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Elements of mythmaking in witness accounts of colonial piracy

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ELEMENTS OF MYTHMAKING
IN WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF COLONIAL PIRACY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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This work was made possible by a peculiar sequence of incidents, influences, and humors. It all began with a strange affection for Exquemelin's buccaneers that I felt during a seminar in 18th Century Literature taught expertly by Dr. Keith Sandiford. He became my advisor and mentor, and I am now more in his debt than I can ever repay.

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on historical accounts (1684-1734) by English, French, and Spanish witnesses, this dissertation establishes a continuity in fictionalized representations of anti-heroic pirates from the buccaneering period to the Golden Age of Piracy. Informed by history, literary, myth, and performance theory, the analysis identifies significant distortions in reports by observers and participants. The distortions that pertain to mythmaking patterns are classified and analyzed further. Conflicting and ambivalent representations of the pirate as an anti-hero are resolved through the positing of a literary scapegoat hypothesis drawing from René Girard and Joseph Roach. While demonstrating mythical archetypes at work in the construction of the colonial pirate figure, the analysis also takes into account the effects of confluent early modern processes such as the rise of colonial capitalism, print culture, and the middle class in Britain.

CHAPTER 1

PIRACY IN THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD: TRUTHS CONVENIENT TO NONE

Arv. Have they not rang'd the Globe to serve my Cause,
With me they made a Circle round this World,
Disclaim'd Relation, Country, Friendship, Fame,
They toil'd, they bled, they burnt, they froze, they starv'd,
Each Element, and all Mankind their Foe

—Charles Johnson, *The Successful Pyrate*¹

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

On February 28th, 1694, Henry Avery left a declaration at the island of Johanna in which he proclaimed that he and 150 other men had taken the privateer ship *Charles*, renamed it the *Fancy*, and were now “bound to Seek our Fortunes.” He described a signal that friendly English and Dutch ships may use to announce themselves but warned that “my Men are hungry, Stout, and resolute, and should they exceed my Desire I cannot help myself.”²

Later in the year, after having taken several ships of the Indian Mogul, Avery's *Fancy* seized in the port of Surat the royal ship *Ganj-i*. A representative of the East India Company in Bombay reported that the pirates had tortured both English and Muslim passengers to make them confess where their money was hidden. “There happened to be,” he continued, “a great Umbraws Wife (as Wee hear) related to the King, returning from her Pilgrimage to Mecha, in her old age. She they abused very much, and forced severall other Women, which Caused [some] to kill themselves to prevent the Husbands seing [*sic*] them (and their being) ravished.”

Two years later, a ship captained by an associate of Avery's touched down on an island off the Irish coast, causing much speculation among the locals, “some saying she was a Privateer,

¹ Johnson, Charles. *The Successful Pyrate: a Play*. London: Printed for Bernard Lintott, 1713. 9.

² Jameson, J. Franklin, ed. *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents*. New York: Macmillan, 1923. 154. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

others a Buccaneer, or that she had Landed some of the Assassimators” who had conspired against King William (Jameson 158-9; 161). At roughly the same time, some of Avery’s spoils surfaced at the Caribbean island of St. Thomas. A French monk related rumors that they came from “the ships of the Great Mogul laden with women, merchandise, and enormous treasure for Mexico.”³ Around the same year, a ballad began to circulate titled “A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Avery, Lately Gone to Sea to Seek His Fortune.” Over a century later, it was reprinted by John Pitts under the title “Bold Captain Avery.” In it, the boisterous pirate beckoned sailors and readers alike to join him in plundering ships from all nations.

In 1704, a proposal before the House of Commons warned that if Madagascar pirates are not suppressed “by Force or by Perswasion,” they will soon spawn a nation of rogues by interbreeding with islanders.⁴ Around 1707, a rogue biography of Avery appeared. Titled “The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, rais’d from a Cabbin Boy, to a King,” the narrative had Avery marry a Mogul princess and become King of Madagascar.

