

‘A STRICT JOURNAL OF ALL THE PASSAGES’: JOHN LAWSON’S *NEW VOYAGE TO CAROLINA* AND THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILITY

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Abstract. In colonial British America ‘travel writing’ found its way into many different literary genres: religious tracts, scientific accounts, and political or promotional writings, often written to make settlement attractive. Travel writing was also often devoted to mapping and describing landscapes for future travellers or settlers. Whatever its genre, however, early American travel writing is unquestionably a form that makes manifest by implication the actual mobility of the travellers themselves and the need for continued and future mobility. This paper will examine this issue in *A New Voyage to Carolina* (1709), by British travel writer John Lawson (1674–1711) as little attention has so far been paid to the rhetoric of his implicit assumptions about mobility and the importance of emigration. In this post-colonial context, then, this paper argues that *A New Voyage* stands as a substantial piece of colonial travel writing, one of whose basic, underlying themes is the importance of freedom of movement, both individual and collective. Lawson’s own experience bears this out insofar as, in addition to his travels, he was himself instrumental in the founding of two early eighteenth-century towns in North Carolina, Bath and New Bern, the latter a community of about 300 Palatine and Swiss emigrants.

Key words: John Lawson, travel writing, Carolina, mobility, natural history

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most popular books published in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were accounts written by British-born explorers or travellers who described their experiences and observations of regions of the New World like John Josselyn’s *New England’s Rarities Discovered*, published in 1672, or Mark Catesby’s *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*, published in instalments from 1731 through 1743. Even though one could thus argue that the New World was no longer entirely new to Europeans, 18th century readers were still eager to learn about the fauna and flora, the geography or the inhabitants of parts of the world most of them would never visit; the reports thus offered them opportunity to enjoy a form of vicarious mobility. John Lawson’s *New Voyage to Carolina* (short title), initially published in London in 1709, after its author’s first stay in America from late 1700 till 1708, is one of the most valuable books of this genre. It pertains both to the trend of natural history writing and to that of promotional writing. As a natural history book giving – at the time –

the most precise firsthand account of the indigenous inhabitants, the fauna and the flora of the Carolinas, more particularly of North Carolina, it stands as a very good example of mobility of knowledge, as John Lawson took advantage of his trip both to write a journal and to collect data, seeds and samples he then sent to his British correspondent, London apothecary James Petiver (1663–1718), Fellow of the Royal Society (founded in November 1660 and granted a charter by Charles II).

Necessary to such mobility of knowledge is, of course, personal mobility, as '[t]he ability to move easily and independently from place to place would seem to be the essential condition of travel' (Kuehn and Smethurst, 2015: 7). The man who will share knowledge and send seeds must himself be physically, literally mobile and it is this understanding of mobility that is the focus of this paper. Yet, what presents itself as a natural history book and a travel narrative works on other levels as well. Therefore, I argue that in order to promote emigration to the Carolinas, Lawson showcases his own mobility and also that, beyond different forms of spatial mobility, mobility in Lawson's text takes on a symbolic-temporal dimension as it refers to an edenic, pre-lapsarian state: that is, there is a simultaneous temporal mobility evident in his *New Voyage to Carolina*.

PHYSICAL MOBILITY

Little is known about John Lawson's early life. It is either generally assumed that he was born in 1674 in a Yorkshire landed family or, as Hugh Talmage Lefler argues, that he was from London and may have been the Lawson referred to in the Court Book of the London Society of Apothecaries under the date of February 1, 1675 and apprenticed to John Chandler (Lawson, 1967: XIV). This second hypothesis seems more convincing, especially given Lawson's later links with the aforementioned Petiver. Whatever his elusive origin may have been, Lawson seems to have come from a wealthy family, and his affluent background may account for his education and writing skills, and also for his ability to travel extensively without having to worry about his means of subsistence.

