sophisticated, satirical, man of letters” if we are to confront the unsettling implications of this violence for race, class, and gender relations in the colonial South, relations that characterized the public and political realms as much as the private and personal ones. Byrd’s Histories offer powerful illustrations of how attitudes toward land and attitudes toward people can be mutually sustaining. In his colonial Eden, the environment was much more than a neutral assemblage of rock, water, and woods. It was the terrain in which he and his men like him rooted their cultural identities, values, and human interactions. This fact is no more a relic of the colonial past than the acts of sexual violence that he described. Natural science and social science remain as inextricable today as when Byrd first traversed the dividing line.

NOTES


6. Here is powerful evidence indeed for Kathleen M. Brown's assertion that "in [Byrd's] life and in the lives of an unknown number of planters, power and sex were mutually reinforcing, especially when played out on the bodies of female subordinates." (Good Wives, Nasty Wenchens, and Anxious Patriarchs [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996], 334). In her discussion of American literature, Dawn Landman links the frontier's promise of sexual adventure for men with assumptions about white women's unfitness for frontier life: "Contrary to its surface appearance, America promises not a land of men without women. Paradise without Eve, but a wilderness where the white man will have the best sex of his life. The assertion that wilderness life is too difficult for women, and the subsequent insistence upon the exclusion of white women, often assumes, unspoken, the notion of a non-white female sexual object (not peer or partner) and a sexualization which is without responsibility" ("Eve among the Indians," in The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism, ed. Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977], 201).

7. Byrd was typical in his use of categories of civilization and improvement to understand and control the "New World." On the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century ideology and literature of improvement, see Joyce Chaplin, An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 26ff.


11. Ibid., 154, 166, 188.


15. Ibid., 102.

16. Here as along other colonial frontiers, the evaluation of land could not occur without an external benchmark. As a secular of colonial Peru points out, "good' and 'bad' environments are defined as such in terms of a given productive system" (Karen Spalding, Huarochiri: An Andean Society under Inca and Spanish Rule [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1984], 295). Thus, for example, the Andus represented a "problem climate" for Spanish conquerors and colonists be-

cause it was a landscape that presented "great difficulties to the technology de-
v eloped by Europeans for the cultivation of their temperate, relatively flat agri-

ducal lands" (p. 13). Since any productive system is tied to those who produce land use were simultaneously judgments of land users.


18. Ibid., 102.

19. Ibid., 201.

20. Ibid., 211.

21. Ibid., 25, 152.

22. Ibid., 102.

23. Hookworm, a parasite that can cause lethargy, dullness, and physical weakness that can persist for years when not treated. See also the comments Byrd makes in this letter about the "laziness" of the Indians and the need to treat them for illness.


27. Byrd's landholdings began with an inheritance of some 14,000 acres in 1705. By 1744, when he died, he was the owner of 179,440 acres of land and had been negotiating for the Great Dismal Swamp. See William Byrd, The Progress of William Byrd of Westover: Narratives of a Colonial Virginian, ed. Louis B. Wright (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 214. Byrd was not alone in his acquisitio
33. Ibid., 27.
40. Ibid., 34.
44. Ibid., 50.
47. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 226.
48. About a pleasing view across a valley, for example, Byrd wrote that it "had a most agreeable effect upon the eye, and waved walking but Cattle grazing in the Meadow, and Sheep and Goats feeding on the Hill, to make it a Compleat Rural Landscape" (*Histories*, 296). See also Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 20.
49. Byrd's own plantation, of course, became a carefully constructed and well-managed English Eden, at least as he described it, though slavery certainly made it a "post-Fall" environment.
51. Ibid., 92, 116, 301.
52. Ibid., 92.
54. Smits, "The 'Squaw Drudge'," 281-306.

55. "William Byrd," 305-7. Smith points out that the spring and fall portions of the survey expedition had markedly different characters. The accounts of sexual violence all occurred during the spring portion, which Smith argues had a more relaxed attitude toward violence. The fall months were identified as a "light-hearted group pilgrimage." The fall months of."
On the Sources, 86, accepts Byrd's claims of sexual temperament and restraint, believing that his expressions of misogyny were limited to his commonplace books. Donald J. Siebert Jr., "William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line: The Fashioning of a Hero," American Literature 47 (1975): 533–51, however, is less convinced that Byrd's self-descriptions as regular, orderly, and sexually restrained. The Secret History and Byrd's London diary certainly establish that his backlass was not limited to literary jibes. When elite women frustrated Byrd's attempts to fashion himself as a Virginia gentleman, separate from both equal to his English counterparts, he and men of his class could and did take recourse against the nonwhite and nonelite women to whom the power of courtship did not accrue.

79. Byrd, Histories 2: 4, 1.8, 1.20.


82. Kathleen Brown, Good Wives, 356, similarly sees sexual relationships between masters and enslaved women as a case in which the gross imbalance of power renders the notion of "consent" extremely problematic, if not completely untenable.

83. For this phenomenon in Colombia, see Taussig, Shamanism, 25. For the Russian Alaskan example, see Miller, "Handsome but Tattooed," 32, 37.

84. Taussig, Shamanism, 30, 41, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 100, 121.

85. The implications of domination in Byrd's narrative have not gone entirely unnoticed by scholars. Historian Kenneth Lockridge recognizes that the History of the Dividing Line is not only an epic of running the line but is also "the epic of William Byrd's natural mastery over those around him," and he notes that "in the Secret History, much of the mastery is the shared mastery of men over women" (Diary, 132). Ultimately, however, Lockridge treats the Secret History's "obscenity with sex" as a flaw in the text's literary merit rather than as a key to understanding gender and power in colonial society; ibid., 134. In this analysis, Lockridge is aligned with Byrd's many other editors and commentators who have treated his Secret History as a literary work of art, a "witty social satire" that is "rich in racy humor" (Davis, Intellectual Life, 137; Wilson and Ferris, Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, 677). For a more recent literary take on Byrd that emphasizes his role in the production of a distinctly southern regional literature, see Susan Manning, "Industry and Idleness in Colonial Virginia: A New Approach to William Byrd II," Journal of American Studies 28, no. 2 (1994): 168–90. When historians have addressed the acts of sexual violence, they have most often treated them dismissively as an "eye for feminine charms" or as "amorous activities" (Byrd, Histories, xv; Byrd, Prose Works, 13). More than twenty years ago, David Smith recognized that it was no longer enough to agree with such assured complacency. In the recent judgments of Byrd, Smith, "William Byrd," 308–9, identified some of the complex questions regarding masculinity, sexuality, power, and colonialism raised by the Histories, though he left them unanswered.


88. On Byrd's intent in writing the History, see Davis, Intellectual Life, 59.


90. Historian Richard Davis, Intellectual Life, 59, 1367, 1373, has argued, for example, that Byrd was representative of his age and that the survey expedition was emblematic of the American experience.

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