Introduction

In 1614, the lawyer and wit Richard Martin approached the bar in Parliament to deliver a humbling apology. Martin had given members of the House of Commons something of a history lesson, speaking at length of recent geographical discoveries, notions of conquest, previous European colonial efforts, the failed English settlement on Roanoke, and the means through which Virginia might strengthen the English foothold in the Atlantic. What most displeased the Members of Parliament (MPs), however, was not his detailed account of colonization but the ease with which he had slipped into discussing other matters of state. Martin’s speech fluctuated away from and then ‘fell in again, as it were [to] the Council of Virginia’, speaking ‘as a School-master, to teach his Scholars’. Colonial supporters from the House of Lords who had accompanied Martin to the Commons were livid. Among clamours for Martin to kneel to deliver his apology, the barrister Francis Ashley maintained that although at fault, Martin ‘had his Heart sound and intire’, and his ‘Love of the State [was] great’.

Martin’s defence of Virginia and subsequent digression offer a glimpse into the entangled nature of early colonial interests in Jacobean London, and into the intensely interpersonal environment in which these projects occurred. Martin’s behaviour risked damaging the Virginia Company’s efforts – and, by extension, the honour and standing of its elite shareholders who were deeply committed to the enterprise. When members of the Virginia Company were asked to leave the chamber while the Commons deliberated Martin’s punishment, the lawyer Christopher Brooke refused, ‘this being a mixed action’ that could not be neatly divided between the integrity of the Lower House and Virginian affairs. The
outcome of the incident is also revealing. Contrary to fears, Martin’s transgression seems not to have damaged colonial support. The speaker of the House of Commons reiterated that Martin had ‘done himself much Right in the Beginning’, and that the ‘Remembrances of the Plantation [were] well accepted, and looked upon with the Eyes of our Love’.5

Increasingly, the colonial endorsement of gentlemen and their ‘love of the state’ became difficult to pick apart. In the space of some forty years, from unsuccessful efforts to colonize Roanoke in the mid-1580s to the creation of a royal Virginia in 1624, America, to the English, went from a terra incognita to an integrated component of early seventeenth-century political culture. This book examines how and why this happened, integrating America into the politics and social lives of Jacobean gentlemen and arguing that demonstrations of their civility were increasingly contingent on participating in the colonial. This challenges long-standing assumptions that gentlemen had little interest in the Atlantic prior to larger-scale migration during the reign of Charles I and the civil wars, and establishes a fundamental connection between the proclaimed desire to ‘civilize’ other peoples and changing notions of civility and refinement in London itself. The civilizing project that the English extended to America did more than stimulate colonization in the Atlantic: it created the foundations of an imperial polity at home.

Scholars of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries have long considered the impact of empire on London, acknowledging that questions over the burdens, responsibilities, and economic potential of empire informed how the English understood themselves as a nation and how they conceived of their place in the wider world. Historians, writes Catherine Hall, ‘need to open up national history and imperial history, challenging that binary and critically scrutinizing the ways in which it has functioned as a way of normalizing power relations and erasing dependence on and exploitation of others’.6 In Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism, the American historian Jack P. Greene admits that although he sought to shed light on developments in the Atlantic outside the imperial centre, de-centred approaches could at times distract from the fact that metropolitan policy-makers were not just implicated in imperial intervention but often ‘the principal agents of it’.7

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5 Ibid.
Introduction

Many studies of early seventeenth-century English politics have nonetheless kept national and imperial histories separate. Statesmen in Jacobean London are often seen as thinking about and acting on others while remaining untouched by those they sought to colonize. The Jamestown colony under James I is seen as having little or no significance at the time, dwarfed by English travels to a multitude of territories around the world. Until Oliver Cromwell’s Western Design and the rapid economic growth of English plantations in the Caribbean, English colonization is often considered peripheral to political practice, lacking a unified vision or coherent ideology. The result has been that fundamental issues about the cost and consequences of creating an imperial polity have remained muted in studies of English socio-political history. American and colonial scholars have examined the complex relationships between peoples, groups, and institutions on the ground, while global history has opened up remarkable studies on the cross-cultural encounters of merchants, chaplains, sailors, and other transoceanic go-betweens and joint-stock company agents with diverse peoples across the globe. Yet the sense remains that colonization happened ‘over there’ somewhere, meaning the English impetus to expand their territories through colonization seems to bear little on shifts in domestic thought and behaviour. A focus on James’ English reign (1603–25) offers a corrective to assumptions that the Jacobean contribution to colonization was haphazard and minimal, and revises the notion that English experiences in America existed outside Jacobean political culture.

