

21L007 After Columbus

Topics for the second essay (10/27)

This essay should focus on one (or possibly two) of these materials: Strachey's *Letter*, Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Smith's *History*. (It's also possible to write about Disney's movie *Pocahontas*; talk to me if you are interested). Below, I suggest some broad, general topics; within these, it's your job to carve out something more focused and specific. Usually, the best way to do this is by focusing on specific events, scenes, figures, or passages -- perhaps those you've picked out from your reading over the weekend. The essay should be roughly 5 pages, and revision is possible but optional.

All of our texts describe places in which members of the European society have *recently* arrived, and thus share several common concerns.

Work: who does it, and who doesn't? Who assigns it, and for what purpose? If there is conflict associated with work, what is the conflict about, how is it expressed, and how is it resolved -- if it is? Who does the text suggest is an ideal or exemplary worker, and why? These are issues both in *The Tempest* and in Smith's Jamestown; we've begun to discuss them in class, so see if you can take that discussion further.

Authority: who has it, and where does it come from -- what enables one person to tell others what to do? Are there different kinds of authority in the text, or different sources for a person's power over others? How do different persons in authority use their power? Do those who are governed see the authority of those above them as legitimate? What kinds of projects or plans do those in charge have -- what are their visions for the future of islands, colonies, communities? Again, we've begun to discuss these issues in *The Tempest* and will continue to look at them in Smith. In Smith's text, as you'll see, official power to govern changes hands so rapidly it makes California look stable, so these questions are especially interesting; in addition, Smith has or claims to have a good bit of *unofficial* power both over other colonists and the Indians. It's also possible to think about Powhatan and the ways he functions as a ruler.

Love: how does love fit in with these questions about power? In this context, "love" may describe voluntary (rather than coerced) compliance with the wishes of another, whether that other is a person one loves -- like Miranda (for Ferdinand), or a group which one decides to welcome rather than to fight -- like the English (for the Powhatans). In other words, love is the alternative to fear in the political world, covering voluntary service, hospitality, and affectionate interchange as well as romance; people do things because they want to, rather than because they are afraid of what will happen if they don't. (In "After Pocahontas" under "Backgrounds" you'll see an account which justifies a switch from love to fear in the colony's relations with the

Indians). Romantic feelings -- real or imaginary -- may also be useful for larger political projects of forming alliances between groups. The presence of women in the text often signals these kinds of issues. In Jamestown or on Shakespeare's island, where do you see "love" (either personal or political), what are its motives or sources, and what are its consequences? What is it that binds people with different interests together and moves them to cooperate?

Others: Miranda and Prospero see themselves collectively as "us," and Caliban as "them." Smith, also, divides the people in his text into "us" (English colonists/Smith's supporters) and "the Sa[l]vages." In all three texts, there are also dissidents who may be part of the community of Italians, or Englishmen, but have their own agendas which are at odds with the community or its authority. How do the dominant voices of the text (say, Prospero and Smith) view the others around them? What place do these others occupy in their scheme of things? What kinds of problems and possibilities do the presence of these others offer them? Are there alternative ideas, in the text, of how to view/relate to the other, and what are they? Do the speeches and actions of (say) Powhatan, or Caliban, suggest different ways to understand this relationship?

"Magic": Talk about the role played in *The Tempest*, or in Virginia, by forces that are not fully understood – the command of spirits or the supernatural, alcohol, guns, writing, spectacle or theatre. What are the practical effects of being able to command a spirit (Prospero) or use an "ivory double compass" (Smith)? What are the symbolic or indirect effects on those who witness these abilities? Does one matter more than the other?

NOTE: You are the judge of your own work-flow. If you need it, you can request an extension on this essay, but you must do so by 5 pm on the 26th. Otherwise, I will count it as late and lower the grade of the essay.