In 1712, Charles Johnson’s play “The Successful Pyrate,” a financial flop, had a brief run at Drury Lane’s Theater Royal. By 1724, the myth of Avery, the Pirate King of Madagascar, was so widely accepted that “several Schemes were offered to the Council for fitting out a Squadron to take him; while others were for offering him and his Companions an Act of Grace, and inviting them to England, with all their Treasure, least his growing Greatness might hinder the Trade of Europe to the East-Indies.”⁵ At the same time as his fame reached its apogee, Captain

³ See Labat, Jean-Baptiste. *The Memoirs of Père Labat, 1693-1705*. Trans. John Eden. London: F. Cass, 1970. 202. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

⁴ See House of Commons Sessional Papers, Sixth Parliament of Great Britain, Session One, 1704. *A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England (1668-1741)*. Dublin, London: John Torbuck, 1742.

⁵ See Defoe, Daniel. *A General History of the Pyrates*. Manuel Schonhorn Ed. New York: Dover, 1999. 49. All subsequent quotations come from this edition but use the pseudonym “Johnson” to refer to the author in view of Defoe’s disputed authorship (see Chapter 4.2.2).

Johnson argued in his *General History*, Avery was a pauper in England, cheated out of his ill-gotten wealth by jewel merchants.

How and why did this particular incident of piracy reverberate so widely and compel so much speculation? Why did rumor transform rape scenes into courtship of an exotic princess? Why did the public desire so greatly to see a cabin boy become an island king? And why was the name of Avery's ship retained, and made much of, in the ballad? Was this a case of history gradually becoming legend and if so, why this exact incident? Where did the history end and the legend begin?

From the arrogant note of a sailor turned pirate to the fabulous myth of a Pirate King, the story of Avery's 'success' was continuously embellished and transformed by rumor. Its transformations reveal much about the central preoccupations of British culture at the time. The cabin boy turned pirate turned king and seducer of the Orient inscribes a mythical pattern whose sacred qualities can be related without much difficulty to the age's greatest over-determinant—capitalist imperial expansion. Through the marriage of mythical archetypes with early modern capitalist desire, the dilettante pirate Avery was transformed into a formidable anti-hero who lived out the essential fantasy of his time—from rags to riches, from the quarter deck to a colonial throne.

But it would be too simplistic to say that fantasy replaced fact gradually, with the passage of time and with the distortions of each re-teller. Traces of the mythical at work can be seen even in Avery's own words. If we examine his declaration closer, the pomp and pathos of it are difficult to miss. The line "My men are hungry, stout, and resolute..." sports the iambic pentameter of heroic verse. Across the brief text, abstractions like fortune, fancy, and desire are not only placed under the common dominator of a quest trope but also implicitly said to be 'exceeded' by the sailor turned pirate. The tone itself is arrogant and belligerent, though posing

as friendly. Its subtext was correctly interpreted in the ballad as a declaration of war against ships of all nations. The East Indies employee's account of Avery's captures in Surat already paid tribute to rumor: an old woman related to the Mogul was only reputed to have been on board, paving the way to what was to become a beautiful oriental princess.

Real-life rape haunted the subtext of Johnson's play in which Princess Zaida resists Arviragus's persistent courtship and refuses to become pirate queen as the popular biography would have it. But the myth prevails in Johnson's resolution—Zaida's true love Aranes is revealed to be Arviragus's son, and so the pattern of conquest is re-enacted.

It would seem, then, that even the early historical documents regarding the 'facts' of the Avery case, including his own words, are already complicit in what was to become a full-fledged myth reportedly potent enough to be mistaken for reality. Some elements, such as the ship's name and Avery's declaration of total war, were retained and amplified. Other elements, such as torture, rape, and forced suicide, were transformed into allegorical abduction and romantic conquest of an Oriental princess.

It is important to emphasize that these early records, more than the events themselves, already contained mythical potential, demarcating as they did a certain portrayal of the pirate as a defiant commoner who declared war against all mankind in his pursuit of fortune and captured the coveted prize. This he achieved by 'exceeding' the greed of East India merchants engaged in colonial trade. Correspondences by members of the East India company reveal their deep concern that the Mogul would hold them responsible for Avery's depredations and seek revenge on them and their trade (Jameson 154-62). In that sense, Charles Johnson the playwright, and Captain Johnson, the author of *General History of the Pyrates*, picked up on parallels between the pirate figure and that of the economic opportunist that were already in currency. A number of Golden Age pirates recognized these parallels as a cultural commonplace and invoked them

when other justifications for their crimes were in short supply. The myth of the Pirate King proved that the British public was prone to glamorize courageous and successful fortune-seekers, often turning a blind eye to the methods used to obtain wealth and social status.

