

Atlantic World Research Network
Graduate Student Prize – 2015-2016
First Prize Winner

Matthew Phillips, PhD Student in English, Nominated by Professor Christopher Hodgkins

Title: "First Miles Philips, and Then Tony Last: The Noble Savage Myth in Hakluyt and in Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*."

This essay analyzes two transatlantic accounts of British imperialism in the New World: Richard Hakluyt's 1582 historical redemption of the "noble savage" and Evelyn Waugh's 1934 fictional critique of the same myth. In an impressive analysis of texts composed four centuries apart, Matthew Phillips addresses these two authors' contrasting approaches to the myth, concluding that the modernist Waugh's critique ironically precludes empathy for indigenous peoples, while Hakluyt's narrative of conversion experiences led, unexpectedly, to compelling modes of cross-cultural empathy. Phillips's essay demonstrates the subtle complexities of navigating the "noble savage" myth and the surprising ways that it helps us to confront what he calls "the nightmares and fever dreams left in the wake of imperial expansion."