In the introduction to *A New Voyage*, he refers to his inclination to adventure and mobility in the broader context of the mass mobility of a pilgrimage to Rome for the Pope's Jubilee in 1700:

my Intention, at that Time, being to travel, I accidentally met with a Gentleman, who had been Abroad, and was very well acquainted with the Ways of Living in both Indies; of whom, having made Enquiry concerning them, he assur'd me, that Carolina was the best Country I could go to. (Lawson, 1967: 6)

This 'mise en abîme', or self-reflexive embedding, of his own mobility fulfils multiple functions. First, from a socio-economic perspective, it confirms Lawson's place in a certain category, that of the people who could afford to travel

at will rather than because of the necessity of migrating. It also emphasizes his willingness to travel for the sake of discovering the natural environment of a little-documented colony and, thus, of furthering scientific knowledge, as he proposes to deal with 'the natural History of Carolina' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 9).

Last, this narrative device also testifies to his self-awareness, which he underlines in the Preface, when he denounces the lack of education of travellers to America who are unable to write about their own experiences there:

It is a great Misfortune, that most of our Travellers, who go to this vast Continent in America, are Persons of the meaner Sort, and generally of a very slender Education; who being hired by the merchants, to trade amongst the Indians, in which Voyages they often spend several Years, are yet, at their Return, incapable of giving any reasonable Account of what they met withal in those remote Parts. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 4)

His account, then, implicitly purports to be informed and *reasonable*. As he discards the notion of 'amus(ing) my readers with the Encomium of Carolina' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 5), he asserts that his book won't be a grossly exaggerated promotional tract extolling the merits of the colony, but 'a faithful Account' written with 'Impartiality and Truth' (*ibid.*: 4). Additionally, this embedded reference to his status as a learned traveller legitimizes the firsthand description he is about to give while drawing attention to the defects of other accounts written before by people who had never set foot in Carolina, like Richard Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas or Robert Horne, who had published *A Brief Description of the Province of Carolina* in 1666 at the request of the Lords Proprietors to encourage settlement.

Carolina is a fair and spacious Province on the Continent of America: so called in honour of His Sacred Majesty that now is, Charles the Second, whom God preserve; and His Majesty hath been pleas'd to grant the same to certain Honourable Persons, who in order to the speedy planting of the same, have granted divers privileges and advantages to such as shall transport themselves and Servants in convenient time; This Province lying so neer Virginia, and yet more Southward, enjoys the fertility and advantages thereof; and yet is so far distant, as to be freed from the inconstancy of the Weather, which is a great cause of the unhealthfulness thereof. (Horne, 1666: 10)

From the very beginning, the reader is thus made to assume that Lawson, though neither a trained scientist nor an explorer commissioned by the British Crown, is more legitimate than any of his predecessors and that his observations will be more reliable. The absence of a formal training was at any rate quite common at the time: 'Little formal discipline or special training was required of those in the field' (Wilson, 1978: 7). The long and precise title, typical of the period, which aims at being an exhaustive description of the contents of the book, reinforces that impression of meticulousness and accuracy: *A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country: Together with the Present State Thereof. And a Journal of a Thousand Miles,*

Travel'd Thro' Several Nations of Indians. Giving a Particular Account of Their Customs, Manners, etc.

His mobility is here again given pride of place, with mentions of the 'voyage' and the distance – albeit exaggerated, as Lawson is more likely to have covered the 550 miles from Charleston to the Pamlico River – he has 'travel'd'.

Similarly, the way information is organized inside the book, starting with the journal of Lawson's journey in 1700–1701 and moving on to a minute description of the natural and human environment of Carolina divided into chapters such as 'Of the Corn of Carolina' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 65) or 'Fish of Carolina' (ibid.: 131) mixes the narrative of Lawson's adventures on his trek from South to North Carolina with data that may be useful for prospective settlers or curious readers alike. In addition, Lawson provides a map of the colony which, according to William P. Cumming, heavily relies on a previous map published by three London map makers in 1685 and is valuable essentially for its detailed rendering of the Pamlico region. Indeed, Lawson was instrumental in the founding and incorporating of the first town in North Carolina, Bath, in 1705 and he established himself there (Cumming, 1958: 178) after initially building a house a little further south, on the Neuse River, near the site of the future New Bern: 'I had built a House about half a Mile from an Indian Town, on the Fork of Neus-River' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 111). Even though Cumming essentially draws attention to the map's flaws, stating that 'It cannot be said that Lawson's map added much information of value, though it retained several old inaccuracies and included some new ones' (ibid.), its very presence in the book is interesting. In the context of the Enlightenment and of a growing interest for and consumption of knowledge, Lawson's choice of including a map – albeit an imperfect one – further emphasizes the educational impact his book may have while being a step ahead of others. In his paper *The Ambulatory Map: Commodity, Mobility and Visualcy in Eighteenth Century Colonial America*, Martin Brückner indeed writes that only 'by mid-century, maps were regularly tipped into bound volumes such as geography books, histories and travel narratives' (Brückner, 2011: 150).

