

it pays a lot of lip service to its importance. Its sum contribution seems to further obscure “indigenous” peoples, erase the Doctrine of Aboriginal Title, stigmatize poor “migrants” and most of all, obscure capitalism and imperialism as driving forces of settler colonialism and its transformation. As such, one has to assume that the analysis serves to help these processes along.

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L.H. Roper. *Advancing Empire: English Interests and Overseas Expansion, 1613–1688*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 302 pp. ISBN: 9781107545052. \$39.99.

L.H. Roper’s *Advancing Empire* offers a critical analysis of the complex nature of English overseas endeavors globally in the tumultuous seventeenth-century. Principally, Roper argues that the roots of English colonialism and trans-oceanic trade are to be found not in a powerful and centralized state but rather within a network of remarkably ambitious private interests. Moreover, Roper contends that neither the English Civil War nor the Restoration significantly changed the power of personal interests and the relatively limited influence of the state. The advancement of England’s empire was not the product of centralized state policy, but rather it was derived through individuals seeking to advance their socio-political status through overseas ventures and colonization. Due to the enormous costs (and the equally considerable risks) involved, even the wealthiest of London-based entrepreneurs sought out partners and, occasionally, state support in the form of charters or monopoly rights. However, the efficacy and importance of such state sponsorship in the seventeenth century are regularly called into question by Roper; it was often the case that merchants and financiers operating in the Atlantic or Indian Oceans sought out support from the Crown or Parliament only when it suited them.

After putting forth the broad strokes of his argument in Chapter 1, Roper goes on to survey the specific workings of private English interests in the Americas, Guinea, and Asia, which constitute Chapters 2–4. His analysis of the Americas and Africa delves into the origins of the English slave trade as well as the ability of private capital to move readily from one hemisphere to the next. These chapters give an in-depth history of how the English overseas empire came to be, and it is made to look a wholly organic process rather than a coherent and coordinated project. It is in these opening chapters that the reader witnesses the birth of an empire from the private capital networks of dozens of merchants, entrepreneurs, settlers, and financiers.

After establishing the beginnings and rough contours of England’s nascent empire, Chapter 5 pushes ahead to addresses the extent to which the English Civil War impacted affairs—which is to say, not much. To call the Civil War a revolution in imperial overseas operations is, to Roper, misguided. In so many ways, it was business as usual for the myriad private interests that constituted the lifeblood of the growing English overseas empire. Chapter 6 continues this line of reasoning by showing the extent to which the Interregnum government took a backseat to private merchant capitalists just as its predecessor government had. “The state became involved in overseas trade and colonization”, writes Roper, “only when the promulgators of those activities solicited its involvement” (149). Roper’s revisionism of the Civil War period culminates in Chapter 7, wherein he argues (again, contrary to established narratives) that the Restoration did *not* mark the beginning of some fundamentally new age to the English empire. While the state may have rejuvenated, it was no more capable a government when it came to the business of empire. Nor was the Restoration a

reckoning for the many private operators who sided with Parliament during the war years. Again, it was very much business as usual. Before the Restoration, it had been individual merchants like Maurice Thompson who “drew the English state into greater involvement” abroad and “this pattern persisted after the return of kingly government in 1660” (161). Put another way, the restoration government’s approach to imperialism was still “haphazard” while overseas initiatives “still stemmed from people outside the government” (180).

Chapter 8 uses the history of the colonial Americas after 1660 to reveal at once the solidification of England’s Atlantic economy, the complexities of the English-Dutch rivalry at its peak, and the limits of the Stuart monarchy to significantly impact the emerging political and economic systems of its distant American colonies. Here, the careers of figures such as John Winthrop Jr. illustrate well the extent to which the growth of Anglo-America was very much a product of individual ambition unfolding in an environment of imperfect state controls. Even the Anglo-Dutch conflict gets reframed as emanating not from the new Stuart government but principally “from the promoters of English overseas trade and colonization” (203).

Ultimately, this is a tale of continuity. From the beginning of the seventeenth century through the civil war and the Restoration, private interests continued—often disrupted but never derailed. This tale is not to say that the English state—in its many forms throughout the century—had no significant role to play within its empire. Quite the contrary, the central government often acted as a conduit for capital and a critical legitimizing entity. Additionally, the spasmodic shifts of power from the reign of Charles I to William III offered abundant opportunities for private interests to push forward their agenda.

Among the book’s highlights is its tendency to shed light on all too often overlooked aspects of English overseas ventures, such as the Courteen Association and its adversarial relationship with the EIC. There is also the career of Maurice Thompson, a London merchant of such wide-ranging political and commercial connections throughout the early empire that one wonders how such a life has garnered so little commentary from historians. Of course, for Roper, these actors are so often overlooked because of the state-centric narrative that has come to dominate histories of early modern European empires. On numerous occasions, Roper takes the time to critique and, on occasion, admonish the historiography that has too often over-emphasized state controls.

For all the book’s strengths, one still wishes to see Roper probe beyond the confines of English operators and to make connections to the structural and operational logic of overseas ventures conducted by England’s European rivals. There is now a substantial historiography on early modern European colonialism and imperialism that dovetails oh so well with Roper’s thesis, but he has left it to us to draw those connections. Indeed, Roper’s blinkers rarely reveal much else outside of English experiences save for their most bitter of commercial rivals, the Dutch.

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Alexander B. Haskell. *For God, King, and People: Forging Commonwealth Bonds in Renaissance Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 400 pp. ISBN: 9781469618029. \$45.00.

The moral character of the colonisation of Virginia has presented a vexed question since the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). For Alexander Haskell, the ideal of “commonwealth”—“a constellation