
Buccaneer Ethnography: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier

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B UCCANEER ETHNOGRAPHY: NATURE, CULTURE, AND NATION IN THE JOURNALS OF WILLIAM DAMPIER

Anna Neill

It might seem odd to speak in the same breath of piracy and science; of the violent tales of buccaneer adventures and of the growth of enlightenment modes of knowledge; of lawless bands of criminals and of a circle of informed public men whose capacity for reason and reflection qualifies them as members of a civil community. How could pirates, as international outlaws, participate in any kind of civil discourse within their home states, much less at the level of the disinterested, supranational production of knowledge about places and people in the newly colonized parts of the globe? Yet, if in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries new forms of discursive authority are emerging in response to the proliferation of texts of discovery and exploration, it must be important to identify how these outlaws of the seas, historically central to English colonization of the new world as well as to the growth of English maritime power, might have helped to reshape the language of imperialism. In order to understand how this occurred, we must recognize how “nation” and “empire” are doubly interrelated in this period: in the spirit of a newly invigorated *imperium* that is busy defining who does and does not belong within its jurisdiction; and in an imagined political community where the relationship between subject and state is constantly being negotiated, sometimes on colonial terrain.¹ Part of what this essay will show is that the cultural transformation of the buccaneers from plundering pirates into ethnographic observers grows directly out of this connection between imperial administration and modern conceptions of political sovereignty.

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From Hobbes's *Leviathan* to Locke's *Two Treatises*, accounts of the character of both state sovereignty and civil subjecthood in this turbulent century of English government inevitably felt the need to link principles of rightful rule to representations of the nature of man—his natural dispositions, as well as his civilized accomplishments. New World discovery literature, read through the lens of a hierarchized, natural-law distinction between “savagery” and “civilization,” obviously provided fertile ground for such anthropological study. Such literature at once illustrated the condition of human beings in an earlier “pre-civil” state, and at the same time suggested that it is less might than civilized reason that determines entitlement to colonial territories and resources. Although by the very violence of their actions, the buccaneers, a society of maritime outlaws based in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, had confounded this distinction between civilized colonizer and savage colonized, the increasingly direct interest of the state in scientific discovery in the last third of the seventeenth century had the effect of bringing them more closely into the fold of civilized statehood—either as objects of its disciplinary control or, more importantly for my discussion here, as reformed, re-civilized sovereign subjects and men of science.

My inquiry into the changing cultural and political status of the buccaneers in the 1690s will suggest that, through the language of natural law, newly remade English subjects also become racialized. The territorialized identity of the national subject in turn establishes boundaries between European and Indian and between white and nonwhite. The example of William Dampier, I will argue, demonstrates how what can be described as the fluid space of colonial contact, where identities and epistemologies shift and change, is juridically transformed into a stable zone of scientific exploration, where the boundaries between the ethnographic observer and the object of his study are firmly drawn. “Colonial contact,” in the sense that I am using it here, suggests an encounter in which events and actions are shaped not by what science has identified as the natural disposition of a people, but by the interactive circumstances of the encounter itself.² This form of contact, I am arguing, is a feature of the kind of fragmented colonialism wherein private merchants and other enterprising adventurers venture out into newly discovered parts of the globe to pursue their fortunes independently of the direct interests of the state. “Ethnographic detachment,” on the other hand, describes a mode of colonial encounter in which the state has a rather more immediate and engaged interest. This interest stems at once from the modern state's growing concern with the management of foreign commerce and from the questions about human society that have become so central to principles of sovereignty. The domestication of the buccaneers, then, has everything to do with *both* the technologies of colonization and merchant capital as they are developing in this period *and* with the relationship between state and subject in England as it is newly mediated by the science of Western exploration.

SCIENCE AND STATECRAFT

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, enough privateer and buccaneer journals and memoirs had been published to mark them as a distinct genre. Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (1678) appeared in numerous editions and languages, with the first English edition becoming available in 1684. Of the Caribbean adventures alone, a whole series of “English” buccaneer travelogues were published:

Bartholemew Sharpe's *Voyages* in 1684, Basil Ringrose's supplementary chapter to an edition of Exquemelin in 1685, Dampier's *New Voyage Round the World* in 1697, and Lionel Wafer's *A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America* in 1699. Dampier's book went through five editions before 1706, was published with a second volume as *Voyages and Descriptions* in 1699, and with a third volume, *A Voyage to New Holland* in 1703. William Funnell's *A Voyage Round the World* appeared in 1707. In 1712, Woodes Rogers published *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, which contained the famous account of the marooning of Alexander Selkirk on the island of Juan Fernandez that inspired Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. George Shelvocke's *A Voyage Round the World by Way of the Great South Sea* followed in 1726. The commercial opportunities that these texts documented made them interesting to merchants of London and Bristol who were hungry for examples of successful, privately sponsored expeditions to Spanish America. At the same time, the often detailed natural and human histories included in the buccaneer journals appealed to those in scientific and official circles who saw that, along with opportunities for raw products and new markets, they offered significant contributions to the national geographical archive. The tastes of this more "disinterested" readership might be seen to express an important facet of later seventeenth-century English political culture: the increasingly strong links, both philosophical and institutional, between scientific discovery and state practice.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes recommended that the governor of a nation should "read in himself, not this, or that particular man; but man-kind."³ In doing so he put a specifically anthropological emphasis on Bacon's counsel that the sovereign should have knowledge of "the natures and dispositions of the people, [and] their conditions and necessities."⁴ Such grounding of state power in the study of human nature sets at least part of the scene for Stuart patronage of science in the later seventeenth century.⁵ In 1660, an organization was established to institutionalize the advancement of learning and to promote experimental philosophy, and in 1662 it was granted a first charter by Charles II, becoming the Royal Society. Now English imperial spirit was formally linked to state investment in scientific discovery and the improvement of natural knowledge. In his *History of the Royal Society of London* (1667), Thomas Sprat emphasized the importance of scientific discovery to proper state practice, arguing that "to make a man prudent in the affairs of state, it is not enough to be well vers'd in all the conclusions which all the politicians in the world have devised...or [to rely] on...universal precepts...but there must be a sagacity of judgment in particular things."⁶ This Baconian emphasis on the observation, compiling, and analysis of particulars echoes Hobbes's advice concerning the usefulness of information about remote societies to the government of passionate, self-interested, always potentially "savage" men. The state, Spratt added, should be especially invested in travel and exploration since those rulers who will know nature in all its particularity will have "their eyes on all parts, and [will] receive information from every quarter of the earth" (*The History*, 20). As we shall see, the immediate return that the state made on this commitment to the advancement of knowledge was reaped in the form of discoveries about natural law—discoveries that confirmed both the domestic authority of the sovereign and the legitimacy of colonial and commercial expansion into newly discovered parts of the globe.⁷