This research began with an investigation into why America appeared so frequently in a range of English discourses beyond the expected cosmographies and travel reports. Why did churchmen evoke the practices of indigenous South Americans in sermons about moral corruption, or pamphleteers deem the Gunpowder Treason conspirators ‘tobacconists’? What induced a soldier, in a court deposition, to verbally defend his Protestantism by professing he was no more an atheist than he was a cannibal? Representations of Native Americans featured in unexpected

Introduction

places, appearing on architectural sketches for ceilings and in paintings hanging on walls in royal palaces. Walking through banqueting halls and chapels, a visitor to Hampton Court in 1599 noticed ‘the lively and lifelike portrait of the wild man and woman captured by Martin Frobisher . . . and brought back to England’ in the corridors on the way to the inner apartments.’ These were the Inuit Arnaq and Kalicho, captured by the English in 1577 along with an infant, Nutaaq. Though the visitor deemed them ‘savages’, clad in skins and ‘Indian dress’, images of these Native Americans were widely replicated, from the colonist John White’s watercolours to their appearance in the ‘America’ engraving by the artist Marcus Gheeraert the elder, who spent time in London. Amidst tapestries and tiled floors, taintet glass and ornate tableaux, representations of the people, flora, and fauna of North and South America – including ‘captured’ individuals – inhabited the world of the political elite.

By this time, several Native Americans also lived in England as servants, guests, and intelligencers, including in the households of Walter Ralegh and James’ secretary of state, Robert Cecil. References to the Chesapeake, tobacco, and cannibals, and slurs about ‘savage’ or ‘Indian-like’ behaviour, could be found in commonplace books, Parliament speeches, wit poetry, sermons, popular print, cabinets of curiosities, and court masques. Over the course of this research, it became apparent that these references, while intriguing in and of themselves, were the result of a much larger process of domestic change. On one level, they catalogue the far-reaching effect that English colonization, and the first sustained encounters with Native American peoples, had on English discourse, politics, and sociability in the earliest decades of contact. However, these were not just manifestations of curiosity about other peoples and places, but reflect imperial intent. By extending the civilizing project, so integral to post-Reformation humanistic reform and political stability, to America, English gentlemen began to view their own civil integrity in relation to the project of empire, and they began to fashion themselves accordingly.

10 Design for a ceiling [plan 1/12], c. early seventeenth century, Hatfield House, CPM I 12; Thomas Platter’s Travels in England 1599: Rendered into English from the German, tr. and ed. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 201.
11 Ibid., 201.
Expansion and the Civilizing Project

To interrogate civility and America in the Jacobean metropolis is to delve into the heart of the troubled relationship between nascent imperialism and English concepts of honour and political identity. Like studies that focus on the abolition of slavery without placing due emphasis on the intentionality behind its beginnings, so an understanding of civility and its implications for participation in civil life is incomplete without acknowledging the fraught, often conflicting ideas that operated within this term. The enduring myths of a trade-based empire undergirded by common law rather than exclusion, liberty rather than conquest, do not match up to the knowing endorsement of subjugation that emerges from civility’s political meanings. Neither do such narratives fully explain the elite’s commitment to empire for centuries after. By the eighteenth century, the English view of themselves as ‘a Race of Men, who prefer the publicke Good before any narrow or selfish Views – who choose Dangers in the defence of Their Country [and] an honourable Death before the unmanly pleasures of a useless and effeminate life’ was an entrenched prototype of the ideal gentleman. This ‘Race of Men’ equated ‘Birthright to bringing ‘Good Manners’ and Protestantism to distant parts of the world, refracting the language of colonial treatises and pro-imperial poems constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The discussion of the civilizing project in this book is a means of exploring the dual sense of English identity that emerged as a result of expansion and reform. The Reformation fractured ideas of a unified Christian Europe. Henry VIII’s break from Rome imbued the English monarch with claims to religious and political sovereignty while leaving many practical questions over what such sovereignty entailed. Humanists turned to history and queried the language, literature, and institutions of their own past in the hopes of understanding what it meant to be English. The Reformation also shifted the relationship between the English and the rest of the British Isles, where Ireland and parts of Scotland remained resistant to the religious and political reforms of the late Tudor state. Colonization was in many ways the large-scale consequence of changing

strategies for domestic governance, where the Tudor governing regime
drew on the concept of civility to subject individuals to the authority of the
state.