The genre of the book, as a result, is hard to define but the reader is never allowed to lose sight of Lawson as its central character, as the one risking his comfort, or even his life, for the advancement of knowledge:

With hard Rowing, we got two Leagues up the River, lying all Night in a swampy Piece of Ground, the Weather being so cold all that Time, we were almost frozen ere Morning, leaving the Impressions of our Bodies on the wet Ground. We set forward very early in the Morning, to seek some better Quarters. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 12)

So, it is precisely Lawson's mobility – both the fact of his crossing the Atlantic and of his trekking through the backwoods of the colony – that gives him scientific legitimacy. And, back in London in 1709 to attend to the publication of his book, he even concludes his narrative with the mention of his perceived didactic responsibility and his plans for future trips:

I do intend (if God permit) by future Voyages (after my Arrival in Carolina) to pierce into the Body of the Continent, and what Discoveries and Observations I shall, at any time hereafter, make, will be communicated to my Correspondents in England to be publish'd. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 214)

In contrast to his own (literal) mobility and the potential mobility of would-be European settlers, Lawson makes the effort to convince his readers of the relative immobility of American Indians, but the least one can say is that his position seems ambivalent. He does grant that some of the Indigenous peoples he encounters in North Carolina seem, over generations, to have migrated great distances:

and it seems very probable, that these People might come from some Eastern Country; for when you ask them whence their Fore-fathers came, that first inhabited the Country, they will point to the Westward and say, Where the Sun sleeps our Forefathers came thence, which, at that distance, may be reckon'd amongst the Eastern Parts of the World. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 180)

He also concedes that contemporary Native Americans do travel locally as hunters and in several instances the verbs 'travel' and 'hunt' are found together: 'that they get in different Parts of the Country, where they hunt and travel' or 'In Travelling and Hunting, they are very indefatigable' (*ibid.*: 165; 149).

Nevertheless, in the context of mobility for other purposes such as trade, the Indians appear, in Lawson's view, extremely limited. His argument – at odds with his general benevolent and open-minded attitude towards American-Indians – is perhaps most notable in an early passage in his own travel account. As he reports it, a group of Indians decide to build an ocean-worthy fleet of canoes so that they can sail to, and thus trade directly with, merchants in England. As 'some of the craftiest of them had observ'd, that the Ships came always in at one Place, which made them very confident that Way was the exact Road to England (*ibid.*: 14), they will thereby make some 'twenty times the Value for every Pelt they sold Abroad, in Consideration of what Rates they sold for at Home' (*ibid.*). After deciding to undertake such a voyage in the first place, they divide the labour for building and provisioning a fleet of large canoes, and they set out to cross the Atlantic. Lawson describes their attempt as naïf and ill-fated:

The Wind presenting, they set up their Mat-Sails, and were scarce out of Sight, when there rose a Tempest, which, [...] it is supposed, [...] carried one Part of these Indian Merchants by Way of the other World, whilst the others were taken up at Sea, by an English Ship, and sold for Slaves to the Islands. The Remainder are better satisfied with their Imbecilities in such an Undertaking, nothing affronting them more than to rehearse their Voyage to England. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 14)

In short, nothing is more an affront to them now than the thought of making such an attempt again. The effect of this seemingly satirical description of the attempted voyage is to render the Indians naïf, certainly, but also to suggest that they are as incapable and as immobile as they are ignorant.

