

# Heroes of Empire

## The British Imperial Protagonist in America, 1596–1764

RICHARD FROHOCK

The British representation of America in the colonial period is an unwieldy topic, and scholars have fashioned various points of focus for studies of imperialist discourse of the Americas, including cannibalism, translation, wonder, the figure of woman, the tropicopolitan, and the romance of the first encounter. This book adds to the studies of imperialist discourse by delineating in unprecedented detail the evolution of the British imperial hero from Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana* (1596) to James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764), with concentration on narratives produced between Cromwell's *Western Design* (1655) and the British raid on Cartagena (1741).

The book's concentration on the evolution of the colonial protagonist allows for a reassessment of the importance of the rhetoric of conquest in British colonial apologetics and enables the delineation of significant colonial topoi as they are transferred, modified, and rejected over time. As the image of the nobleman leading heroic conquests gradually gave way to images of the scientist, the merchant, and the industrious planter, writers of the period authorized appropriation and dominion and defined "heroic" imperialist work in evolving and competing forms.

The Introduction defines the parameters of the book and offers a brief consideration of the feminization of the Americas. Chapter 1, "The British Conqueror in America," surveys key representations of British military conquest in the New World and argues

that the language of heroic conquest constitutes a foundational rhetoric in British discourse about empire in America. Chapter 2, "Aphra Behn's America," argues that in their New World fictions Aphra Behn and Thomas Southerne reveal the unsuitability and anachronism of pure heroic codes of conduct in the colonies and offer instead protagonists who bridge heroic and capitalist worlds. Chapter 3, "Science and Conquest," illustrates the creation and promotion of the scientist as new imperialist hero who can replace the conqueror; writers covered include Thomas Sprat and William Dampier. Chapter 4, "Labor and Conquest," illustrates how several writers, from John Locke to Daniel Defoe, seek to replace military conquest with agricultural labor as the quintessentially British, and most legitimate, method of appropriation. After the delineation of these several versions of colonial protagonists in chapters 1-4, chapter 5, "The Satire of Conquest," turns to the dissenting voices of eighteenth-century satirists who attack colonial rationales by creating mock imperialist heroes, inverting well-established binaries, parodying colonial motifs, and exposing the gap between colonial representation and experience. The epilogue reviews the main types of the colonial hero covered in preceding chapters by means of a close study of the planter-hero in James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764), a major literary representation of a hybrid colonial protagonist written when the specter of colonial independency had appeared on the horizon.