Since at least Drake's time, buccaneers had been identified as circumnavigators, colonialists and explorers as much as swashbucklers and murderers. The part that the buccaneers of the later seventeenth century began to play in the integration of "impartial" knowledge with imperial interests is to be seen in the published journals of their adventures where the writers move back and forth between dramatic stories of attack and plunder, and natural-historical accounts of the climate, plants, animals, and peoples of the various places they visit. Dampier's journals, which brought him to the attention of the Royal Society, attempt to cleanse the criminal pasts of their author by downplaying his acts of violence and presenting him instead as an explorer and scientific journalist. Fashioning himself as a careful observer of the natural phenomena and human societies that he encounters on his travels, he is able at once to identify himself as the member of a respectable profession and to divorce himself effectively from the "uncivilized" behavior of his buccaneer colleagues and their indigenous allies.

Because Dampier presents himself as a man of science at the moment that he is transformed from an outlaw into a civilized English subject, his life and journals offer an example for natural-law philosophy. In the writings of Jean Bodin, Hugo Grotius, and Samuel Pufendorf, the history of civil society not only describes the structure and development of human communities as they progress through a series of stages from primitive to commercial and more politically complex societies, but also ranks the cultures of the world according to a single "natural" juridical order designed by God.⁸ Cultures, societies, and positive laws are not, according to this order, the product of a set of historical accidents; behavior is not determined by a collection of manners, rules, and habits handed down from one generation to another, nor does it mutate in response to contact with outsiders. Rather, each is shaped by a uniform divine plan whose sole agent is human reason. This plan supplies the legal basis not only for the power of princes but also for relationships between states since, in the post-Westphalian Europe that Bodin and Grotius are looking ahead to, these states are not regulated by any single secular authority.⁹ These two principal findings of natural law—that law is just where it is in accordance with the divine plan, and that some peoples live the realization of this plan more fully than others—endorse state authority at the same time as they legitimate colonial practice. Hence the study of a "barbaric" culture by professional observers belonging to a "civilized" (commercial) one has, in cultural-political terms, little or nothing to do with the practical consequences and contingencies of the encounter itself.¹⁰ As a condition of their acceptance by the state, the buccaneers must learn that "savage" peoples are objects of scientific knowledge before they are friends or enemies, guides or captors.

The kind of anthropological knowledge that organized peoples according to this "natural" hierarchy thus elevated the man of science to a new position of national responsibility. The "search into knowledge," as Sprat describes it, makes these men "serviceable to their country" (*The History*, 26) since they teach kings better government, even as they open up channels for the transmission of both scientific data and commodities back from the colonies to the metropolis: "in a short time there will scarce a ship come up the Thames that does not make some return of experiments, as well as of merchandise" (*The History*, 86). Men of science, like merchants, bring the world back to London, but in so doing their greater imperial task is to enlighten state power and, at the same time, to represent that sovereign power as the telos of the history of cultures. An emphasis on the natural hierarchy of cultures is

thus at the root of the buccaneer-scientist's "patriotic" representations of encounter with the native peoples of Spanish America.

BEYOND THE LINE: STATELESS OUTLAWS OR ENGLISH SUBJECTS

The transformation of the sea-raider into man of science must be understood not only in terms of a shift in the perceived cultural origin of state power but also in the way that this power is directly exercised over errant subjects. The growing extent to which maritime violence came to be managed by state and legal apparatus during the course of the seventeenth century points not only to the need to maintain control over those subjects who have strayed beyond the reach of the state (or "beyond the line"), but also to reincorporate them into the national body—to assert, that is, the authority of the state over and above any independent sovereignty exercised by either merchant adventurers or maritime outlaws. During this period, privateering, a form of maritime plundering that was formally authorized by the state, came under closer scrutiny, while piracy (which carried no such authorization) was gradually more firmly disciplined. Colonial governors were instructed to prosecute privateers who sought commissions from foreign princes or who simply took to unlicensed plundering "as pirate[s] and English subject[s]." ¹¹ In the second half of the century, such measures were repeatedly taken against the "English" buccaneers whose national and legal status was particularly ambiguous: at times they served the colonial administrations of the Caribbean and at other times they teamed up with buccaneer gangs of other national origins. Although its attitude toward the buccaneer communities often wavered, the state became less and less tolerant of their waywardness and, in an effort to limit their independent mobility in the area, began to identify them as subjects of English law and Government. ¹²