Even as the English looked to their past and their borders to form their
identity, increased trade routes and travel impelled them to profess their
legitimacy on a global stage. Proud of their status as an island nation while
acutely aware of their inferior reputation in the eyes of many Europeans,
the English began to assert a sense of national feeling influenced by
Protestantism and inflected by a larger international cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{17}
A desire to contend with the status of other European nations, and what
J. H. Elliott calls the imperial envy of the English, propelled their outward-
looking ambitions in the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{18} The frontispiece to the 1625 edition of
the geographer and clergyman Samuel Purchas’ \textit{Purchas his pilgrimes} depicted James wearing an imperial crown and his son Charles stepping
forward to accept the call to further effect the plantation projects begun by
his father. Psalms 147:20 appeared below him, reinforcing the English
belief of themselves as providentially elect: ‘He shewed his word unto
Jacob, and he hath not dealt so with any nation’.\textsuperscript{19} Purchas’ frontispiece depicted Scotland and England as united realms, but he also mapped
English spaces in Newfoundland, Virginia, Guiana, Brazil, and Peru,
challenging the territories claimed by the French in Florida and by the
Spanish in New Spain. The works of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas
embodied what J. G. A. Pocock describes as the English belief that they
were ‘occupying a moment and possessing a dimension in sacred history’, one in which each individual was called to act.\textsuperscript{20} To many Jacobean
Englishmen, colonization was a national imperative.

The humanist ‘re-discovery’ of England played an important role in how
imperial-minded gentlemen conceived of colonization. As Colin Kidd
argues, the outward-looking ideological imperatives of the English were
shaped by conceptions of their own history, marked by repeated
conquests and new settlements by the Romans, Saxons, and Normans.\textsuperscript{21}
Humanists drew on classical models and histories to mould their national

\textsuperscript{17} Adrian Green, \textit{Building for England: John Cosin’s Architecture in Renaissance Durham and Cambridge} (Durham: Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 2016), 14.


\textsuperscript{19} Samuel Purchas, \textit{Purchas his pilgrimes} (1625; STC 20509), frontispiece.


image. The imperial language of ancient Rome heavily influenced political thinkers in Elizabethan England, where *imperium* related both to territorial expansion and to the power of the monarch at home.\(^\text{22}\) Coins and portraits, courtly performances and the frontispieces of books likened Elizabeth and James to classical emperors, often crowned with the closed imperial crown of Roman rulers. Elizabeth and James were compared to the emperor Constantine, not only for his ability to rule but also for his desire to create a Christian empire that involved a concerted attack on the pagan world.\(^\text{23}\)

Elizabethan and Jacobean antiquarians including William Camden, John Selden, and Robert Cotton were also lawyers and politicians, and did not see history as distinct from, but integral to explaining the legitimacy of English customs.\(^\text{24}\) English statesmen and colonists claimed they were well placed to ‘civilize’ Native Americans since they themselves had benefitted, and continued to benefit, from having been civilized by Roman occupation.\(^\text{25}\) ‘[F]or his Majesty to reach his long royall armes to another World’ in the present moment was to do as the Romans had done, since the ‘Roman Empire sowed Roman Colonies thorow the World, as the most naturall and artificall way to win and hold the World Romaine’.\(^\text{26}\) The antiquarian Henry Spelman, an active officeholder and treasurer of the Guiana Company in 1627, sent his own nephew Henry to Virginia in 1609, where Henry learned Algonquian languages and became an important mediator in Anglo–Algonquian relations. Even more so than the Greek polis, the Roman pursuit of the civil life involved a demonstrable interest in empire and the exportation of their customs abroad, in models that Jacobins demonstrably sought to emulate.\(^\text{27}\)

Colonization implicated the political elite in a significant way, requiring sustained regulation and oversight. This began with Ireland. Henry VIII’s self-conscious declaration of political legitimacy and his rejection of papal authority necessitated more vigorous campaigns to instil conformity as the state began to look beyond its borders.\(^\text{28}\) The influential Elizabethan statesmen Francis Walsingham and William Cecil, Lord Burghley, as well as Elizabeth’s keeper of the privy seal, Thomas Smith, and Cecil’s


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 18.


\(^{26}\) Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimes*, sig. Mmnmnmnvm. \(^{27}\) Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 22.

son, Robert, oversaw the colonization of Ireland in the second half of the sixteenth century. Irish scholars have established how humanism and the Reformation shaped English colonial intervention and provoked varying levels of resistance and accommodation on the part of local peoples. This involved attempts to subject the Gaelic Irish, but also the Catholic ‘Old English’ descendants of the twelfth-century Norman conquest of Ireland, to Protestant visions of reform. The humanist statesman Francis Bacon, like the colonist Edmund Spenser, portrayed the colonization of Ireland as a civilizing project modelled on Greco-Roman political histories and the imperial ambitions of Rome. The language of savagery set against the civilizing initiatives of the English state provided consistent rhetoric in favour of colonization among policy-makers and their agents.

