

## INTRODUCTION

On 20 December 1606, three ships, containing settlers for ‘Virginia’ with their baggage and sailing under the auspices of the Virginia Company, chartered in London for this purpose, shipped anchor in the Thames. After weathering ‘many crosses in the downes from tempests,’ they crossed the Atlantic Ocean, arriving in Chesapeake Bay in the middle of the following April where, after some consideration, they established themselves at a site on an island in the James River.<sup>1</sup>

As every proverbial American schoolchild knows, the Jamestown pioneers endured years of misery, suffering bouts of dysentery, as well as harassment from the neighbouring ‘Indians,’ while they squabbled incessantly amongst themselves. They also failed to find either mines from which to extract precious metals or a quick ‘Northwest Passage’ to the lucrative East Asian trade, preoccupations which prevented them from growing the crops necessary to sustain themselves. Only the reform programme implemented by the heroic Captain John Smith – at least, according to Smith’s own account – saved the colony. Even so, a further ‘starving time’ rendered its situation precarious after Smith’s departure: the survivors of the desperate first years had packed up to return to England when a relief ship and a new governor, Thomas West, Lord de la Ware, arrived in 1611. In the meantime, the Virginia Company manned the public relations pumps against the flood of derogatory reports generated at home by disgruntled colonists and other naysayers as they sought to keep their endeavour afloat.

Subsequently, matters became easier: the famous marriage between John Rolfe, a leading Virginian, and the Powhatan ‘princess,’ Pocahontas, stabilized relations with her father and Rolfe’s equally famous introduction of tobacco cultivation provided the English with the all-important ‘staple crop’ which generated a ‘boom’ as hundreds of people made their way to Virginia. In addition, some time before 1619, the first Africans arrived at Jamestown thereby facilitating the introduction of the transatlantic system of slavery to the Chesapeake region.

The influx of white migrants, however, created headaches in the form of further antagonism from their indigenous neighbours, who attacked the colony in 1622 killing a quarter of the inhabitants, and overcrowding, which made it

difficult to feed the 'sot-weed'-crazed colonists. These difficulties added fuel to bickering within the management of the Virginia Company, prompting the royal takeover of the colony in 1624. Yet, despite these difficulties and continued concerns about the possible effects of Virginia's overdependence on tobacco, the end of the 'company period' saw the English presence along Chesapeake Bay permanently established.<sup>2</sup>

So reads the seemingly well-known narrative of the early history of Virginia. As one of the first examples of English overseas colonization, there can be no question that it provides a profound example for our understanding of the development of the British Empire as well as of Anglo-American colonies. The chronological primacy of the first permanent English settlement in North America moved the study of Jamestown to privileged historiographical ground for students of United States history during the nineteenth century and it has remained there ever since. This privilege arises naturally from the important, perhaps fundamental, cultural links – language, most importantly – and the 'special relationship' which continues to exist between Great Britain (for which read 'England', customarily) and the United States. These links, in turn, have generated analyses of the connections as manifestations of 'modernization'. This term has incorporated a variety of intertwined phenomena and perspectives, including, most notably, colonization, empire and 'state formation'. Invariably, though, authorial conceptions of the character of 'liberty', including the place of the United States in the history of that concept, both domestically and generally, have occupied a place very close to centre stage in these reflections.

In the first instance, from the period preceding the American Civil War until the 1960s, Virginia constituted the chronological ace in the sectional struggle with adherents of New England over the 'origins' of American society and the cultural attributes which Great Britain bequeathed to the thirteen colonies which won their independence from it in 1783. This self-consciously Whiggish view attempted to place early American history within a wider context of the progress of Anglo-American liberty and, so, trumpeted such 'achievements' as the creation of the Virginia House of Burgesses, the first representative assembly in the 'New World'. It also lauded, particularly, the yeoman-adventurer persona of Captain Smith as the prototype of the American character against the rival claims made by 'Yankees' on behalf of the 'Pilgrim Fathers' and 'Puritans' as the progenitors of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

This debate over the 'origins' – and, thus, the essence – of American society received a famous fillip in 1893, when the young Frederick Jackson Turner famously lamented the demise of the catalyst role of the 'frontier' (as defined by the United States Bureau of the Census) in the development of American society. While Turner never wrote on early Virginia, his preference for 'the West' and his corresponding view of purportedly self-sufficient yeomanry operating as

the vanguard of a civilization advancing across the continent provided the characterization of a distinct, even unique, American nation which has resonated most profoundly. Moreover, it set out the frame for subsequent considerations of United States history in terms of the degree of the distinctiveness of that history and of the society which spawned it.<sup>4</sup>

The post-World War II generation of American historians, many of whom entered the profession during the period of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, moved away from these celebratory views. Instead, these scholars placed a greater emphasis on 'history from the bottom up' (known at the time as the 'new social history') and the contributions of women, people of African descent and others previously ignored by historiography. According to the investigations of the element of this group which formed a 'Chesapeake school', colonial society in the region surrounding Chesapeake Bay underwent a series of phases en route to 'modernity'. In the first decades of English settlement, according to this scholarship, the relatively egalitarian character of the early population coupled with a keen desire for advancement and the exigencies of frontier life, exacerbated by the reality of routine premature death, created a rough-and-tumble socio-political environment in which only the fittest prospered, tobacco became the be-all and end-all, and a bizarre form of the metropolitan social structure developed. By 1660, however, the population had settled to the degree that a recognizable elite had emerged and enslavement of Africans had become part of the 'success' equation. After the convulsions of Bacon's Rebellion (1676) and, in Maryland, the 'Glorious Revolution' (1688–9), the membership of the colonial elites became further entrenched and, in accord with their counterparts in other colonies, copied, as best as they could, the behaviour and characteristics of the metropolitan aristocracy; they became increasingly 'anglicized'.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, practitioners of 'Atlantic history', apparently in line with the emergence of post-modernist perspectives in other disciplines and with the break-up of the Soviet Union after 1989, have proclaimed their intentions to move away from a reliance on the nation-state as a basis of historical inquiry. This perspective has proved eminently adaptable to the study of the early modern English Empire as an increasing number of treatments have endeavoured to situate the English settlement of North America within the wider context of an 'Atlantic World'. In general terms, the pupils in this new school stress the importance of the commercial and social links – generated by the unprecedented movement of people and commodities during the early modern period, especially among the various English colonies and between those colonies and other European-American settlements, as well as Africa and Europe – as a key element in the development of 'modernity'.