However, both state and merchant commissioning of privateers did continue to be a regular practice during these decades. The peripheral colonial economies of the Caribbean had difficulty resisting the extra revenue that the buccaneers brought to the colony. Here the buccaneers were regularly preying on Spanish ships and hence were perceived by the Jamaican colonists (whose recent arrival and perilous proximity to the Spanish empire made them anxious for their safety) as invaluable allies. After 1655, the buccaneers often sailed under commission from the governors of Jamaica. Although, following the Treaty of Madrid in 1670, buccaneering was more carefully policed in the Caribbean, the arrest and return to London of both buccaneer Henry Morgan (for the sacking of Panama) and Jamaican Governor Thomas Modyford (for commissioning him) was transparently a gesture to appease the Spanish. Morgan was treated like a hero in London and eventually returned to Jamaica as Deputy Governor, and Modyford was imprisoned for only two years, after which time he, too, was able to go back to Jamaica and assume the post of Chief Justice. ¹³ In 1669, Modyford defended the need to grant commissions against the Spanish by pointing out that the buccaneers know "all the ports, bays and creeks...[and] every path [in these islands.]" ¹⁴ In a petition to the King in 1670, he argued that trade and plantation would be discouraged in Jamaica if privateering was reduced. ¹⁵

Yet England did genuinely endeavor to honor the Treaty of Madrid and to restrain buccaneering, both licensed and unlicensed, in the Caribbean and around the

coasts of Spanish America after 1670, in which effort the state increasingly found support in commercial circles and among colonists. Concern that buccaneer aggression against the Spanish was seriously disrupting the *assiento* and more efficient administration of plantation trade at the end of the century contributed to a growing sense that buccaneering was bad for English business.¹⁶ In 1680, Henry Morgan (now re-nationalized as Deputy Governor of Jamaica) turned on his former brethren and insisted that buccaneering should be stamped out in the interests of protecting England's trade with Spain.¹⁷ Already in 1670 the King had instructed the new Governor of Jamaica, Thomas Lynch, to pardon privateers for any and all offenses committed since 1660 on condition that they cease all hostilities and to encourage them to take up planting. In 1672, Lynch reported that the privateers had been so reduced to obedience "that there now is not one English pirate."¹⁸ Concerns about their effect on trade then precipitated an assault on the independent sovereignty of the buccaneer societies: the 1683 Jamaica Act attacked the federation of buccaneer colonies (English, French, and Dutch) by making it a felony for any British subject in the West Indies to serve under a foreign prince. Even as the buccaneers came under the firmer disciplinary hand of the state, they were also being interpolated as English subjects.

The state's more general concern, to present itself as the central actor in the international arena and to assert its authority over wayward subjects by drawing aggressive distinctions between privateer and pirate, is reflected in the juridical rhetoric of the period. In the proceedings before the Lords of the Council concerning the trials of John Golding and others for piracy in 1693, the viability of the charge of piracy rested on whether the former King James had the authority to issue commissions to these men. The prosecutor, ordered by the Admiralty to proceed against them as pirates, refused to do so on the grounds that pirates "are common enemies of all mankind, having no legal authority for what they do...and ha[ve] thereby lost [their] right in the Law of Nations."¹⁹ As subjects of even a deposed King, he argued, privateers, unlike pirates, are legitimate actors in the global civil arena. Similarly, in the trial of Joseph Dawson and others in 1696, the Judge of the Admiralty reminded the court that pirates operate beyond the civil line, as he argued that "the King of England hath not only an empire and sovereignty over the British seas, but also an undoubted jurisdiction and power in concurrency with other princes and states for the punishment of all piracies and robberies at sea, in the most remote parts of the world."²⁰ This identification of pirates as the enemies of global commercial and civil order also figured them, by the logic of natural law, as degenerates and barbarians. In the later trial of Major Stede Bonnet in 1718, Attorney General Richard Allen declared that pirates are worse than beasts of prey for the latter "eat only to satisfy their hunger...[and] are never found to prey upon creatures of the same species as themselves...[whereas] pirates prey upon all mankind, their own species and fellow creatures, without distinction of nations or religions."²¹ The suggestion that those who operate outside of the international legal community are not merely uncivil but also, because they prey on their own kind, cannibalistic, also featured in Judge Forbes's representation of piracy in the trial of Robert Greene in 1705:

A pirate is in perpetual war with every individual and every state, Christian or infidel. Pirates properly have no country, but by the nature of their guilt, separate themselves, and renounce on the matter, the benefit of all lawful societies. They are worse than ravenous beasts, in as far as their fatal reason gives them a greater faculty and skill to do evil: And whereas such creatures follow the

bent of their natures, and that promiscuously, pirates extinguish humanity in themselves, and prey upon men only, especially upon traders, who are the most innocent. The crime of piracy...is made up of oppression, robbery and murder committed in places far remote and solitary.²²

In each of these cases it is the rootlessness of pirates, their willful renunciation of all national ties, that constitutes the primary offense against the law of nature. Pirates, according to these prosecutors, are the stuff of Lockean nightmare: self-created savages who prey on civilized men of commerce. The act of claiming independent sovereignty, “renounc[ing]...the benefit of all lawful societies,” means turning back the clock of nature to a kind of Hobbesian state of war where, unrestrained by government, men have no sense of civil responsibility toward one another or respect for the compact that creates social cohesion, civil stability, and the conditions for cultural progress.