The notion that even early accounts of colonial piracy were implicated in the cultural production of an imaginary cultural icon is not novel. Hans Turley quotes the deposition of one Robert Joyce, a sailor whose ship was seized by pirates. He notes that the pirate Ingram in Joyce's report already 'speaks like a pirate'. Ingram's diction "is clever, profane, and frightening." Turley concludes that the pirate "is being represented as a cultural icon, even in a 'factual' account."⁶

One would be tempted to dismiss this observation as a retroactive envisioning based on what we know literary pirates to have become if it weren't for other sources of Joyce's time that engage in similar representations. His Ingram is heavily reminiscent of defiant pirate figures in Capt. Johnson's *General History* who speak unapologetically of their crimes, with similar certainty of being damned and punished, with a great distaste for cowardice, and occasionally great pathos in defending their choice to wage war against mankind. Although Joyce, a commoner, was unlikely to have read Johnson's book, published the year before his encounter with Ingram, his representation clearly taps into an already established cultural commonplace of what pirates were, or should be. While there is a definite overlap between the figure of the pirate and the more generic cultural icon of the rogue, the central emotion expressed in Joyce's portrayal is Ingram's privileging of self-sacrificial courage and punishment of cowardice—a mythos dating back to the age of buccaneering. A highway robber may strike with cunning, out

⁶ See Turley, Hans. *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality, and Masculine Identity*. New York and London: New York UP, 1999. 39. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

of the darkness. By contrast, the colonial pirate was often depicted as seeking combat in close quarters, often against the odds, with zeal bordering on insanity.

In the context of Johnson's *General History*, Turley's analysis indeed proves that a supposedly factual account employed cultural stereotypes similar to much less reliable sources. But a leap from claims of cultural icon reinforcement to the argument that such representations as found in Joyce's report tap into a deeper mythical reservoir must be done with great care. Nevertheless, the leap has already been made.

Literary historians John Mullan and Christopher Reid argue that pirates and highwaymen were "widely mythologized in the first half of the [eighteenth] century." They suggest two possible explanations. One is the nature of early capitalist development in England, which lent a degree of validity to the argument that these criminal types "could be thought of as opportunists in an age of economic individualism." The second reason they point out, which may be substituting effect for cause, is writers' awareness "of the sheer popularity and ubiquity of criminal tales."⁷

As thought-provoking as these statements are, the claim that pirates were mythologized alongside highwaymen remains without any textual support in Mullan and Reid's selection of popular eighteenth century literature. Their succinct claims raise a number of questions, only one of which is the issue of kinship between the pirate figure and the highwayman. And while much attention has been given to thieves and highwaymen as mythologized literary figures in early modern England,⁸ there is a notable paucity of corresponding critical literature on the myth-making of pirates. Hans Turley's detailed study of the ways in which the colonial pirate figure was sexualized in early accounts is the only recent work that focuses on pirate representations in

⁷ See Mullan, John, and Christopher Reid, eds. *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 2000. 179.

⁸ See Faller, Lincoln B. *Turned to Account*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1987. Also: Dionne, Craig and Steve Mentz, eds. *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2004.

archival materials. His exploration, however, deals with a specific aspect of cultural representation and shies away from theories of myth that are necessary to determine the limitations of the claim that the colonial pirate figure was mythologized. Turley's study maps out a direction but takes only a few narrow, albeit inspiring, steps. For instance, he contends that Defoe and Captain Johnson "mythologize the pirates for their own ideological purposes" but does not take care to define what mythologizing means, nor do we ever learn what these purposes might be (Turley 31). In fact, even in the much more impressive body of literature on early modern roguery, one would find little more than a puzzling reference to Levi-Strauss that eventually does nothing to explain why the legendary John Sheppard was compared to Proteus (Faller 175; 192).