From this perspective (like that of contemporaries), the establishment of Jamestown holds no great import in and of itself. Indeed, the arrival of the Eng-

lish in the Chesapeake, so far from providing the platform for the creation of the United States, constitutes ‘an almost trivial event’, a small tributary of ‘a migratory stream that was altering the four continents bordering the ocean.’ A proper appreciation of its significance, instead, arises from considering it within a wider ‘Atlantic’ context of activity in Africa and South America, as well as North America and Europe. Led by a vanguard of ‘cosmopolitans’ or ‘boundary-crossers’ – merchants, interpreters and others travellers to exotic parts – the expansion of early modern European interests had formed a manifestly new world in which peoples from four continents interacted. ‘By the middle of the seventeenth century’, according to a recent analysis, this movement of people

had put in motion effects that would produce much of the modern world as we know it today – a Western Hemisphere in which most people speak European languages; an African diaspora that has spread across the Americas and, to a lesser extent, Europe; a drastically reduced Native American population that has survived through cultural adjustment; and a global market that circulates goods around the world.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, while this body of work avowedly eschews a national perspective, it maintains, ironically, the age-old presumption that the formation of colonial worlds resulted in inherent and fundamental socio-political novelties. In a related sense, to what degree does the present-day quest to find the origins of a global, diverse, modern world (and the place of English-speaking people in it) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries differ from the old Turnerian search for the origins and catalyst of American society? The nature of both enquiries has privileged the modern outcome and even, despite the cautions presented by the horrors of transatlantic slavery and the decimation of American Indian populations noted by the most recent generations of historians, a sense of progress.<sup>7</sup>

This enduring whiff of Whiggishness has meant an enduring obscurity of the nature of colonization and empire during what we call today the early modern period. In the first instance, in the English case, it shrouds the important links that were maintained between the ‘Old World’ and its Anglo-American offspring, especially their cultural and political aspects. This tendency arises from the tendency of ‘Atlanticists’ – shared, again ironically, with their predecessors – to regard the phenomena they study, especially prior to 1760, as one-way traffic westward, whether in terms of the ‘Atlantic basin’ as a whole (‘circum-Atlantic history’, as David Armitage has styled it), comparatively (‘trans-Atlantic history’) or in terms of situating ‘particular places within their more general Atlantic context’ (‘cis-Atlantic history’). Thus, while they have pointedly eschewed the old-fashioned national perspective, this new perspective has found it difficult to shed the enduring desire to comprehend the role of the English settlement of the future United States as an important part of a fundamentally distinctive modernizing process.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, according to an 'Atlantic' account of Jamestown released in conjunction with the 400th anniversary of its founding, 'the first permanent English settlement in the territory that would become the United States' constituted 'the tiny seed from which would grow a powerful nation where all the world's people would mingle'. This seed came to flourish through 'trial and error – and error often predominated' employed by the settlers, a number of whom 'had had experience of other Atlantic and Mediterranean regions before they came together on the James River', over a decade or so after 1607. In doing so, the emerging society overthrew the 'hierarchical arrangements' devised by the Virginia Company, which had also conceived 'notoriously unrealizable goals' for its colony. The 'improvisation, undertaken by ordinary people' with the people and the land they found, created 'the outlines of genuinely American society, with all its virtues and defects' and made 'elites nervous' as they 'set about the task of building families and family farms' – a characterization with which the Progressive historian Turner would have readily concurred.<sup>9</sup>

The shadow of another eminent Victorian also still hovers over the counterpart of colonial British America, the early history of the Anglo-British Empire. Five years before Turner's appearance at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, Sir J. R. Seeley declared that the British Empire was founded in a 'fit of absent-mindedness'.<sup>10</sup> Even today, historians of the early modern English state offer their considerations (in which the expansion of its 'empire' during the seventeenth century, of course, played a part) in terms of Seeley's characterization of an essentially accidental empire. They do so even as they have struggled to come to terms with a revamped understanding of the social and political world over which the Tudor and Stuart monarchs ruled. At the same time, the Whiggish/Marxist 'high road' to the English Civil Wars, culminating in the triumph of 'liberty' or of the bourgeoisie (depending on one's point of view), which was first laid coincidentally with Turner's construction in the United States, has undergone substantial revision and post-revision. These investigations have yielded a re-evaluation of the meaning of 'liberty' to contemporaries, a more nuanced understanding of the powers and limits of early modern English government, and a greater appreciation of the importance of politics and religion to this history.<sup>11</sup>

The most cogent of these analyses have sought to reconcile the apparent indifference towards overseas empire on the part of the early Stuarts with the reality that English overseas interests rapidly expanded during their reigns, while the Anglo-British state, like its peers, became increasingly modernized. According to Michael Braddick, the growth of English long-distance trade and colonization accompanied a halting but inexorable seventeenth-century 'state formation' – the increasing manifestation and centralization of state functions accompanied by the acquisition and control of those functions for political advancement. In the case of Anglo-American colonies, elites 'had vested interests which could

be protected by crown authority, and mutualities of interest with the metropolitan authority'. Thus, the manner of development for these places both 'shored up the interests of developing local elites' and 'bore considerable similarities to the activities of the patriarchal state in England. None the less, these developments took place within the shell of a developing fiscal-military empire, the interests of which overrode the interests of particular colonies'. This scenario, in turn, gave rise to 'a potential tension between the interests that bound local elites to the crown and the autonomous interests of the state'.<sup>12</sup>

