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M
any historians have noted the question of why the native peoples
of the Caribbean and Americas were decimated by the Spaniards
and other colonizing peoples. The question has usually been answered
by the concept of “Virgin Soils,” as noted by Alfred Crosby and expanded
upon by Noble David Cook. Virgin soils are lands in which people have
had no previous contact with the disease in question, in this case,
smallpox. Cook argues in Born to Die that disease played an essential
role in the ritual subjugation of native peoples. Disease added to the
exploitation and famine that had already hit the native peoples. David S.
Jones, on the other hand, argues that disease, while important, should
not receive the utmost focus. To him, it is important to note that social
and environmental factors worked in tandem with the colonizing powers’
agendas to take out the native peoples. I agree with Jones’ argument,
as it calls to mind various factors that do not take the colonizers off the
hook, as their human behavior is at the forefront of Jones’ argument.
In this paper, I will outline Noble David Cook’s arguments about the
subjugation of native peoples concerning disease and the concept of
the “Black Legend.” I will then outline David S. Jones’ argument about
diff erent factors culminating in the subjugation of natives. I will then
conclude with my own opinion about which argument is more appealing
both ethically and methodologically.
Noble David Cook traces how the “Black Legend” narrative of
European colonization of the Americas gained prominence, pointing to
religious and political causes. In his introduction, Cook uses imagery
that draws upon the various sources for the native colonization. The
Dying to Meet You:
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received smallpox, measles, the plague, typhus, and cholera.
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 The
wide variety of diseases would cause problems later, as it was hard

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of the population. While this set of epidemics has been pinpointed by
many historians as the beginning of the decimation, Cook believes that
the death began in the fi rst expedition of 1492-1493. He diff ers from