INTRODUCTION 11
IN THE SHADOW OF THE MYTH

CHAPTER ONE 21
A PLACE FOR THE UNWANTED
Elizabethan adventurers dreamed of an American empire that would give them gold and glory. Others saw the New World as a dumping ground for England’s unwanted poor.

CHAPTER TWO 33
THE JUDGE’S DREAM
A highwayman who became Lord Chief Justice planned to colonise America with criminals. He began to empty England’s gaols and set a precedent.

CHAPTER THREE 47
THE MERCHANT PRINCE
The mastermind behind the first successful English colony in America was reputedly Britain’s richest man. He kept a fledgling Virginia going and paved the way for the first white slaves.
CHAPTER FOUR  75
CHILDREN OF THE CITY

The Virginia Company wanted youngsters to work in the tobacco fields. The burghers of London wanted rid of street children. So a bargain was struck and hundreds of children were transported.

CHAPTER FIVE  89
THE JAGGED EDGE

The New World was a magnet for the poor. To get there, they had to mortgage their labour in advance. They were not to know that they had contracted into slavery and might well die in bondage.

CHAPTER SIX  99
‘THEY ARE NOT DOGS’

Virginia was run by planters who pushed through laws that relegated ‘servants’ and ‘apprentices’ to the status of livestock. Notionally they had rights but planters were literally allowed to get away with murder.

CHAPTER SEVEN  113
THE PEOPLE TRADE

In the 1630s, almost 80,000 people left England for the Chesapeake, New England and the Caribbean, most of them indentured servants. A ruthless trade in people developed in which even a small investor could make money.

CHAPTER EIGHT  127
SPIRITED AWAY

Untold numbers were kidnapped or duped onto America-bound ships and sold as servants. The ‘spiriting’ business became as insidious and organised as the cocaine racket today. Even magistrates took a cut of the proceeds.
CHAPTER NINE  137
FOREIGNERS IN THEIR OWN LAND
Ethnic and religious cleansing in Ireland became a model for Native Americans being cleared from the Chesapeake. During the Cromwell era, still more were displaced and Ireland became a major source of slaves for the New World.

CHAPTER TEN  155
DISSENT IN THE NORTH
Until the 1650s, Scotland fought shy of transporting its unwanted to any English colony. Then religious and political dissent were made punishable by transportation to the Americas. Sometimes more died on the way than ever reached the New World.

CHAPTER ELEVEN  169
THE PLANTER FROM ANGOLA
The idea that Africans were Virginia’s first slaves is revealed as a myth through the story of one who became a planter himself and went on to own whites as well as blacks.

CHAPTER TWELVE  177
‘BARBADOSED’
In the 1640s, Barbados became the boom economy of the New World. The tiny island’s sugar industry would outperform all its rivals in profits – and in its ruthless use of slave labour.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN  193
THE GRANDEES
A planter aristocracy emerged in the Chesapeake. Its members dealt in men, land and influence, creating dynasties that dominated America for centuries. But stories of brutality deterred would-be settlers from emigrating.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN  205

BACON’S REBELLION

The planters’ nightmare of a combined uprising by blacks and whites came true when a charismatic young aristocrat turned an Indian war into a campaign against his own class, the English grandees. Swearing never again, the grandees set out to divide the races.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN  213

QUEEN ANNE’S GOLDEN BOOK

Bogus promises of free land persuaded hordes of Europeans to sell up and leave for America. They began a nightmare journey that left some so impoverished they sold their children to pay the fare. But some outfoxed their exploiters.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN  227

DISUNITY IN THE UNION

Scottish clansmen were sold as servants in the Americas while their chieftains were allowed a comfortable exile in France – two different fates for Jacobites after 1715. Merchants made fortunes selling the clansmen in six different colonies.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  233

LOST AND FOUND

The tide of kidnapping continued under the Hanoverians. In two famous instances, victims returned, as if from the dead, to denounce their abductors. One claimed to be heir to an earldom, kidnapped by the man who stole his birthright.
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN  247
‘HIS MAJESTY’S SEVEN-YEAR PASSENGERS’
After 1718, England subsidised the convict trade and America was deluged with British jailbirds. Paranoia grew, with soaring crime rates and epidemics blamed on convicts. Only employers were happy: a convict servant was half the price of an African slave.

CHAPTER NINETEEN  271
THE LAST HURRAH
Having won their liberty in the War of Independence, Americans had no intention of allowing their country to serve as a penal colony ever again. Britain had other plans and an astonishing plot was born.

NOTES  283
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY  301
INDEX  313