Chartered companies, especially of the joint-stock variety, proved particularly popular mechanisms for engineering overseas trade and colonization between 1550 and 1640. Their structure helped minimize the huge risks involved and they provided a banner under which English interests could rally against foreign rivals, while the issuance of a royal charter granted these entities quasi-governmental functions, such as recruiting settlers and building fortifications. Their nature also removed the financial burdens necessarily incurred in these activities from the shoulders of the Crown while providing spearheads for involvement in areas from Russia to the Moluccas to the Gold Coast to Hudson's Bay to Virginia. In the latter case, however, divisions within the company, compounded by its indebtedness and continuing 'reports of hardship and disorder', punctuated by the 1622 Indian attack on the colony, led to a royal takeover: 'This confirmed the emerging consensus, that these settlements represented an extension of the English polity'; this consensus, partly, 'was the product of sentiment in the colonies themselves'.<sup>13</sup>

In order to ascertain the character of this imperial meeting of the minds in the North American case, Braddick has relied on the scholarship of the Chesapeake noted above. He notes that, as colonial societies matured, they turned to 'Old World' governmental and social examples, 'not [as] a survival of the presumptions of the original settlers but a product of later mimesis, as complex societies sought models for their political and social order'. The colonists also 'drew upon diverse local experiences and responded to conditions with which they were not necessarily familiar', such as slavery and demographic diversity, but primarily relied upon the importation of English law and governmental institutions as well as a presumption of the superiority of patriarchal authority. In the Chesapeake, where 'the imbalance in the sex ratio, high mortality rates and dispersed settlement made patriarchal authority more difficult to attain than in' New England, 'individualism and competition' resulted. While a self-conscious provincial elite emerged in Virginia and Maryland 'by the early eighteenth century', the imperial state, after 1640, 'accelerated' its direct involvement in the colonies.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the appearance of a recognizable English imperial ideology (at least *ex post facto*) – based upon the expansion of Protestantism (despite the vagueness of the term to contemporaries) and free maritime trade – became

evident through the work of writers such as John Dee, the younger Richard Hakluyt and Captain John Smith. These efforts, according to Armitage, provided the intellectual impetus for pursuing economic and political advancement in faraway places during the Tudor-Stuart period, although they began to bear their fullest fruit after 1730.<sup>15</sup>

The book you are about to read constitutes a different sort of attempt to bridge the histories of early modern England and 'colonial British America' and so improve access to our understanding of both subjects. It does adopt an 'Atlantic' view of what happened in the early English Chesapeake since a proper comprehension of the significance of this subject can only come from a transatlantic context and perspective. It does not, however, pursue an investigation related to the emergence of an 'Atlantic World'; not only because contemporaries remained wholly unaware of this concept, but because most early modern Europeans did adhere to their own sense of nationhood and abhorred those, such as the Jesuits, who they found blurring political and cultural boundaries. Nor does it seek to place American colonization within the context of the history of 'modernity'. Instead, this book adopts an unfashionable 'national' perspective in order both to provide clearer insights of what transpired in what passed for the English Empire during the first half of the seventeenth century and to enable the use of the English case for comparison with others. In doing so, it situates the expansion of English interests overseas within the context of medieval and early modern English social and political history, as sketched in Chapter 1 below.

Of course, some of the English people who spent considerable time with other societies, notably John Smith and John Pory, actively participated in the Virginia Company; naturally, their colleagues – persons with deep mercantile and political experience – drew upon their knowledge. Equally obviously, Jamestown's indigenous neighbours had profound effects on the early history of Virginia. And, of course, as others have observed, English people living in a 'New World' necessarily had to adapt to rather different social and environmental realities from the situations they had left.<sup>16</sup> Most famously, they lacked an aristocracy as those few members of the armigerous order who ventured to Jamestown, such as George Percy, eighth son of the eighth Earl of Northumberland, returned to England. Moreover, this group received the scorn of Captain Smith both for their alleged failure to govern the colony properly and for their refusal to contribute to the production of food. The absence of this customary leadership created a vacuum into which the aspiring Jacobean could and did step – often over each other – in assuming prominence in this colonial backwater.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, however, for all of the novel environmental circumstances that early English migrants encountered in the Chesapeake, they ultimately retained – and successfully applied to their new surroundings – an 'Old World'

sensibility of how society and politics were supposed to operate, as Braddick, for one, has noted. Indeed, ‘modernization’, if it did come, came hard: the socio-political understanding of colonists shared the same belief in a hierarchy based upon landed income as the best means of ordering society, a system of reciprocity which required the cultivation of patronage links through deference to ‘superiors’ and condescension towards ‘inferiors’, and a keen sense of locality, especially in terms of local administration and in negotiation with the central government with their counterparts in England.<sup>18</sup>

This sensibility also included a long history of fierce factional jockeying for political, religious and economic advancement. Thus, as Braddick and others have also observed, while distinguishing socio-cultural traits certainly developed out of necessity and contingency in Virginia, to regard the colony as the platform from which sprang something fundamentally new and improved – not to mention exceptional – means to look, anachronistically, for something that did not exist in the first part of the seventeenth century. Again perhaps paradoxically, the mechanism for socio-political change (if not ‘modernization’) came to a manifest degree from within the shared political culture through the pursuit of advantage on both sides of, as well as across, the Atlantic Ocean. *The English Empire in America* contends, however, that this shared political culture not only came to exist at a later point in Anglo-American colonial history; it came into existence very early in the history of the Jamestown settlement. Correspondingly, ‘anglicization’ never needed to take place as those who assumed control of the colony and its offshoots always maintained a metropolitan orientation.

Thus, this volume, first, casts aside the inherently teleological preconceptions that have, by extension, remained embedded in discussions of ‘origins’, especially, in the debate over Anglo-American ‘exceptionalism’. Instead, it widens the chronological context from which Anglo-American settlement arose. In Chapter 2, it concentrates on those in the metropolis who became interested in colonization, who amassed the necessary political and economic capital to support overseas settlement, who provided the ready socio-political model for their colonists, and who had to overcome the doubts which were raised about their endeavours. ‘Peopling’ entailed far more than pioneering and interacting with indigenous neighbours: without the continuing willingness of investors to undertake the significant risks and costs of colonization and pay the settlement freight, Hakluyt, Smith and the rest of the ‘Jamestown project’ would constitute little more than historical footnotes. Not coincidentally, what we can glean – largely from the promotional pamphlets which the Virginia Company generated – about the motives for migration suggests that both colonizers and would-be colonists identified the ‘wilderness’ and American ‘opportunities’ largely in terms of landed estates, which remained the benchmark for socio-political status on both sides of the Atlantic.