It is this lack, or perhaps conscious evasion of myth theory, that the present study will seek to amend while crediting critics like Turley, Mullan, and Reid for opening these lines of inquiry. What does it mean exactly to say that colonial pirates were mythologized? What are the texts we should turn to if we want to observe this process at work? What are the theoretical tools we can employ to analyze them? How do we minimize the bias of retroactive re-imagining from a present perspective charged with its own representational agendas? What was the relationship of the colonial pirate figure to certain mythical archetypes? How do we go about theorizing the similarities and differences between it and the outlaw in general? Can we use mythical theory to account for the ubiquitous ambivalence of the pirate anti-hero that haunts Turley's analysis? And will doing so lift the cloud of 'indeterminacy' that Lincoln Faller laments in regarding the heroic highwayman figure?

By way of addressing these questions, the present study will examine a number of texts from the period of 1667 to 1726 written by participants, witnesses, and reporters who claimed veracity and intimate knowledge of colonial piracy. Regardless of such claims, these accounts

can be shown to engage in mythical thought. Often subtly, their authors transformed a historical phenomenon such as piracy in the colonial period into a trope reflecting contemporary anxieties but also imbued with some of the sacred and timeless qualities of myth. While not as overtly iconic and mythical as colonial pirate figures in literary works by Charles Johnson, Defoe, Byron, and Robert Louis Stevenson, the representations and self-representations of sea rovers in these early accounts echo in their totality all central features of the colonial pirate mythos.

Anthropologist Harry Levin explains that the term euhemerism refers to a mythoclastic process which “reduces myth to legend; and legend... to exaggerated history”⁹ This study will attempt to do the reverse—by looking at exaggerated histories and biographies of nominees for legendary status, I wish to identify early forays into the creation of a typically fragmented modern myth.

The time frame of these texts encompasses at least two distinct periods in colonial piracy—the Age of Buccaneering, and the Golden Age of Piracy. An overview of the rapidly shifting political and economic landscape of the period is essential to our understanding of the various agendas and genuine preoccupations behind individual writers’ mythmaking of the colonial pirate.

1. 2. FROM BUCCANEERS TO GOLDEN AGE PIRATES

Historians differ on the exact boundaries of the so-called Golden Age of Piracy. Marcus Rediker, a leading historian and ethnographer of colonial sailors, originally placed its beginning at 1716.¹⁰ Three years earlier, the Treaty of Utrecht brought peace to Western Europe and put thousands of colonial privateers out of their legal wartime employment. According to Captain

⁹ See Levin, Harry. “Some Meanings of Myth.” *Myth and Mythmaking*. Ed. Henry Alexander Murray. New York: G. Braziller, 1960. 107.

¹⁰ See Rediker, Marcus. “Under the Banner of King Death: The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates 1716-1726,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, (38:2), 1981, p. 209. Also see Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*. Cambridge UP, 1986. 254. All subsequent quotations refer to these editions.

Johnson, the mysterious author of *General History of the Pyrates* (1724), lack of employment was the main reason why many of them turned to piracy. The absence of centralized government and military presence in the American colonies of France and England had caused governors to tolerate, and often endorse, piratical activity in their jurisdictions during the second half of the seventeenth century. For the same reason, British colonial privateers were encouraged during The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) to undermine once more Spain's waning pre-eminence in the Caribbean and South America. The colonial counterpart of this conflict was known as Queen Anne's war, and was waged exclusively by royally commissioned privateering forces.

But, as several major narratives of buccaneering testify, a great number of pirates had ravaged the Caribbean and the Spanish Main long before 1716. Writers such as A. O. Exquemelin, William Dampier, de Lussan, and le Golif have recorded the buccaneers' numerous daring raids and depredations, captivating audiences, spawning imitations, and causing a number of fortune-seekers to sail for the West Indies. These records, especially Exquemelin's hugely popular and widely imitated *Buccaneers of America* (1678), have prompted historiographer Alexander Winston to set the starting date of the Golden Age of Piracy much earlier, at 1665.¹¹

In response to Winston and others, Rediker proposes a golden age of piracy spanning from 1650 to 1730, and featuring three 'distinct generations': the buccaneers of 1650-80, the Indian Ocean pirates of the 1690's, and the pirates of 1716-26. He is interested in exploring the latter generation, and a particular type of pirate representative of the period—the 'proletarian outlaw' who mutinied in response to exploitation and gained control over a colonial ship, thus asserting his presence in the exclusionary modes of capitalist circulation.¹² This narrower focus

¹¹ See Winston, Alexander. *No Man Knows My Grave*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1969, 36.