The history of the buccaneers of America made them especially vulnerable to the accusation of nationless barbarism. The buccaneer associations of the Caribbean in the seventeenth century consisted of a mixture of originally English, French, or Dutch bands of “masterless men”—deserters, dissenters, crews of wrecked vessels, or chance marooners; masterless, because, according to sailors’ law, having passed the tropic, they had left behind all their former obligations to the state, as well as to their families.²³ On the northern shore of Hispaniola, they first banded together as a group of cattle hunters, acquiring the name “buccaneer” from their habit of curing strips of beef—a practice which they learnt from the Caribs who called this meat “boucan.” They governed themselves by what they called “the customs of the coast”—a code which, however violent, stressed the egalitarian character of their communities. In an effort to rid the island of the buccaneers, the Spanish destroyed the wild herds of cattle on which the buccaneers lived, but in so doing only drove them to prey on passing merchant ships, and eventually to attack Spanish coastal vessels and fortified towns. Until the mid-seventeenth century, they constituted a kind of independent republic, a transnational federation of exiles, known for their extraordinary brutality and, in the case of L’Olonnais, reputed cannibalism.²⁴

Official condemnation of the buccaneers after 1670 often presented them as pirates, *hostis humanis generis*, by pointing to their lack of national character. Living beyond the reach of the state, they were represented as both un-English and uncivilized. In 1681 for example, Governor Lynch accused those privateers who held commissions from the Spanish of barbaric indifference to the laws which stand between civil community and a brutal state of nature. In doing so, he associated their violent behavior with ethnic heterogeneity: “They have committed barbarous cruelties and injustices, and better cannot be expected, for they are Corsicans, Slavonians, Greeks, mulattos, a mongrel parcel of thieves and rogues that rob and murder all that come into their power without the least respect to humanity or common justice.”²⁵ This linking of unlicensed, nonstate violence with both ethnic mixing and the rejection of national ties is precisely what Dampier is responding to as a travel writer in the 1690s.²⁶ In his efforts to reassume English identity and to distance himself from the pirate fraternities that Lynch describes, Dampier emphasizes his cultural and, in some instances, racial difference from the indigenous peoples he encounters and implicitly situates this cultural difference and distance within the terms of natural law. In his journals, ethnographic detachment begins to take the place of “contact” with the native peoples

whom he meets. Correspondingly, the authority of the buccaneer shifts from legal documents in the form of letters of marque (which enabled privateers to attack legally any enemy vessels as acts of reprisal) to natural scientific and ethnographic narrative, as what becomes valuable about his account is the accuracy of his descriptions of plants, animals, climate, and peoples in the places that he visits.

Dampier's downplaying of his pirating past, I am arguing here, needs to be understood in relation to a model of state sovereignty and international community that firmly separates "civilized" nations from "savage" and unruly societies. Sovereignty, according to this model, cannot originate in a set of customs like those of the buccaneers, but is conferred from below in the contract between ruler and subject, and from above in the equal division of power between civilized states. While buccaneers live "beyond the line" in the sense of their self-imposed exile from the civilized world and the laws of nations, they also inhabit a cultural borderland wherein they render themselves perilously vulnerable to the flux of contact. By abandoning the laws of nature and the privileges of national identity, they have not only sacrificed their humanity but in the process have become, according to prosecutors like Lynch, cultural mulattos. In the second half of this essay, I will look at how Dampier responds to this criminalization of buccaneering by reinventing himself as an English subject and a man of science. What begin as accounts of alliances made with certain tribes or incidents of cultural and commercial exchange between buccaneer explorers and their indigenous guides develop into an ethnographic study of the manners of remote, "barbaric" peoples. The radical alternative for intercultural relations that "contact" offers to natural law is thus, I will suggest, neutralized by a national identity invoked, in part, to distinguish the ethnographer from his subjects.

PIRATE TURNS MAN OF SCIENCE

William Dampier took part in the buccaneer crossing by foot of the Isthmus of Darien (Panama) from the Caribbean into the Pacific in 1680. The expedition was led by John Coxon and Bartholomew Sharp and intended the sacking of Panama and raiding of Spanish gold mines in the interior of Darien. However, as the Spanish were warned in advance that pirates were headed for the South Seas, the attempt on Panama was unsuccessful. Subsequent quarrels over leadership encouraged Dampier and forty-three others to break away and return across the Darien. On the return journey, exhausted and depleted in numbers, the buccaneers depended even more than they had a year earlier on Mosquito and Cuna allies as guides and informants about Spanish activity in the area. In 1681, Dampier took part in a third crossing of the Isthmus—a trek this time more than hundred miles. A later journey took him around Cape Horn and eventually across the Pacific. The manuscript of his journal, which he carried with him across the Isthmus in a bamboo holder sealed with wax, was published by James Knapton in 1697 as *A New Voyage Round the World*.

One of the most striking things about Dampier's record of his journey is the way in which he retrospectively reframed contact with the members of these tribes in the language of scientific discovery. His published journal provided detailed meteorological, botanical, and ethnographic accounts of yet unexplored parts of the Spanish American coast, and the most thorough English navigation of the Pacific to that date.²⁷ His wind maps may have provided the prototype for the depiction of trade winds in

eighteenth-century cartography, and his accounts of the behavior of tropical storms and of tides and currents remained authorities for English navigation throughout the following century.²⁸ Dampier himself insisted that his journey was motivated more by a disinterested intention “to indulge my curiosity [rather] than to get wealth.”²⁹ The scientific community was convinced: while other members of the buccaneer party were defending themselves against charges of piracy, Charles Montague, president of the Royal Society, had introduced Dampier to the First Lord of the Admiralty, who then commissioned him to explore the coast of New Holland. Sir Robert Southwell, President of the Royal Society between 1690 and 1695, and Sir Hans Sloane, a member and later president, were also Dampier’s patrons. In the portrait that Sloane commissioned Thomas Murray to paint, Dampier is described as a “pirate and hydrographer,” yet in his right hand he is holding not a musket but a volume of his journal.