This particular passage stands of course in direct contrast to the narrator's representation of his own literal mobility, his 'thousand miles travel *among* the Indians', and it also stands in contrast to the potential mobility of European settlers. Immediately juxtaposed to the account of the Indians' failed undertaking is the account of the successful transplanting of a group of French settlers. About seventy French families, Lawson writes, have successfully emigrated and are 'living very conveniently [...]; decently and happily' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 14)

The French being a temperate industrious People, some of them bringing very little of Effects, yet, by their Endeavors and mutual Assistance, amongst themselves... have outstripped our English... Tis admirable to see what Time and Industry will (with God's Blessing) effect'. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 15)

By juxtaposing the accounts of Indians with those of the French emigrants, Lawson implies how far these European settlers have outstripped the American Indians, people who are unable to work for their own profit because they are unable to travel themselves. In this sense, mobility, literal mobility like Lawson's own, enables the settlers to 'arrive to very splendid Conditions' (*ibid.*), unattainable without such mobility and thus out of the reach of what he presents as imbecilic Indians. Furthermore, by presenting the Native Americans as naïf and lacking significant mobility, Lawson implies that the Indians pose no threat to 'mobile' settlers; they are essentially harmless, are often described as 'friendly' (*ibid.*: 74) or 'docile' (*ibid.*: 75) and pose neither threat nor impediment to European emigration and settlement. Lawson's rhetoric is perfectly logical and appropriate, given that one of the author's goals is to encourage emigration to North Carolina.

THE PROMOTION OF EMIGRATION TO NORTH CAROLINA

In Britain, after Cromwell's Commonwealth, Charles II took the throne in 1660. As a reward to those who had stayed loyal to him during his exile and as a way of repaying his debts, he granted land in America to eight noblemen, who had approached him for a grant. The first charter was issued on March 24, 1663 and granted them all the land between 31° and 36° N from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Two years later, the tract of land was further enlarged by the second charter to include the Albemarle region already settled by Virginians, as well as additional territory south into Florida, including the Spanish town of St. Augustine. Of course, as the width of North America was at the time

unknown, the Western boundaries of that huge territory remained purely theoretical. These eight men, who became known as the Lords Proprietors were William Berkeley (former governor of Virginia); John Colleton (a West Indies planter); Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon; George Monck, duke of Albemarle; William, Earl Craven; John, Lord Berkeley; Anthony Ashley Cooper; and Sir George Carteret. As the ruling landlords of the colony, they were anxious to attract more settlers in order to farm the land and secure it against possible encroachments from the Spaniards:

settlers had already begun moving from Virginia into the area around Albermarle Sound, though settlement farther south had so far been inhibited by the threat of Spanish retaliation and the presence of numerous American Indian nations. (Middleton, 1996: 137)

Beside, the Privy Council had also decided that grants ‘would lapse unless settlement was effected within a reasonable period’ (Middleton, 1996: 138), which provided a further motive for encouraging emigration to the Carolinas. Emigration and settlement were still timid in the Northern part of the colony in spite of the publication of pamphlets such as Horne’s, mentioned above. Besides, it must be noted that North Carolina did not exist at the time as a full-fledged political entity. It came into existence in 1729 when the proprietary colony was partitioned into two royal colonies. To inspect the land and promote settlement, the Proprietors appointed Lawson as deputy Surveyor in 1705, and then Surveyor General in 1708 – he worked with Edward Moseley – to survey the controversial boundary between Virginia and Carolina (Latham and Samford, 2011: 255), thereby granting an official function to his mobility. It is thus no surprise that he should frame the overall narrative of his explorations by referring to them at the beginning and the end. Indeed, his book is dedicated to them:

I here present Your Lordships with a Description of your own Country, for the most part, in her Natural Dress, and therefore less vitiated with Fraud and Luxury. A Country, whose Inhabitants may enjoy a Life of the greatest Ease and Satisfaction, and pass away their Hours in solid Contentment. (Lawson, 1967: Dedication)

Their presence provides the narrative with a form of institutional structure. One of the primary assets of the colony, its religious freedom, is stressed from the start: ‘It being the Lords Proprietors Intent, that the Inhabitants of Carolina should be as free from Oppression, as any in the Universe’ (Lawson, 1709/2015: 7). Similarly, the auxiliary material that closes the book is the 2nd Charter, granted by Charles II to the Lords Proprietors in 1665. Emigration to the colony can thus take place under the benevolent gaze of the British Crown and the aristocracy.