In a related vein, this book offers a reassessment of the management of the Virginia Company, which has generally attracted opprobrium practically since its first fleet landed. On the face of things, the undoubted misery of succeeding waves of settlers, the inability to sort out relations with the Indians, the colony's subsequent addiction to tobacco, and the ultimate dissolution of the corporate entity itself make a lengthy list of serious charges to answer. Underpinning them lies the belief that the merchants, such as Sir Thomas Smythe who led it until 1618, the gentry, such as Sir Edwin Sandys who oversaw the affairs of the company from that point until its dissolution, and their aristocratic patrons, such as Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, did not make adequate provision for the American situation, did not devote adequate time and resources to the colony, and insisted on imposing impractical social and governmental schemes upon their settlers. Even the reforms undertaken after 1618, which included the establishment of the celebrated House of Burgesses, as well as private plantations, turned sour as the throngs of migrants the company sent arrived without adequate provisions and the colony lacked supplies to maintain them, resulting in more death and finger-pointing among the shareholders.<sup>19</sup> Indeed 1624, when the court of King's Bench dissolved the corporate charter, remains a benchmark of Virginia history.<sup>20</sup>

*The English Empire in America* thus takes the view that the absence of an aristocracy in the early Chesapeake, the dissolution of the Virginia Company and the attempt to link English overseas colonization with modernity constitute red herrings to our understanding of these imperial and colonial histories. In the first instance, as Chapter 1 discusses, English society had experienced such 'modernizing' phenomena as widespread migration and a devotion of substantial resources to commercial agriculture as far back as the thirteenth century, especially in, but by no means limited to, the Home Counties. Accompanied by continuing demographic recovery from the nadir of the Black Death of the late 1340s and the great land-grab generated by the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, these activities continued through the period of what proved to be the genesis of the English Empire in America.<sup>21</sup> This reality, however, did not signal the 'origins of English individualism', the identification of which has, in turn, provided the foundation for an influential treatment of the formation of Anglo-American colonial societies.<sup>22</sup> Rather, it manifested the history, which sometimes incorporated profound changes, of the enduring attempt in England to reconcile social order and individual behaviour.

Those who led the management of Virginia on both sides of the ocean and who constituted the real engineers of this enterprise, providing the investment and maintaining the interest in the venture in the teeth of frequent hostility, ridicule and disinterest, were products of this environment. As outlined in Chapter 4 below, in accordance with principles of good management and the character

of early modern English politics and society, the company's leaders remained willing to defer to their men in charge on the scene. Unfortunately, these realities, aggravated by the distance between London and Jamestown, entailed issues which proved insoluble. In particular, generations of colonial leadership took to cultivating patronage connections and socio-economic interests of their own, just as their 'superiors' at home did. It proved beyond the capacity of the company to compel their officers to devote their attentions to the corporate good. As a consequence, a recognizable Virginia elite emerged by 1614, as suggested by the typically paradoxical career of John Rolfe.

The name of this planter, as noted above, has long been enshrined in Jamestown lore as the spouse of Pocahontas and as the midwife of tobacco cultivation. But for all of this notoriety, we know very little about Rolfe's life, especially before his life in Virginia.<sup>23</sup> Yet, he did, of course migrate to America and, more importantly, he established the early template for Anglo-American colonial success: the acquisition of a landed estate fuelled by an exportable commodity and the formation of connections in the metropolis. He also took an active role in promoting the colony.<sup>24</sup>

The case of Rolfe also illustrates how contemporaries resolved the fundamental ambiguities inherent in the expansion of early modern English overseas interests. Colonizers – and colonists, for that matter – had to square their comprehension of proper social order in terms of phenomena which meshed uneasily with the prevailing view. Both the metropolitan reality and the colonial ideal rested on the belief in hierarchy derived from the ownership of landed estates. Yet, the migration required to build colonies was twinned, by definition, with individual initiative and opportunity, not to mention commercial activity, which seems to rest uneasily, in retrospect, with the socio-political pillars of civility and gentility erected in the sixteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Of course the distance between metropolis and colony, of which colonizers were aware and sought to manage, together with the 'wilderness' character of America, aggravated the situation. In all of England's colonies, when it suited colonial leaders to cooperate with colonizing officials such as the Virginia Company they did; when it did not, they did not; officials in London could do little to affect this scenario.<sup>26</sup>

Then, although the company's management certainly made mistakes, some very serious, over the years, and did lose its charter, a significant number of the people involved in that management remained in charge of proceedings after 'royalization' – on both sides of the Atlantic. As noted in Chapter 4, once the military situation became ensured after making peace with the Powhatans in 1614, this leadership and its successors worked together to realign Virginia into a settlement colony devoted to the production of commodities for export. Not only did this appeal to 'mercantile' thinking, of the sort espoused by Hakluyt and others; it appealed to migrants seeking the status – as well as the wealth

– generated by the income from landed estates in accordance with the prevailing norm. Correspondingly, then, the absence of contemporary intent, accompanied by the largely successful adaptation of the metropolitan socio-political system to the new, casts doubt on the degree to which we can consider Anglo-American colonization in terms of modernization. At the same time, given that England had experienced both a lengthy period of overseas empire and substantial long-haul migration prior to 1550 (and 1350), it remains unclear to what degree the British Empire constitutes a ‘modernizing’ phenomenon.<sup>27</sup>

Chapter 1 of this book, then, sets out the structure of that world – as much as can be done, in light of the continuing convulsions it endured – especially in terms of its government and society in order to provide the context from which early English overseas activity arose. Chapter 5 then analyses the attempts of the governments of James I and Charles I to imagine and effect what might be termed an ‘imperial’ policy, especially after tobacco became established as a lucrative export commodity in the Chesapeake, which the government tried to conduct in accord with private interests. The existence of these efforts, despite their tentativeness and ultimate failure, demonstrates that these monarchs and their officers, pace Seeley, did have a sense – perhaps tentative, but nevertheless, palpable – of an overseas empire and visions of how to coordinate that empire. The problem, both for contemporaries and for historiography, was that these views, along with the policies which guided them, often emerged incoherently and, so, sometimes conflicted. The ‘fiscal-military shell’, identified by Braddick, seems to have developed particularly slowly on the imperial side of things.