In his dedication to Montague, Dampier professes to have abandoned his buccaneering past and assumed the responsibilities of citizenship as he begs the Earl that “in perusing these papers by your goodness [to] distinguish the experience of the author from his faults and to judge him capable of serving his country” (*DV*, 1:18): his patriotism will be visible in his writing even if his actions have proven him disloyal. He will, he says, satisfy the Society’s “zeal for the advancement of knowledge, and anything that may...tend to my countries advantage” and in so doing present some “things in them new even to [the President]; and some possibly, not altogether unuseful to the publick” (*DV*, 1:17). In his tribute to the reader he remarks on the contribution that this raw, sometimes unprocessed data will make to the scientific archives:

In the description of places, their produce, &c. I have endeavoured to give what satisfaction I could to my country-men; tho’ possibly to the describing several things that may have been much better accounted for by others: choosing to be more particular than might be needful, with respect to the intelligent reader, rather than to omit what I thought might tend to the information of persons no less sensible and inquisitive, tho’ not so learned or experienced. For which reason, my chief care hath been to be as particular as was consistent with my intended brevity, in setting down such observables as I met with. (*DV*, 1: 19)

Scientific authority here is located both in eyewitness experience and in a society of “sensible and inquisitive” persons.³⁰ Although Dampier is more “learned and experienced” in the particulars of his study than is his intelligent reader, his journal is addressed to and validated by an intellectual equal and a “countryman.” His accurate representation of the phenomena he encounters, while it is the authentic product of his first-hand experience, is of scientific value only once it has been made available to a circle of enlightened readers and fellow Englishmen.

It is in this same spirit of enlightened observation and respect for the principles of the Royal Society that Dampier distances himself from both classical authorities and the accounts of earlier travelers, explaining that he has not “confined [him]self to such names as are given by learned authors, or so much as enquired after many of them,” but that because he “write[s] for [his] countrymen” and “shall leave to those of more leisure and opportunity the trouble of comparing these with those which other authors have assigned” (*DV*, 1:20–21). Yet if his text takes its authority from what he finds in the natural world, he is nonetheless the compiler and organizer of the

data he has collected, shaping and editing his raw material in such a way as to make it most accessible to its readers. What he originally intended as a lengthy appendix, including a “chorographical description of all the south sea coast of America,” is left off because “such detail would have swelled [the book] too unreasonably” (*DV*, 1:21). Rewriting and revising, carefully organizing his materials so that he will maintain the interest and patronage of an informed readership, Dampier is more than a mere observer. His concern not to “prejudice the truth and sincerity of [his] relation...by omissions” (*DV*, 1:20) is challenged by his subsequent reflection that in some places he may not “have express’d [him]self as [he] ought” (*DV*, 1:23), and by his submission to the “judgment and candour” of his readers in accordance with whose wisdom, rather than with the raw truth of his observations and experiences, he will compose later accounts. Moreover, his design in publishing the journal, he insists in the dedication to Montague, is to produce the kind of document that will qualify for the Royal Society’s “general magazine of the knowledge of foreign parts” (*DV*, 1:18).

Such narrative shaping and the commitment to the scientific community that it reflects is strikingly represented in the differences between the manuscript and the printed editions of the journal.³¹ In the manuscript, “service to my country” does generate “a desire...to travel to the South Seas,”³² yet at this stage such “service” has almost nothing to do with botanical and ethnographic discovery and instead entails informing his countrymen of “the riches which may be gotten out of the mines in America” (Sloane MS, 29). He befriends the Darien Indians because they know the whereabouts of the mines and are useful allies in conflicts with the Spanish, and he explains why the party did not explore certain regions of the northern coast by remarking that their business was not to find places to settle in but only convenient harbors in which to careen. The service to the public which his narrative might offer is, he confesses, beyond the direct compass of his text, since as a mere eyewitness he leaves any consideration of the value of his discoveries to “the ingenious publick spirits of the age” (Sloane MS, 30). Not only does he fail to identify with this “ingenious publick” in the manuscript text, but, at the same time, he makes no attempt to excuse himself from the charge of piracy. Instead, he points out that his journal aspires to nothing more than a record of his piratical adventures: “If it is objected that the point of right was not so well studied in these adventures as it ought to have been I can only say that the political rights, alliances, and engagements between empires and states are too high for me to discuss...” (Sloane MS, 30). Where the modesty of the preface to the printed journal, as we have seen, is intended to link Dampier with a community of polite, scientifically educated readers, here his humility takes the form of a professed ignorance of the law of nations and, given his not-so-subtle disrespect for the “point of right,” of natural law as well.

It is therefore no surprise that his emphasis on the cultural habits of the peoples with whom he comes into contact is much more pronounced in the printed edition of the journal. In the manuscript, descriptions such as those of the indigenous inhabitants of Guam and of the guide at Point Garachina are kept to a minimum.³³ We hear only the narrative details of the contact: how the Indians received, fed, and helped guide the buccaneers to their ports of prey; how the latter wooed the trust of their Indian guides by offering them beads, money, or hatchets; and, where these commodities had no effect in the case of the Indian at Garachina, how “one of our men took out of his bag a sky coloured petticoat and put it on his wife who was so much pleased with the

present that she immediately began to chatter to her husband and so brought him into a better humour” (Sloane MS, 6). The journal’s elaborate description of the survival of the Mosquito Indian on the Island of Juan Fernandez (which supplied one of the sources for Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*) is anticipated in the manuscript only by the brief observation that “his cloaths were all woven out and he had only a piece of goat skin about his waste” (Sloane MS, 32). Dampier questions, at one point, whether “we ever had got [across the Darien] without [the Indians’] assistance because they brought us from time to time to their plantations where we always got provisions which we should have wanted” (Sloane MS, 13). He then remarks that “I shall always owne it to be much better to be friends with the Indians.” The elaborate digression on the appearance, social organization, hunting practices, fishing, marriage, war, and plantations of the Mosquito Indians, which concludes the first chapter of the printed edition, is only matched in the manuscript by a marginal note where he comments that “the Mosquito Indians always have armes and...are courted by all privateers...they strike fish, turtle, and manatee [which help to] maintaine the ship’s company” (Sloane MS, 1). What is represented here is a mode of contact in which the need to secure alliances with, and practical assistance from, the Indians shapes the cultural logic of the encounter. Even the culturally marked spectacle of the woman discovering the petticoat is framed by the exigencies of the moment and the need to secure her husband’s assistance as a guide. In the printed journal, however, Dampier highlights the cultural distance between Indians and Europeans not only through the wealth of descriptive detail about Indian ways of life, but also by suggesting that the objects of his study have not yet achieved that degree of civilized sophistication which would make them capable of independent sovereignty. Having emphasized what accomplished mimics of the English the Mosquitoes are, he concludes his description by remarking that “[t]hey have no form of government among them, but acknowledge the King of England for their sovereign” (DV, 1:42). As they become objects of ethnographic study, they are marked as admirers of English culture and willingly colonized subjects.