¹² See Rediker, Paul. *Villains of All Nation: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004. 8.

may help explain the conservative bounds of colonial piracy's golden age Rediker had initially proposed.

Why begin a study of pirate accounts with the rise of buccaneers in the 1660's? Certainly, the pirate has been an almost constant presence ever since man first set sail. As P. Bradley Nutting has argued, piracy was "a violent tradition long associated with the British Isles," traceable to 55 BC when Caesar crossed the Channel in order to suppress Celtic *piratae*.¹³ The Mediterranean of the fifteenth and sixteenth century saw not only pirates from the Barbary states but also a number of Western corsairs like the Dutch Danseker, and the English Ward and Cusack. At the advent of colonialism, English privateers made a strong debut in the Spanish War, setting the tone for two centuries of nearly continuous conflict and a controversial 'privatization' of maritime warfare. What set the buccaneers apart from Mediterranean corsairs and Elizabethan privateers? The most obvious difference was that of geographic location. Although much of the colonial designs of England were already formulated in Richard Hakluyt's *Discourse on Western Planting* (1584), it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that they were put into practice. Spanish supremacy in the New World was first contested not by the armies of other European heads of state but by significant numbers of poor and impoverished, displaced and rambling, French, British and Dutch subjects.

The most important process that characterized piratical activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries was what Rediker has identified as the "long-term tendency for the control of piracy to devolve from the top of society to the bottom."¹⁴ Over the course of the seventeenth century, control passed from the highest state officials through big merchants and small merchants, to the common sailors themselves. This demotic transformation of piracy was a

¹³ See Nutting, P. Bradley. "The Madagascar Connection: Parliament and Piracy, 1690-1701." *The American Journal of Legal History*, 22:3 (July 1978), 202-15.

¹⁴ See Linebaugh, Paul and Marcus Rediker. *The Many-Headed Hydra*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2000. 156. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

process rooted in the new modes of capitalist production and global commercial circulation of commodities and labor.

With few exceptions, buccaneers and Golden Age pirates came from a growing class that Patricia Fumerton has called “the unsettled poor.” At the cross-section of two larger demographic pools, sailors and rogues, colonial buccaneers, privateers, and pirates received more than their fair share of ballads and pamphlets. Increasingly towards the end of the seventeenth century, colonial piracy sparked controversial debates on the economic, legal, religious, and even sexual limits of ‘freedom.’ If “the seaman was a focus of both anxiety and economic value for the early modern period,” then the seaman as a criminal was the burning focal point at which “lowly representations of the unsettled poor” collided with new awareness of their essential role in the early modern economy.¹⁵

The rapid rise of the Brethren of the Coast in the mid-seventeenth century Caribbean marked the advent of a new mode of piracy which came into being in response to colonial wealth circulation and the uneven distribution thereof. Buccaneers came exclusively from the lower echelons of British, French, and Dutch societies. Between the islands of Tortuga and Hispaniola, the first of their ‘order’ jumped from crude boats onto the decks of Spanish galleons armed with little more than suicidal courage and the element of surprise. Unlike Mediterranean corsairs, these desperadoes did not have to take sides in a long-standing conflict between Christian and ‘Turk.’ Unlike Elizabethan privateers, they were rarely commissioned by a European state and their plunder was theirs to keep. Prior to the emergence of buccaneers, pirates and privateers had been outfitted and protected by affluent members of the aristocracy who were also the chief

¹⁵ See Fumerton, Patricia. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 2006. 30-1.

beneficiaries of their ‘labor’ in the battlefield. The infamous Hawkins and Drake were covertly endorsed by none other than the Queen herself.¹⁶

While buccaneers sometimes operated under the tenuous protection of a corrupt colonial governor, more often than not their only protection was their own ingenuity in forging commissions and hoisting the ‘correct’ colors. Their international makeup and somewhat supranational identities were yet another new element that set them apart from their predecessors who had to cast their anchors, and allegiances, in European ports. In their devotion to gold over national and religious idols, buccaneers, colonial privateers, and pirates even more so than landlocked English migrant workers partook in “an unsettled economy... that unmoored traditional notions of fixed spatial and occupational identity” (Fumerton 34).