In addition to the religious freedom granted by the Lords Proprietors and noted from the start as an incentive to emigration, Lawson repeatedly uses the personification of the colony and the description of nature, its resources and beauties to entice new settlers. In this sense, his account is very typical of other

such promotional tracts. Descriptions of the loveliness of the landscape pervade the whole narrative:

most of the Plantations in Carolina naturally enjoy a noble Prospect of large and spacious Rivers, pleasant Savanna's, and fine Meadows, with their green Liveries, interwoven with beautiful Flowers, of most glorious Colours, which the several Seasons afford. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 55)

Similarly, the colony is presented as a land of plenty, as game is readily available: '[...] we were entertained with a fat, boil'd Goose, Venison, Raccoon, and ground Nuts' (ibid.: 18) and the abundant cattle do not need fodder because the fields are 'green all the Year' (ibid.). This abundance is due to the climate of North Carolina being on the whole very mild: 'this happy Climate, visited by so mild Winters, is much warmer than the Northern Plantations' (ibid.: 142). Aware that many of the prospective settlers are farmers, Lawson also takes great pains to praise the quality of the soil, fertile 'beyond Expectation' (ibid.: 55) and whose yield is much greater than any European soil: 'producing every thing that was planted, to a prodigious Increase' (ibid.). In spite of his plea of impartiality, he even actually grossly exaggerates the quantities of wheat or Indian corn (maize) that can supposedly be expected by any moderately successful farmer: 'The Planters possessing all these Blessings, and the Produce of great Quantities of Wheat and Indian Corn, in which this Country is very fruitful' (ibid.: 55). As W. H. Lindgren III states, 'Lawson's agricultural statements seem to deserve considerable skepticism from the modern reader' (Lindgren, 1972: 334) since he systematically presents good land as 'normative' instead of 'possible' (ibid.: 339) and doubles the wildest possibilities of Indian corn production (ibid.: 337). This particular case seems to exemplify one of the problems posed by travel writing, i.e. its verisimilitude: 'The boundary between fact and fiction – that is, the travelogue's commitment to 'truth' while at the same time being 'entertaining' [or in Lawson's case, convincing] and thereby susceptible to embellishment – has always been a precarious one.' (Kuehn and Smethurst, 2015: 4). As if the beauty and fertility of North Carolina were not reason enough for settling, its subsoil is also potentially superlatively rich: lead, copper, and silver have been discovered and are very conveniently neglected by the Indians ('the Indians never look for any thing lower than the Superficies of the Earth', Lawson, 1709/2015: 141), and a whole host of other minerals are there, waiting to be dug out of the earth: 'the best of Minerals (which) are not Wanting in North Carolina' (ibid.: 72).

The hope for a social mobility resulting from this spatial, physical mobility is perceptible throughout the entire account, and Lawson makes it very explicit that because land can be purchased cheaply, in contrast to land in Britain or even elsewhere in America, anyone can thus become a landowner and reach a higher status:

Land being sold at a much cheaper Rate there, than in any other Place in America, and may, as I suppose, be purchased of the Lords-

Proprietors here in England, or of the Governor there for the time being, by any that shall have a mind to transport themselves to that Country. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 144)

The land is rich and available to anyone willing to transport himself, to anyone, that is, willing to make manifest his potential for mobility. Not only does Lawson praise the availability and relatively low price of land in North Carolina, he also repeatedly stresses its advantages compared even with Maryland and Virginia: the land is cheaper:

[...] in most Places in Virginia and Maryland, a thousand Acres of good Land, seated on a Navigable Water, will cost a thousand Pounds; whereas, with us, it is at present obtain'd for the fiftieth Part of the Money. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 144)