Events in Ireland during the Nine Years’ War (1594–1603) led to more stringent policies against the Irish, and influential treatises by Richard Becon and John Davies argued that the English colonization of Ireland had hitherto failed precisely because colonists were accepting and even imitating the mores of local inhabitants. Interactions between the New English, Gaelic nobility, Irish tenants, town dwellers, and Old English were characterized by negotiation as well as brutality, depending on the policies of individual governors and their rapport with local populations. Nonetheless, English colonization altered the Irish landscape. Even during the atrocities of the Cromwellian regime in the 1640s, poetry explicitly attributed the destruction of Gaelic ways of life to James’ reign and to the violent redistribution of land: ‘[James] ordered their lands to be measured with ropes, he replaced the pure Irish with Saxons, and transplanted them all’. As attorney general in...
Ireland, Davies emphasized the reforming power of the law and the responsibilities of authorities to inaugurate English institutions and values to ensure the success of colonization. At the same time, the initiatives on the part of the English were frequently imperiled and only partially successful. The contracted military campaigns and failures to assimilate Gaelic cultures only deepened the English belief in the importance of conformity in upholding an ordered civil society.

This book picks up policy-makers’ civilizing impetus as they began to apply it further west. The English believed Irish landscapes and industries could be financially beneficial to the state, but the ‘newness’ of America and the competition among European states to claim its sizeable territories added to its appeal. The ‘fourth part of the world’, unknown to the very Greeks and Romans whose authority and civil refinement captivated early modern individuals, seemingly lay ready for possession, infusing Elizabethan and early Jacobean discourse with a sense of opportunity and optimism. Colonial promoters expressed an awareness that their era offered a distinct moment of opportunity. ‘No nation in Christendom is so fit for this action [of colonization] as England’, pressed Edward Hayes in 1602, ‘by reason of . . . our long domesticall peace’.34 While later Elizabethan colonial projects were hampered by war with Spain, the Anglo–Spanish peace treaty of 1604 allowed the English to devote unprecedented energy to American colonization. New investment opportunities from 1600 reflected this intent. The Virginia Company (1606), the Newfoundland Company (1610), the Somers Islands/Bermuda Company (1615), and the Amazon Company (1619) were Jacobean innovations, contributing to a pitch of interest in America at the time. ‘I knowe of some and heare of more of our nation who endevoure the findinge out of Virgenia, Guiana and other remote and unknowen Countries’, complained the king’s lord deputy in Ireland, Arthur Chichester, in 1605, while neglecting the ‘makinge Cyvell of Ireland’.35

A focus on the Atlantic is not intended to diminish the many relations that the English had with the rest of the world. The global turn in early twenty-first-century historiography has emphasized broad patterns of movement and global connectivity, focussing on diasporas and migration patterns, company agents and other go-betweens.36 As Hakluyt and Purchas’ vast travel

34 Edward Hayes in John Brereton, A briefe and true relation of the discoverie of the north part of Virginia (1602; STC 3611), sig. C2r.
35 Arthur Chichester to the Earl of Salisbury, 2 October 1605, The National Archives, SP 63/217, f. 165v.
compendia indicated, English aspirations in North and South America were part of a much larger project of trafficking and exchange. Europeans first turned to America in their search for India. The interest in spices and silks is apparent in many surviving maps of the time, where the label ‘Orients’ reinforced the European desire to orient themselves, quite literally, towards the East. Prior to the establishment of sugar plantations in the Caribbean from the 1630s, pursuing trade with the Ottoman and Mughal empires far outweighed the economic potential of the English Atlantic.

The westward enterprises can be placed within multiple processes of global exchange that were relational, but distinct. Rather than pitting the Atlantic as an alternative approach to English post-Reformation history, America becomes a vital component of the Protestant vision of reform that emerged from the upheavals and traumas of religious and political controversies in Europe and beyond. When gentlemen copied excerpts from geographies in their commonplace books (‘Africa is greater than Europe. Asia then Africa. and America bigger then all’), or purchased engravings that personified America as a woman awaiting possession, they perpetuated widely accepted geopolitical assumptions about a civil Europe engaged with other parts of the globe in a series of interconnected but specific relationships. The English celebrated American plantation as a vital means of sourcing the commodities that characterized Eastern wealth while opposing Catholic ascendancy in the Atlantic. Virginia’s soil and climate rivaled that of Persia, wrote James’s silk-worm expert John Bonoeil, and was not silk the staple commodity of ‘that great Empire’, forming the ‘sinewes of the Persian state’? The vast American continents, not Ireland, would allow the English to become global contenders, turning ‘the Easterne world . . . Spectators of the Western Worth’.


John Bonoeil, His Majesties gracious letter to the Earle of South-Hampton (1622; STC 14378), sig. 1r. See also Thomas Hariot, A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia (1590; STC 12786); Robert Johnson, Nova Britannia (1609; STC 14699.5).