Although correct in tracing the transformation of piracy into a tool serving the interests of lower-class colonials, Rediker misleadingly confines the last phase of this process to the beginning of the eighteenth century. This time frame obscures the fact that thousands of commoners turned pirate had been asserting their presence in the the Spanish Main as early as the 1660’s. For a group of Marxist ethnographers, buccaneers seem part of a transitional phase before England and other European powers “had discovered the navy as an instrument of national policy” (Linebaugh, *Hydra*, 148). The shift of focus away from the buccaneering period does disservice to their own arguments for the radical nature of colonial piracy. While it is true that the political context prior to the War of the Spanish Succession was quite different, many buccaneers turned pirate in the 1660’s and 70’s for the same economic reasons Rediker celebrates in the common sailors of the early eighteenth century.

Perhaps because the evidence of class awareness in buccaneer texts is not as compelling, and because their accounts generated lesser number of legendary figures, there has been a recent

¹⁶ See Haring, C. H. *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century*. London: Methuen & Co., 1910. 31.

tendency to exclude them from the ranks of ‘true’ colonial pirates. Rediker and Turley both suggest that historical figures of the period after the Peace of Utrecht, such as Blackbeard and Bartholomew Roberts, “generated most of the images of pirates that live on in modern popular culture” (Rediker, *Villains*, 9). This is not, strictly speaking, the case. What is true is that most of the piratical *personages* that have survived as faces of the pirate myth in contemporary literature and modern media, with the notable exception of Henry Morgan, bear the *names* of pirates from this later period. However, the overall *image* of the colonial pirate in modern popular culture is, as I hope to demonstrate, charged with a number of features that date back to now forgotten Caribbean buccaneers such as de Lussan and l’Ollonais, as well as to Indian Ocean pirates such as Avery, the fabled King of Madagascar. One of the main goals of this project, then, is to show how texts produced in different political contexts between 1650 and 1730 have all contributed to the creation of the pirate as an uneasily amalgamated and ambivalently mythologized cultural icon.

It takes no special strain to see Caribbean buccaneers as lower-class reactionaries to the new environment of colonial capitalism, first to cross the threshold into the greatest age of piracy the world had ever seen. The term ‘buccaneer’ initially referred to English and French hunters of wild cattle squatting in the northern parts of the Spanish island of Hispaniola. Upon Spaniards’ attempts to drive them out and deprive them of subsistence, many of them regrouped on Tortuga and found themselves in an ideal position to intercept galleons carrying silver from the mines in the Spanish Main. For several decades, their ranks were reinforced by former indentured servants like Exquemelin and fortune hunters like de Lussan. The rise of the “big commercial estate” of the plantation and its increasing dependence on African slave labor resulted in a surplus of poor European colonials who had no real place in the modes of production and circulation of commodities determined by the big plantation model (Linebaugh, *Hydra*, 149; Rediker, *Villains*,

63). Many of them joined the buccaneers, lured by the promise of Spanish gold. French, British, Dutch, and even Spanish pirates, sometimes numbering over a thousand and in fleets numbering over a dozen ships, sacked a number of large Spanish settlements in the West Indies and the Pacific, kidnapped the affluent for ransom, and sailed off with some of the most impressive hoards of silver, gold, and gems that history, before or since, has seen. Not to include them in piracy's golden age requires a number of good reasons.

Following in Rediker's footsteps, Hans Turley has proposed a distinction between the age of buccaneering and the Golden Age of Piracy. He contends that "the buccaneer differs from the pirate because he was an outlaw-made-nationalist hero," and adds that buccaneers "ceased to be a threat to Spain's colonies by piracy's golden age in the 1690's". Turley makes a further distinction between the buccaneer and pirate on one hand, and the colonial privateer on the other, who was by contrast, "a working member of society." In his view, there is a hiatus between the age of buccaneering (1660's to 1680's) and piracy's golden age (1690's onwards) (Turley 29).