Moreover, and very important to traders, the mobility of goods and persons remains possible throughout winter and is impeded neither by climatic conditions nor excise duties:

for we can go out with our Commodities, to any other Part of the West-Indies, or elsewhere, in the Depth of Winter; whereas, those in New-England, New-York, Pennsylvania, and the Colonies to the Northward of us, cannot stir for Ice, but are fast lock'd into their Harbours. Besides, we can trade with South-Carolina, and pay no Duties or Customs, no more than their own Vessels, both North and South being under the same Lords-Proprietors. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 142)

The inevitable conclusion is, of course, that travelling to and settling in North Carolina is the obvious thing to do, and Lawson appeals to people's reason:

any rational Man that has a mind to purchase Land in the Plantations for a Settlement of himself and Family, will soon discover the Advantages that attend the Settlers and Purchasers of Land in Carolina, above all other Colonies in the English Dominions in America. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 144)

All these material arguments were enough for Lawson to persuade a group of Swiss and Palatine immigrants to move to North Carolina. This immigration plan was headed by Christoph Von Graffenried, a Swiss Baron who, with Lawson, co-founded the North Carolina town of New Bern, on the Neuse River in 1710. The Swiss immigrants were in search of a better life while the Germans were fleeing their war-torn country, especially during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714). Lawson was convinced that 'as soon as any of those Parts are seated by the Switzers, a great many Britains will strive to live amongst them, for the Benefit of the sweet Air and healthful Climate, which that Country affords' (*ibid.*: 176).

But as appealing as Lawson's North Carolina is made to appear, there is more in Lawson's book than mere literal, material arguments for making the area attractive to settlers. Lawson recounts the land's symbolic appeals as well.

FIGURATIVE MOBILITY

Even though Roderick Nash asserts that wilderness 'was the basic ingredient of American civilization' (Nash, 1982: XI) and that 'the first white visitors (to America) regarded wilderness as a moral and physical wasteland fit only for conquest and fructification in the name of progress, civilization, and Christianity' (Nash, 1982: XII), the portrait Lawson makes of sparsely inhabited North Carolina certainly evokes different images. The colony he depicts is indeed not an awful, hostile wilderness peopled with wild human and non-human creatures. On his trek in the backcountry, the nature he describes is never 'a cursed land' (Nash, 1982: 14) but rather a land of plenty – with its promise of a readily-available and nearly inexhaustible abundance of resources. He does not hide the presence of dangerous species or of Indians, but even this does not seem to come in contradiction with the Garden of Eden he depicts. Indeed, the harmful species that take centre stage are snakes – he lists fifteen of them and gives pride of place to the rattle snake (Lawson, 1709/2015: 111–116) – and he repeatedly calls the Indians 'heathens' or 'savages' (for instance Lawson, 1709/2015: 164; 173; 4; 17; 44...), reinforcing the Judeo-Christian reading of his description, reminiscent of the land of plenty mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah, 2:7:

[...] such a Place lay fairly to be a *delicious* Country, being placed in that Girdle of the World which affords *Wine, Oil, Fruit, Grain, and Silk*, with other *rich Commodities*, besides a *sweet Air, moderate Climate, and fertile Soil*; these are the *Blessings* (under *Heaven's Protection*) that spin out the Thread of Life to its utmost Extent, and crown our Days with the *Sweets of Health and Plenty* [...]. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 70, my emphasis)

His description corroborates Nash's assumption that the common feature of all paradises is 'a bountiful and beneficent natural setting in accord with the original meaning of the word in Persian-luxurious garden. A mild climate constantly prevailed. Ripe fruit drooped from every bough...' (Nash, 1982: 9). And indeed, Lawson's North Carolina seems to combine all the tropes of an earthly paradise. Even the name of the Cape Fear River that flows between what is now New Hanover and Brunswick counties is changed to Cape Fair, to enhance its beauty instead of its dangers... Not only is the land the author describes beautiful and fertile beyond belief, its abundance requires very little work, if any at all. Lawson mentions that the land 'with moderate Industry, will afford all the Necessaries of Life' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 70), but he soon discards the very notion of work, as if the earth were rich enough to take care of itself:

The Planter sits contented at home, whilst his Oxen thrive and grow fat, and his Stocks daily increase; The fatted Porkets and Poultry are easily rais'd to his Table, and his Orchard affords him Liqueur, so that he eats, and drinks away the Cares of the World, and desires no greater Happiness, than that which he daily enjoys. (Lawson, 1709/2015: 76)

In short, in Lawson's imagery, the earth is more nurturing mother than fierce wilderness. As a result, the greatest danger settlers face is not exhaustion from hard work, but succumbing to an easy, idle life, in which they could ultimately lose their manly virtues: 'The easy Way of living in that plentiful Country, makes a great many Planters very negligent' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 73).