It is worth noting how this ethnographic reading of a culture and the natural legal identification of what does and does not constitute a sovereign people also enables the racializing of cultural differences. Describing the party that returned across the Darien, Dampier’s manuscript identifies the group as consisting of forty-five white men, two Mosquito Indians, and five slaves. In a marginal note, he clarifies that “by white men I meant all that bore armes for we had a Spanish Indian [who afterwards] stayed among the Indians in Darien” (Sloane MS, 1). The printed journal assimilates the information from the footnote into the body of the text by eliminating the racial ambiguity of the original description: “We were,” he says in this version, “in number forty-four white men who bore armes, a Spanish Indian who bore armes also; and two Mosquito Indians...” (DV, 1:33). Where “white” comes to signify the cultural distance between European and Indian rather than, as it did in the manuscript, an ally bearing arms, then raced difference has become more important than an identification forged through strategic alliance. We might recall here how Lynch used the term “mulatto” to describe the muddle of ethnic identities in the buccaneer communities, and how he linked such mixing to their violent disrespect for common justice. Now, in this scene of encounter, Dampier and his crew become “white” once loyalty to country becomes, retrospectively, more crucial than the need for guides and allies.

After cruising the southern coast for some months, Dampier joined Captain Swan in a voyage across the Pacific, hoping to find a profit by interloping on the East

India Company trade. In this account, he quite explicitly categorizes the peoples with whom he came into contact according to the state of commercial and political civilization which these people have achieved. He describes the Mindanao of the Philippines as “the greatest nation in the island” and points out that “[in] trading by sea with other nations, they are therefore the more civil” (DV, 1:332). Their tendency to laziness, however, stems from “the severity of their Prince of whom they stand in awe: for he [deals] with them very arbitrarily, and taking from them what they get, this damps their industry, so they never strive to have anything but from hand to mouth” (DV, 1:333). Similarly lacking in resourcefulness, the natives of Timor are “lazy in the highest degree” and “said to be dull in every thing but treachery and barbarity” (DV, 2:500), and they take little trouble to clear their land. In his account of the shortcomings of these cultures, he not only fails to mention his true reasons for traveling into these waters but also retrospectively codes his distance from the buccaneer crew with which he was sailing. The *Supplement of the Voyage Round the World*, written in the wake of the success of the first volume, investigates the degree to which efficient trade is possible and desirable with the nations that Dampier visits; the “wild, unruly men not subject to government” (DV, 2:44) are the native peoples (in this case the Malaysians) of remote places where there is no civilized exchange of goods. This account of their unruliness echoes his description of the buccaneers, whose inclination to mutiny, Dampier points out in the first volume, makes the difficult journey through the Magellan straits inadvisable, for “our men being privateers and so more willful and less under command, would not be so ready to give a watchful attendance in a passage so little known” (DV, 1:108).

In the Nicobar islands, Dampier broke away from the buccaneers. From there he sailed by canoe to the English factory at Achin in Sumatra. Later he joined trading ships to Tonquin and Malacca before finally returning to England. His descriptions of these later adventures in the *Supplement of the Voyage* continue to be punctuated by lengthy accounts of the countries he visits and the customs, institutions, and condition of the peoples who inhabit them. In the course of these descriptions, he compares the “bold and treacherous” Malaysians with those who are fond of trade and therefore “affable and courteous to merchants” (DV, 2:94); the Tonquinese, he complains, are “low spirited: probably by reason of their living under an arbitrary government” (DV, 1:591), and the poor are very thievish (DV, 1:599); the Chinese, he observes, are corrupted by an addiction to gambling (DV, 1:592). At other times he makes recommendations for the setting up of other English factories, and he argues for a particular model of management that will at once protect English trade against the jealousy of other European nations and cultivate profitable relationships with the native inhabitants. In this second volume, he owns, he has not relied on his own experiences and perceptions but has “improved [his]...observations...by those of some English gentlemen who made a considerable stay in that kingdom” (DV, 1:551). Neither the fantastic story of a pirate nor simply an eyewitness’s collection of raw, ethnographic data, his journal is now clearly the authoritative product of his initiation into a community of knowledgeable and dependable traveling Englishmen—men who can project English commercial advantages across the countries and peoples they have explored and compared.