The record – and, therefore, predictably, the scholarship – remains preoccupied with the miserable little groups of settlers at Jamestown and its counterparts. Significantly – perhaps either because they feared neglect or because they sought to justify themselves – early colonial promoters, such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Captain John Smith – spent considerable time and energy creating tracts, ‘histories’, diaries and other documents that created a durable lens through which the light of history has continued to shine. But does this lens prevent the light from hitting more important regions of reality for our understanding of early English colonization?

In the case of Virginia, the figure of Smith has long dominated. The Captain composed three versions of his *History of Virginia* during his lifetime, which, *inter alia*, famously bemoaned the laziness of Jamestown’s gentlemen and the perfidy of the Indians. It also privileged Smith as the saviour of the settlement and the champion of Anglo-American expansion whose sound suggestions failed to register with the stubborn gentlemen-amateur incompetents who had control of the Jamestown project following his enforced departure from the colony in 1609. As the most in-depth first-person account we have of Jamestown, Smith’s *History* provides unparalleled access to the colony’s early tribulations.

And because generations of subsequent readers have identified its author – by his own account a forthright, pragmatic, ‘can-do’ leader quick to point out the shortcomings of his aristocratic ‘superiors’ – as an early American, it has also cemented the Captain’s status as a household name even today as a progenitor of American identity although those involved in Virginia scarcely noted him.

Yet, Captain John Smith, his career and *History* comprise only one, relatively unimportant, aspect of the actual history of early English colonization. For leading English colonizers, Smith and his ilk were, literally, foot soldiers in a greater game, of which empire constituted only a part: the colonizing itch developed from the frustration felt by some, both personally and philosophically, with the character of England some time around 1575. Some of these people were concerned about the refusal of Elizabeth I to marry (thereby ensuring the Tudor dynasty as well as security for the realm) and about her government’s seeming tendency to drift, especially with respect to combating the pretensions of Catholic power in France, the Netherlands and Germany; this group, in its initial incarnation, coalesced around Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Philip Sidney. Its members shared the humanist belief, tied to ‘medieval’ notions of chivalry, that true aristocrats should take direct action – act as true leaders of their society – to solve problems whenever they saw occasion to do so; their tools included literature, patronage and drama (both theatrical and personal). Thus, Sidney, Mary Wroth and others composed a battery of social critiques of the sort found nowhere else in Europe. Members of this circle cajoled Elizabeth and her ministers, notably William Cecil, Lord Burghley, to adopt a more forceful policy on behalf of the Huguenots against the Catholic League in the Wars of Religion in France, on behalf of the Dutch rebels against Spain, and against the pretensions of Mary, Queen of Scots, to the English throne. They also supported greater English colonization in Ireland and overseas.<sup>28</sup>

After Sidney’s death during a skirmish with the Spanish at Zutphen (which, predictably, transformed him into a martyr for international Protestantism), the group carried over its allegiance to Leicester’s stepson, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex. Essex maintained both a spy network on the Continent to monitor and counter the activities of ‘papists’ and a patronage network designed to promote the Essex agenda at home against Burghley, perceived as overly cautious with respect to the Catholic threat.<sup>29</sup>

But here the equation of English imperial pursuits with anti-Catholic, or even anti-Spanish, agendas becomes too simplistic: the Essex faction did not maintain a common intellectual ‘front’ outside of the perceived need for reform and to protect English national interests (although they did not use the term) against foreign plotters. Most particularly, its leader – paradoxically, given his foreign policy predilections – favoured religious toleration by the standards of

his day and so attracted those English Catholics, such as the colonizer Sir George Peckham, who accepted a Protestant monarch, to his side. Also, as a self-styled protector of the interests of the old aristocracy, Essex opposed the pretensions of perceived parvenus such as Burghley, his son, Sir Robert Cecil and Raleigh.

Although the latter supported, as Essex did, international Protestantism and colonization, his alienation from the earl's patronage and his corresponding inability to create his own network (compounded by his secret marriage to the queen's handmaiden Bess Throckmorton which enraged Elizabeth, who banished Raleigh from court) shunted his own career to an imperial cul-de-sac. Despite all of the later publicity heaped on him as the founder of Roanoke, his employment of Hakluyt as a colonial theorist, his efforts to settle Guiana and his tragic end, purportedly at the hands of the 'scheming' Count Gondomar, Raleigh failed either to generate significant state support for his colonizing activities or to establish any sort of enduring colonial model for future settlement. Instead, his legacy consists of the knowledge he and his associates gathered about America and its inhabitants and the enduring sensibility that the Spanish ambassador 'duped' the 'tyrannical' James I into carrying out the death sentence that had hung over this romantic hero following his implication in the 'Bye plot'. Raleigh's execution in 1618 came to symbolize both the struggle of 'Elizabethan adventurers' to advance the liberties purportedly manifested by Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and the fate of that struggle at the hands of perfidious Spain and a feckless king.<sup>30</sup>

While Raleigh languished in the Tower for fifteen years and then went to the block after one last Guiana fling, his great rival, Essex, despite his own execution following his failed rebellion in 1601, retained rather more significance. In the first instance, the survivors of the Essex revolt and the close relatives of others, notably Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, and Sir John Danvers, younger brother of the executed Sir Charles Danvers, carried on the Essex legacy.