In the meantime, their wives take over: 'The Women are the most industrious Sex in that Place, and, by their good Houswifry, make a great deal of Cloath of their own Cotton, Wool and Flax' (ibid.). In her paper entitled 'The Most Industrious Sex: John Lawson's Carolina Women Domesticate the Land', Kathy O. McGill argues that masculine indolence in America could be 'interpreted as effeminacy' (McGill, 2011: 281) and that there was a 'fear that gender roles might be subject to inversion in the colonies [...]' (ibid.). Lawson's position, however, seems to be less contentious: while acknowledging that Carolina women are equal or perhaps even superior to men in terms of activity, his position is to be understood against the backdrop of Carolina as an edenic country. He indeed develops an analogy between the fertility of the land and women's fecundity: 'The Women are very fruitful; most Houses being full of Little Ones.' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 74) Lawson even insists that women who could not have children in Europe see their fecundity return once in North Carolina, as if the land could have an impact on their fecundity: 'It has been observ'd, that Women long marry'd, and without Children, in other Places, have remov'd to Carolina, and become joyful Mothers.' (Lawson, 1709/2015: 74) According to Lawson, they manage, just like Indian women, to give birth without experiencing the pain of labor: 'They have very easy Travail in their Child-bearing, in which they are so happy, as seldom to miscarry' (ibid.). These elements seem to indicate that women, in North Carolina, are no longer the fallen creatures of the post-lapsarian world, meant to experience pain in childbirth, as in Genesis 3:16: 'To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children (...)"'. As McGill writes, '(woman) was an equal partner and helpmate, and a being whom God had created precisely because He considered her necessary to Adam's existence' (McGill, 2011: 295). Similarly, Southern men's indolence is attributable to the mild climate, so that they do not have to toil as Adam was made to after his eviction from the Garden of Eden ('In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread' Gen 3:19). The portrait of North Carolina that Lawson draws in some sections of his book is thus that of a promised land, 'an Eden so forgiving that no human foible can ruin it' (Thomson Shields, 2011: 85). By promoting a literal, spatial mobility to that supposedly edenic country, not only is he propounding access to wealth and upward social mobility, but also – and probably even more importantly in a still deeply-religious society – some form of temporal mobility, enabling a journey away from the Old (fallen) World and a return to a pre-lapsarian state where mankind was free from the burden of daily labour and where a form of gender equality could be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Mobility is of course a key notion to understand the building of colonial America, one without which – for better and for worse – the discovery, settlement and mapping of what was considered by Europeans as a virgin land would not have taken place. As such, mobility meant, and still means, power, especially power on one's environment. In its promise of the good life available to those mobile enough to take advantage of it, in his *New Voyage to Carolina*, John Lawson echoes previous writers such as Richard Hakluyt, who claims that Sir Walter Raleigh could not be taken away from the delights of Virginia (Kolodny, 1984: 3), and Samuel Purchas who promotes the settlement and the potential of a plentiful virgin land. At the same time, he anticipates later naturalist travel writers, like William Bartram, whose works also document the unique natural abundance evident in the American southeast. The mobility of European settlers came to be synonymous with the forced mobility and/or death of innumerable Indians, while Lawson himself met an untimely end at the hands of the Tuscaroras while on a trip up the Neuse River from New Bern in 1711. To thousands of European immigrants, however, mobility symbolized the hope for a better life. The truth concerning the hard work of farming in the New World might have proved startlingly more difficult than Lawson promises, but rhetorically speaking, North Carolina was easily 'the best Country [he] could go to.'

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