The journals were published several years before Dampier’s subsequent voyages: the first an exploration to New Holland to look for new commercial opportunities,

and the second a privateering expedition against the Spanish on the Pacific coast. They therefore predate the several court martials that he faced as a consequence of the failure of both these expeditions—trials which exposed his behavior as a tyrannical captain capable of impulsive acts of violence against his crew.³⁴ His reputation as a man of science thus remains relatively uncompromised by the scandals of his career. Whereas Dampier's associate Captain Davis was identified in 1699 as a criminal companion to Captain Kidd in part because he figured in an account of the latter's "privateering" expeditions,³⁵ Dampier's published text positions him as the compiler and analyst of plausible data collected by several respectable men of science. A contemporary review of *A New Voyage* makes it clear that this is a reliable scientific document rather than the sensational history of a pirate:

[In] voyages for the most part unknown to English navigators to the East or West Indies...he was the more diligent in his observations and the more particular in his descriptions of their situations, soyles, products &c the greatest part of which are made from his owne experience and the others from particular informations he received from credible and knowing persons.³⁶

Both as a scrupulous observer of particulars and as an industrious intellectual able to collate and combine data from a range of sources, Dampier had demonstrated his character as both a member of a learned elite and a servant of the commonwealth. What we have seen here is how the ethnographic dimensions of his journals invest his history with questions about the proper relationship between trade, travel, and government. In so doing they document an emerging syncretism between the teleologies of natural history and a commercially aggressive state no longer tolerant of private enterprise beyond the line.

Dampier positions himself and his history not at the margins of natural law, but at the intellectual center of a legal imaginary which divides the world into a core society of advanced commercial nations and the yet uncivil, precommercial, and savage communities of the peripheral colonial world. Even as his published texts endeavor to reconfigure his own national and legal status, they also put science and discovery at the imperial service of a state whose very legitimacy rests on the "findings" of such discoveries. Thus, they help to organize a chaotic field of colonial violence—where colonial powers, indigenous peoples, and independent marketeers of violence like pirates are continually making and breaking alliances—into a taxonomy of commercial and precommercial, savage and civilized nations and peoples. This taxonomy transformed the differentiated sphere of colonial encounter and cultural exchange into a normative arena in which men of science and subjects of enlightened states were figured as civilized, impartial, and "natural" citizens of the expanding commercial world.

NOTES

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1. I use Benedict Anderson's term "imagined community" here in the same sense as Linda Colley does: to distinguish an affiliative, citizen-based nationalism from one that is organic and ethnically homogenous. Colley points out that the emergence of modern British patriotism in the eighteenth century is

tied in part to the subject-citizen's sense of entitlement to participate in British political life. See Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 5; and Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

2. Here I am indebted to Mary Louise Pratt's notion of a "contact zone." The term "contact," for Pratt, "attempt[s] to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures." In so doing, it foregrounds the "improvisational" and "interactive" dimensions of colonial encounters. See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7. Rather different accounts of the epistemological character of colonial contact in the New World are offered by Stephen Greenblatt and Peter Hulme. Greenblatt sees acts of representation and interpretation as enabling European spectators of American marvels to transform their confusion and curiosity into the language of sovereign possession. Hulme similarly argues that the experience of contact in the Caribbean is organized by ethnographic typologies and legal formalisms which discursively eradicate the cultures of the indigenous peoples. See Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991); and Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986).

3. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 11.

4. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. William Aldis Wright, 3d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 249.

5. Julie Solomon has argued that Bacon demonstrates a specifically mercantilist relationship between the new science and the consolidation of royal power. Bacon's emphasis on both the gathering and coordination of knowledge and the monarch's neutralization of the private, interested nature of this knowledge, she suggests, makes him a kind of mediating figure between king and merchant. See Solomon, *Objectivity in the Making: Francis Bacon and the Politics of Inquiry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998), 62–102.

6. Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*, 2d ed. (London, 1702), 17 (hereafter *The History* and cited parenthetically in text).

7. This essay looks specifically at the way in which the relationship between state and subject is mediated by scientific discovery and natural law in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Recent accounts of the broader impact of colonial development and mercantilist fervor on the structure of English government and its responsibilities to civil and financial society in the "military-fiscal" state after 1688 include those of Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995) and "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, 1720–1785," in *An Imperial State at War*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688–1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

8. Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from the Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed. and trans. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992); Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace; Including the Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Rev. A. C. Campbell, 3 vols. (London: B. Boothroyd, 1814); Samuel Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Basil Kennett (London: J. Walthoe, R. Wilken, 1729). On the four stages theory in natural law, see Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976).

9. Alain Fenet has identified how this endorsement of state sovereignty by natural law is powerfully destructive of the rights of minority groups since by the order of nature only the states can produce law. The same can be said of indigenous nations in the eighteenth-century context since natural law identifies them as incapable of statehood. See Fenet, "The Question of Minorities in the Order of Law," in *Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation States*, ed. Gerard Chaliand and trans. Tony Berrett (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 12.

10. See Michael J. Shapiro, "Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty," in *Perspectives on Third-World Sovereignty: The Postmodern Paradox*, ed. Mark E. Denham and Mark Owen Lombardi (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 39–59. Shapiro points out the usefulness in an analysis of colonialism and sovereignty of Aimé Césaire's argument that nations which conceive of themselves as inhabiting an historic destiny are peculiarly resistant to "contact." There is nothing in the exchange that represents mutual encounter. (Shapiro, "Moral Geographies," 56).

11. Lieutenant Governor Molesworth to William Blathwayt, 8 August 1687, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies (1685–1688)* (London, 1898), United Kingdom, Public Record Office, no. 1, 382.

12. See Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns: State Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), 7–22. Thomson argues that state control over the use of violence is linked to new technologies of colonial and global management. She also suggests that the elimination of nonstate violence from the arena of political activity is the direct effect of the increased wealth of European states, enabling them to abandon the international market of violence and to sponsor all legal acts of aggression themselves. She points out that the distinction between private reprisals, where merchants were given letters of marque to authorize them to “seek redress for depredations they suffered at the hands of foreigners on the high seas” (9), and the licensed attack on enemy commerce in wartime broke down as early as the fourteenth century. This, she argues, suggests that “already boundaries between the legitimate and the illegitimate were under practical challenge” (10). On changes in the state’s attitude towards privateering and piracy, see also David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (New York: Random House, 1995); Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War Against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 148–49; James G. Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers, and Profits* (New Jersey: Gregg Press, 1970); C. M. Senior, *A Nation of Pirates: English Piracy in its Heyday* (New York: Crane, Russak and Co., 1976); Neville Williams, *The Sea Dogs: Privateers, Plunder and Piracy in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: Macmillan, 1975); and David Delison Hebb, *Piracy and the English Government, 1616–1642* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).