Moreover, a number of members of the Essex network served as espionage agents both before and after 1601. As such, they inhabited a particularly shadowy and dangerous world, in which constantly shifting allegiances and fortunes at various levels meant advantage at one turn and ruin at the next. Serving as diplomats and soldiers in Italy, the Netherlands, in Germany, even in Hungary, and as double-agents in the English seminaries in Rouen and Louvain, they often played the tricky game of switching sides (and back again), most scandalously at the 'betrayal' of Deventer to besieging Spanish forces in 1587: some survived, received pardons and even prospered, others, such as the playwright Christopher Marlowe, who became unreliable or deemed a threat were condemned to death, while other veterans, such as Edward Maria Wingfield, Captain Smith, Peter Wynn and Sir Samuel Argall, pitched up at Jamestown after the Spanish war ended in 1604. In this era of constant plot and counter-plot, the stakes and

targets, including the hapless Scottish queen who finally fell in the same year as the Deventer betrayal, remained high.<sup>31</sup>

Chapter 2 and, in part, Chapter 3 set out what we might regard as a ‘pre-history’ of the settlement of Virginia. As they discuss, the requirements of early seventeenth-century colonization necessarily included a substantial military component. This meant, in 1606, recourse to employing men who had served in the wars in the Low Countries and/or in Ireland. The problem, then, for the Virginia Company was not so much the inexperience of its officers with the American environment or even their arrogant presumption in dealing with indigenous people. Rather, the military operations in which these men had made their careers had generated atmospheres of treachery, switching sides and plots, including the infamous handover of Deventer to besieging Habsburg forces by Sir William Stanley and the madcap attempt by Essex to seize control of the government in 1601. We find men involved in both of these events also involved in Virginia.

Their situation, however, improved somewhat when Elizabeth died in March 1603 and was succeeded by James VI of Scotland. Essex (like Robert Cecil) had been in secret correspondence with the Scottish monarch and had generated a favourable impression. Thus, when James came to the English throne he released Southampton and the other Essexians from the Tower and remitted their fines – although they remained on the margins of power. Arguably, the leadership of the faction passed, at least temporarily, to Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford (whose husband seconded Essex in his ill-advised tilt at supreme power), in the absence of viable male direction in the aftermath of the 1601 fiasco. Thus, politics became wedded to the theatre as Bedford and her associates included the leading literary figures of the day – William Shakespeare, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, John Marston, Samuel Daniel, John Donne and William Drayton – amongst their clients. A number of these pens became employed in support of views espoused by the remnant of the Essex faction, most notably in the play *Eastward Hoe!* (1605), a collaboration between Chapman, Jonson and Marston, which lampooned Scottish graspers, wastrel apprentices and also colonizers.

In the meantime, as Chapter 3 discusses, a combination, which included another old Essexian and Dutch veteran, Sir Thomas Gates, Hakluyt (whose former patron, Raleigh, had become implicated in a plot against the new king and went to the Tower at the end of 1603) and the leading London merchant Sir Thomas Smythe, had begun investing in efforts to find likely locations for a ‘Northwest Passage’, a North American version of the Mexican and Incan empires, and locations for trade with Indians. Building on the efforts of Raleigh and others, they sent a fleet under Bartholomew Gosnold to inspect the New England coast in 1602, founded one of two Virginia Companies in 1606 and undertook the settlement of the Chesapeake the following year.

The coming to England of the Stuarts presented an alternative power base to those who chafed for the chance to improve England by employing their talents for government: James's queen-consort, Anna of Denmark, left Edinburgh with intentions of making her presence known politically. Can it have been a coincidence that a number of old Essexians, including, most prominently, the Countess of Bedford, rushed north to meet their new queen on her progress?<sup>32</sup>

Anna had claimed an independent political existence in Scotland, on occasion thwarting the will of her husband, for all of his claims to authority bestowed by 'divine right'. Clearly, James moved, in conjunction with Cecil, who remained in place as chief minister, to circumscribe his wife's political movements in his new kingdom. Cecil and the leaders of the Howard family, including, especially, Henry, Earl of Northampton (the recipient of a Spanish pension), as well as Thomas, Earl of Suffolk (Northampton's brother), and Charles, Lord Howard of Effingham, the lord admiral, had allied themselves against those they regarded as dangerously anti-Spanish. All of these men, for various reasons, planned an end to the long war that had brought on attendant miseries at the end of Elizabeth's reign, a view that completely agreed with those of the new monarch, the self-styled *Rex Pacificus*. Thus, while Southampton and his fellows emerged from disgrace and threat of attainder, Raleigh went to the Tower on treason charges. At the same time, the arrival of James's friends from Scotland complicated the royal patronage mix; they assumed many of the new, plum bedchamber offices.<sup>33</sup>

The presence of these foreign favourites added insult to the injury inflicted by the continued limited access to the centre of authority for the legatees of Essex and their corresponding policy fears – the peace treaty with Spain signed in 1604, proposals for a formal union between England and Scotland, and the seemingly inordinate bestowal of royal wealth on Scottish favourites. A number of their clients, including, perhaps most significantly, the parliamentarian Sir Edwin Sandys, joined Queen Anna's council. Since until very recently, Anna has received short, if any, shrift from scholars and this organization has received scant notice as a potential locus of opposition to policies favoured by James. Yet, coincidentally or otherwise, her council included the most prominent of the spokesmen against those policies speaking even to the point that the king complained that they encroached upon his prerogative.<sup>34</sup>

By this time, the tentative connections that had existed between colonization and the Essexians during Elizabeth's time had gone into abeyance. Instead, with the Spanish war winding down – ironically given the attention paid to the anti-Spanish rhetoric of colonizing theorists such as Hakluyt – the merchants, interested in commerce in the Mediterranean, in Africa and in the East Indies and with no interest whatsoever in linking their overseas activities to a crusade against the Habsburgs, began to move to include North America in a new, related zone of commerce: interest in finding a 'Northwest Passage' to East Asia

remained keen, the fishing off of the North Atlantic coast remained exceedingly promising, and trade with the indigenous inhabitants might, in itself, prove profitable. In 1602, a group of Londoners, led by Smythe, who as the lord mayor of London had famously turned Essex away from his door the previous year, sponsored the exploratory voyage of George Weymouth in order to identify likely locations for bases for trade.

