

(the opening section of a work in progress, named:)

## POWHATAN

(written in honor and memory of Chris Torrance – poet and expander of possibilities – and written on and from the ancestral, traditional lands of the Powhatan Confederacy, specifically the Chesapeake, Lumbee, and Nansemond peoples.)

*["pa-pah-pow-pow-Pow..."]* Powhatan.

*"Powa-tan."*

a man  
and his people.

a man  
a chief  
his rank  
and the people.

a confederacy  
of peoples.

the language  
of these peoples.

a man  
a river  
and a village on its bank

all Powhatan by name  
all Powhatan by nature  
all power  
to the peoples.

\*

Powhatan the language  
or Virginia Algonquian.

Powhatan the village  
at, and meaning:  
'The Falls of the River'

home to the man  
named Wahunsenacawh  
or Wahunsonacock  
whom the settlers called  
Powhatan  
or 'The Powhatan'  
(the Mamanatowick  
or Paramount Chief  
the Chief of Chiefs  
of all Powhatan peoples).

Powhatan the village  
or Paqwachowng  
believed to now be

the contemporary neighborhood  
of Powhatan Hill  
in Richmond, Virginia  
the present Commonwealth's capital  
and seat of power.

Powhatan the river  
that flowed by the village  
that housed the man  
and the language

Powhatan the river  
which white settlers  
renamed for their king  
(the still-named James River)

that runs  
as rapids  
south-east  
to the Chesapeake  
via  
Powhatan Creek  
Jamestown  
Newport News  
Hampton Roads Harbor

where it joins  
the Elizabeth River  
named for James' daughter

and mixes with the waters  
of the independent city

of Norfolk – “Gnaw-Fuck”  
and the coal port at Lamberts Point  
at the southern end  
of Powhatan Avenue.

where the Norfolk Southern Railway  
and its dual surge silos  
dump coal, coke, and iron ore  
at a rate of  
48 million tons a year  
8,000 tons per hour  
day or night  
often night  
into vessels of various  
deadweights and displacement  
from capesize ships to coastwise barges

the cost of which  
depends upon  
the monthly price of  
West Texas Intermediate Crude Oil  
as published in  
*The Wall Street Journal*.

the cost of coal  
the cost of movement  
but not  
the cost to the lands  
the cost to the peoples.

\*

coal and coke  
coal and coke  
iron ore and coke screenings  
coke breeze and dust  
railed here through the docking yards  
of Bluefield, West Virginia  
and the Flat Top-Pocahontas coalfield  
where the Polish, Hungarians, Germans, and Welsh  
did, did, did the digging  
did the drilling.

(the coalfield named for local features:  
'Flat Top' for the sugar-loaf mountain  
'Pocahontas' for the town  
named for Powhatan's daughter.)

from Pocahontas to Powhatan  
favored daughter to father  
coalfield to avenue:

the first coal cars  
to travel 400 miles east  
state line to Chesapeake coast  
arrived March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1883  
40,000 tons of coal given free  
to be distributed by the city mayor  
to the people of Norfolk

*'I was just plain excited the day it did arrive  
and could hardly settle down to do anything intelligently;  
finally we heard the locomotive whistle down the line,  
and I assure you no operatic music ever thrilled me*

*as that sound did....'*

(Mrs. Harriet Eliza Lathrop  
mine superintendent's wife.)

a band, flags, and 'curious individuals'  
greeted the train  
its free coal  
and future  
capitalist gains.

\*

Norfolk.

Powhatan Avenue  
and Lamberts Point:

*'The largest  
and fastest  
coal-loading pier  
in  
The Northern Hemisphere.'*

compressed  
prehistoric forest  
carbonaceous power  
and mineral wealth

dumped here  
for  
maritime maneuvers

the carrying of

the under-earth

over water.

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