13. See Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 42–55; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, 1–26; C. H. Haring, *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1910), 200–31.

14. A Narrative of Sir Thomas Modyford, 23 August 1669, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies* (1669–74), no. 103.

15. Petition of Chas Modyford on behalf of Sir Thomas Modyford and the planters and traders of Jamaica to the King, 28 September 1670, *Ibid.*, no. 275.

16. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, 148–50; Haring, *The Buccaneers*, 198–99.

17. Sir Henry Morgan to the Earl of Sunderland, 1 February 1681, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies* (1681–85), no. 16.

18. Governor Lynch to H. Slingsby, Secretary to the Council for Plantations, 5 November 1672, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies* (1669–74), no. 954.

19. *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors, from the Reign of King Richard II to the End of King George I*, 21 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), vol. 12, no. 378.

20. *Ibid.*, vol. 13, no. 392.

21. *Ibid.*, vol. 15, no. 457.

22. *The Tryal of Captain Thomas Green and his Crew before the High Court of Admiralty of Scotland and the Assessors Appointed by the Lords of the Privy Council for Piracy, Robbery and Murder* (Edinburgh: A. Anderson, 1705), 34. Green was being tried for acts of piracy against Scottish shipping. The larger context for the trial was the commercial rivalry with England immediately prior to Union.

23. See Haring, *The Buccaneers*, 69.

24. A. O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, trans. Alexis Brown (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), 107. On the history of the buccaneer communities see also James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1951); Haring, *The Buccaneers*; P. K. Kemp and Christopher Lloyd, *The Brethren of the Coast: The British and French Buccaneers in the South Seas* (London: Heinemann, 1960); and Peter Bradley, *The Lure of Peru: Maritime Intrusion into the South Sea, 1598–1701* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 103–84.

25. Sir Thomas Lynch to Secretary Sir Leoline Jenkins, 26 July 1681, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies* (1681–85), no. 1163.

26. Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh have shown how piracy operated as a form of radical internationalism which opposed the authority of the state and how pirate communities provided democratic alternatives to the oppressive conditions of service in the navy or aboard merchant ships. Rediker describes in detail how these conditions influenced the conversion of seamen to piracy. See his *Between the*

Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987). On the transnational, multiracial and democratic character of working-class maritime communities, see Rediker and Linebaugh: “The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, and the Atlantic Working Class in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3 (1990): 225–52; and Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 123–38.

27. Kemp and Lloyd, *The Brethren of the Coast*, 78.

28. See Joseph C. Shipman, *William Dampier: Seaman-Scientist* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Libraries, 1962), 9–23. Clennell Wilkinson’s older and more lengthy biography of Dampier suggests that the latter generally had a greater reputation as a scientist than as a buccaneer. See Wilkinson, *William Dampier* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1929), 131–53.

29. *Dampier’s Voyages*, ed. John Masfield, 2 vols. (London: Ballantyne Press, 1906), 1:242 (hereafter DV and cited parenthetically in text).

30. Jonathan Lamb has recently argued that the character of the eyewitness in eighteenth-century discovery literature was greeted with skepticism by a public that had begun to link tales of encounter with the alluring fictions behind disastrous capitalist experiments like the South Sea bubble. He argues that the dependence of experimental science on the authenticating eyewitness rendered it vulnerable to the Hobbesian objection that, removed from the restraints of civil society, the traveling “ethnographer” would be imaginatively subject only to the sensible pressure that objects exerted on him, and would thus become an unauthorized witness. My emphasis here is on how Dampier asserts his authority as the servant of a state that is itself legitimated by the natural-law premises of his ethnographic findings. This, too, is a Hobbesian moment, as I have argued above. See Lamb, “Eye-Witnessing in the South Seas,” *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation* 38 (1997), 201–12. On eighteenth-century reactions to truth and fiction in discovery literature, see also Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

31. There was some debate among his contemporaries about how much editorial assistance Dampier received when he came to revise the journal for publication. Philip Edwards points out, however, that most of the additions made for the published journal were based on eyewitness material. Edwards makes some insightful comparisons between the manuscript and the printed text which reveal aspects of Dampier’s personality contradicting those described by his early biographers. These also show him strategically omitting some episodes and adding others that highlight his spiritual as well as his natural-scientific credentials. See Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 17–46.

32. British Library, Sloane MS, no. 3236, 29 (hereafter Sloane MS and cited parenthetically in text).

33. In the manuscript, Dampier says of these only that “in general [they] are well limbed people and strong bodied and very ingenious in building” and provides a description of their houses and canoes (Sloane MS, 186). In the journal, however, we learn that “the natives of this island are strong bodied, large limb’d and well shaped. They are copper-coloured, like other Indians: Their hair is black and long, their eyes meanly proportioned; they have pretty high noses; their lips are pretty full, and their teeth indifferent white. They are long visaged and stern of countenance; yet we found them to be affable and courteous” (DV, 1:308). He then offers a much more detailed account of their engineering and building of boats and houses.

34. William Funnell, “...Papers relating to the voyage of the St. George,” 1703–5, and “Records of Courts Martial: Lieutenant Fischer against Captain Dampier, Commander of the *Roebuck*,” in DV, 2:575–605.

35. Governor of the Earl of Belmont to the Council of Trade and Plantations, *Calendar of State Papers: America and the West Indies* (1699), no. 890.

36. *An Account of a New Voyage Round the World by William Dampier* (London: James Knapton, 1697).