Weymouth identified Chesapeake Bay, which was supposed to have been the location of the Roanoke colony in 1585, as promising on all fronts: money-making constituted the only spur to investigations of remote places here. From the point of view of the Essex relicts, however, this sort of activity demonstrated the fundamental problems with English society under its new monarch. Instead of vigorously pursuing and defending the nation's interests abroad, especially against the Spanish 'menace', the government lavished power, office and wealth on dubious companions of the monarch and granted perquisite privileges to those unwilling to defend the interests of the realm. This, in turn, created a serious financial shortfall that obliged James's ministers to seek various dubious means, from collecting impositions without parliamentary approval to selling baronetcies, in order to maintain solvency. Not only did these expedencies put kingly government in a poor light; they caused all sorts of social disruption as people of 'inferior' backgrounds – 'ordinary' or otherwise – sought to take advantage and move into the aristocracy by dint solely of their ability to pay. This, of course, debased the old aristocracy and the noble values that the late Earl of Essex, for one, had regarded as crucial to the national interest – and they made their displeasure known as well as they could from the political sidelines.

Yet, as Chapter 4 notes, this situation became transformed after 1616 when the queen, in conjunction with Southampton and other allies, seized the chance provided by the erratic behaviour of James's incumbent favourite, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset. They ingratiated a replacement, George Villiers, whom they used to orchestrate the eclipse of Carr's Howard in-laws and manoeuvred themselves, temporarily as it proved, into power. At the same time, Southampton and his clients took over the management of the Virginia Company, with Sandys taking the leading part and his own clients, brothers John and Nicholas Ferrar, assuming the day-to-day management. Famously, the 'new broom' swept away Smythe's philosophy that the company's interests should remain paramount; the Southampton-Sandys-Ferrar regime astutely realized that the local interests on the ground should have primacy. This attitude sat better both with contemporary socio-political views and the realities of imperial administration and, thus, they created a 'little parliament' for the colony.<sup>35</sup>

In conjunction with these developments, the leading Virginia planter, John Rolfe, famously married the 'Indian princess', Pocahontas (daughter of Wahunsonacock, the sachem of the neighbouring Powhatan people), and successfully

introduced tobacco cultivation at Jamestown. The former act ended the series of wars between English and Indians that had begun in 1609. Rolfe brought his bride to England where she was introduced to the court at, as it happens, the masque at which Villiers met the king. The tour of the 'American' couple generated renewed attention in Virginia and, coupled with the news of tobacco, prompted a successful recapitalization of the Virginia Company. Given the historical links of this group, we can postulate that something more than profit became included in their thinking about colonization. At the same time, public jibes against colonization and social climbing, tellingly, ceased.

With new corporate resources in hand, together with peace with the Indians, and a staple crop offering a substantial incentive for crossing the Atlantic, the Southampton-Sandys-Ferrar organization recruited an unprecedented number of migrants for Virginia. Unfortunately, they became victims of their own success: the Crown, always keen to find new revenue streams, quickly became interested in devising a means of controlling the tobacco trade; the encroachments made by the new settlers rekindled tensions with the Powhatans, who attacked the colony in 1622 killing over a quarter of the inhabitants; and another faction involved in the Virginia Company, led by Robert Rich, second Earl of Warwick, alleged malfeasance by Sandys in their attempt to wrest control of the enterprise. The ensuing struggle, discussed in Chapter 5, only came to an end when the Crown intervened in 1624, filing a writ of *quo warranto* which abrogated the company's charter and placed Virginia under royal government, although this was envisioned as a temporary move, at least initially. The Southampton group exacted a measure of revenge by leading the successful fight in the parliament of 1624 to impeach the lord treasurer, Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, who had led the government's fight to establish a contract for the collection of the customs revenue.

As noted above, the royal takeover – invariably regarded as the beginning of a new epoch of Virginia history following the 'mismanagement' of the company era – did not constitute a break with what had transpired previously, as Chapter 5 also relates. In the first instance, although Nicholas Ferrar retired to the religious retreat they founded at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, and Sandys became a victim of poor health, many of the key figures remained on the scene and assumed even greater prominence.

These included Edward Sackville, fourth Earl of Dorset, who had joined the Virginia Company board as early as 1620 and who led the commission of enquiry appointed by James I following the 'massacre'. Such familiar names as the London merchants Sir John Wolstenholme and Sir John Zouch and the colonial planters William Claiborne (a client of Sandys who arrived in the colony in 1621), Samuel Mathews and Sir Francis Wyatt (a once and future governor) affiliated themselves with Dorset. Subsequently, the earl headed the

government committee charged with colonial matters in the 1630s. By virtue of their respective positions, these understudied individuals – sometimes in combination, sometimes not – came to control the socio-political character of the colony. Most particularly, they succeeded in ‘thrusting out’ the governor, Sir John Harvey, in 1635.

The case of Harvey, who had also participated in the post-‘massacre’ investigation, provides another acute example both of how politics worked in the early English Empire. It also demonstrates how the 1632 granting of the Maryland patent to George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, became the focus of transatlantic political activity. Baltimore’s proprietorship incorporated territory that the Crown had granted to the Virginia Company. By this time, operating under the presumption that Virginia still had claim to the company land, notwithstanding the *quo warranto*, Claiborne and Mathews, as part of their transatlantic (including an African component) venture with the London merchants William Clobery and Maurice Thompson, had established a lucrative trading post at Kent Island in Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately for the Virginians, Whitehall ignored their enterprise and included the island in ‘Maryland’ and the next twenty-five years saw a running battle between Baltimore’s successors and Claiborne and Mathews. Harvey, who mistakenly believed his royal commission would trump any opposition, became a victim of this strife when he offered assistance to the Marylanders: an outraged Claiborne used his metropolitan contacts to outflank and embarrass the governor.<sup>36</sup>

These contacts, notably Dorset, Wolstenholme and Zouch, supported Claiborne because they shared a desire to promote Virginia, especially by extending its boundaries – a dream with which Maryland, on its face, interfered. Since the subjects of Charles I, like all early modern ‘projectors’, did not differentiate between ‘private’ and ‘public’ interest, their personal interests in the colony naturally dovetailed with this particular ‘imperial’ view. At the same time, however, serious disagreement existed over the prospect of a resurrection for the Virginia Company. As late as 1640, George Sandys, brother of the now-deceased Sir Edwin, petitioned the Long Parliament for a restoration of the company and its rights. Alarmed that this plan threatened their land titles (and, possibly, their autonomy), the planters responded with counter-petitions to both parliament and to Charles I at York at what proved to be the onset of the civil wars.

Thus, a paradoxical concept of ‘imperialism’ came to the forefront in Virginia by the mid-1630s: on the one hand, various colonists, backed by important figures in the metropolis, and proprietors from England, pursued expansionist schemes (not always in accord) both to the north and south of Virginia. In doing so, they encountered posts established by the Dutch and Swedes in the Delaware, which, in English eyes, violated their North American claims and so required removal. The Dutch presence at New Amsterdam, however, constituted less of a

thorn – at least for Virginians – since it provided a base for the smugglers who helped keep up the price of tobacco. On the other hand, these ventures made no pretence of advancing the interests of the English state. Some of them, like Baltimore's and Sir Robert Heath's contemporaneous grant to 'Carolana', did arise from a charter granted by the Crown; but Sir Edmund Plowden's patent to 'New Albion' (near present-day Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) came from the government of Ireland, while the efforts of a group from New Haven which attempted to settle in the same area had no greater official sanction.

The history of New Albion, moreover, provides a further demonstration of the shifting sands of early English 'imperialism'. To a greater degree than its counterparts, the English government prior to 1649 conducted its foreign and, by extension, imperial policy on a decentralized basis. Monarchs could and did involve themselves, as in the case of the dissolution of the Virginia Company, the granting of Maryland to Lord Baltimore or the grant of the tobacco receivership to the diplomat Sir William Boswell and the Huguenot gentleman Pierre de Licques. While Dorset and his transatlantic cohort worked out the socio-political character of Virginia, Plowden pursued colonization as a means of demonstrating Roman Catholic loyalty to the English state. Although the Privy Council at Whitehall never endorsed his patent, he received some support, notably a patent under the seals of the kingdom of Ireland, within the political nation from those, such as Sir Thomas Wentworth, the lord deputy in Dublin, who favoured an anti-Dutch foreign policy and saw New Albion as a means both of combating the mercantile activities of the Dutch Republic and of putting added pressure on New Netherland. After overcoming Claiborne's initial reservations, Sir Edmund finally moved to take up his patent, but found the Swedish colony on the Delaware too strong to dislodge.

This largely periphery-driven pursuit of 'empire' continued naturally as the imperial centre collapsed with the outbreak of civil war in August 1642, as set out in Chapter 6. Plowden and the New Haven colony made efforts along the Delaware River and some Independents from Bermuda tried colonizing Eleuthera in the Bahamas in 1647. At the same time, Claiborne, Mathews and their allies, especially one Captain Richard Ingle, used the hostilities to resume their personal offensive on Maryland: a miniature civil war and a barrage of pamphlets from both Virginians and supporters of the Calverts broke out. After the Battle of Dunbar (1651) eliminated the royalist threat in Britain, the central government began to catch up, passing the first Navigation Acts in 1651 in an effort to curb Dutch smugglers. Virginia governor Sir William Berkeley, in conjunction with John Ferrar and others in England, continued the promotion of Virginia's southerly expansion.

The expulsion of the Rump Parliament in 1653 ended the English dalliance with republicanism in favour of the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. For the first time, an English government – thanks, ironically, to the demise of the mon-

archy – possessed both the means and the will to carry out an imperial policy fighting wars against both the United Provinces (1652–4) and Spain (1655), the latter marking the first time England had sent a force to attack an overseas target (Santo Domingo). The disappointing results it achieved, however, revealed that, having developed a clearer and more ambitious sense of its reach, the government's grasp remained relatively stunted.

At the same time, the Protector's regime, despite the continued lobbying of Claiborne and Mathews, upheld the legality of the Maryland patent and ended Virginia's northerly pretensions in 1658, although an aged Claiborne made one final appeal for 'justice' to Charles II, practically from his deathbed, following Bacon's Rebellion eighteen years later.<sup>37</sup> The Calvert triumph in this desperate struggle removed a festering sore in Anglo-American settlement and laid out a clearer line demarcating imperial authority. As with the Cromwellian 'Great Western Design' against the Spanish West Indies, this result illustrated the practical limits on 'imperial authority' even after the mid-point of the seventeenth century. While Whitehall did make the final adjudication, it did so to resolve a provincial battle and at local behest; the Marylanders made the better case and, unlike Harvey two decades previously, had better connections than their Virginia enemies did. Correspondingly, despite creeping 'state formation', the English state continued to delegate, in practice and ambiguously, primary responsibility for colonial affairs to colonists, in accordance with understood practice within the metropolis itself.

At the same time, through colonial success stories, such as Rolfe, Claiborne and Berkeley, the royal appointee who became a dominant figure on the colonial scene between 1642 and 1676, a metropolitan-style elite both became quickly entrenched in the Chesapeake and integrated into an imperial version of the preferred socio-political pyramid. These men understood the importance of currying metropolitan links to establishing and maintaining their positions. This cultivation, however, never came at the expense of local connections, interests and identity. Thus, through the combination of their socio-political cosmology and the character of their state (compounded by the disruptions of the civil wars), the English, on both sides of the Atlantic, manufactured an imperial sensibility in the seventeenth century which had a particularly local emphasis and, correspondingly, maintained a relatively underdeveloped imperial apparatus.<sup>38</sup>