While distinctions between the figures of the buccaneer, the privateer, and the Golden Age pirate are relevant for the purposes of literary criticism, they are far from being historically absolute. Late seventeenth century documents often used the three terms interchangeably, although the most charged label was invariably that of 'pirate'. Actual people seem to have fluctuated easily between these categories as occasion arose. Exquemelin, a former buccaneer surgeon, returned to the Caribbean as a privateer in the late 1690's to partake in the siege of Cartagena during the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697) that pitted France and the Irish Catholics against all other major European nations. The infamous Henry Morgan, main subject of Exquemelin's book, may have started out as a privateer but was considered a pirate by the Spanish and even by some of his own countrymen after he sacked Panama in 1671, a year after peace between England and Spain had been declared. He bribed his way out of legal prosecution

and secured the post of Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica, whereupon he compelled many of his former buccaneering comrades to become peaceful planters. Pere Labat, a French Jacobin monk whose memoirs encompass the years 1693-1705, observed that “nearly all” settlers on the island of San Domingo were retired buccaneers and were thus perfectly capable of defending themselves against Spanish and Amerindian raids (149). On a later occasion, Labat noted that many of the wartime rovers “cannot make up their minds to return to work when peace is made” (152). Other buccaneers, like William Dampier, joined the legitimate British navy as experienced seamen. He served under Woodes Rodgers, who was by contrast a rigorous policeman of the legal line between privateering, buccaneering, and piracy (Linebaugh, *Hydra*, 161-2).

Turley emphasizes that the buccaneer, driven by anti-Catholic or nationalist sentiments in addition to greed, was “heroicized because of his daring raids on Spanish colonial soil” and can therefore be distinguished from the pirate whom William Blackstone identified as *Hostis humanis generis* (Turley, 28-9; Johnson 377). There are several historical problems with this argument. One is that most of what we know of the buccaneers’ activities comes from participating observers like Exquemelin, Ringrose, de Lussan, le Golif, and a series of virtually unknown British commoners.¹⁷ They had nothing to gain, and much to lose, from incriminating themselves. It is true that, as Turley writes, the buccaneers were ‘outlaws-made-nationalist heroes’ but it is important to remember that they constructed themselves as such. Their accounts clearly struggle to fabricate a myth of the courageous anti-Catholic British buccaneer, or the patriotic French filibuster, who wage a holy and/or nationalistic war against Spain’s colonies in the name of their country’s imperial interests. In the final analysis, however, the reasons that made them direct most of their attacks to Spanish ships and colonies seem mostly economic, not

¹⁷ See Jameson 84-137. See also Ayres, Philip, *The Voyages and Adventures of Capt. Bartholomew Sharp and Others* and Basil Ringrose’s account in Exquemelin’s *Buccaneers of America* (discussed in Chapter 4).

political or religious. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the prosperous Spanish settlements in the New World constituted a much better target than the fledgling Dutch, French, and British ones. That moral justifications for attacking them in peace time could be found more readily was an added bonus.

Buccaneers were not unanimously perceived as pirates for two main reasons. First, the political situation allowed them to hide behind the diplomatic hypocrisies of Britain and France. Second, private parties such as colonial governors and merchants, to whom a large part of the spoils were conferred, benefited greatly from their activities. While Morgan, de Lussan, l'Ollonais, and thousands of other buccaneers should have been condemned and hanged as pirates by their own nation-states, no mass prosecutions of the sort took place. A number of historians have pointed out that, at this time, buccaneers served the imperial interests of their respective metropolises to undermine Spain's head-start in colonizing the New World, regardless of the current diplomatic relations with the Iberian empire. The buccaneers of the late seventeenth century, as evinced by their own accounts, were aware of the political situation which afforded them immunity from persecution by their own as long as they presented themselves as deeply righteous and patriotic enemies of Spain alone. Whether this was indeed the case, we are invited to doubt. Exquemelin related an instance in which Morgan and his crew seized a British merchantman and 'commandeered' her cargo, supplying its crew with worthless bonds they were told to reclaim in Jamaica. This Morgan justified by his need of supplies for the first raid on Porto Bello, which was not a legal campaign in any sense.¹⁸

Père Labat also notes that, after the peace of Ryswick in 1697, some French and English buccaneers had turned all out pirate. He feared his pirating compatriots less than the Spanish

¹⁸ See Exquemelin, Alexander O. *The Buccaneers of America*. Trans. Alexis Brown. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2000. 141. Subsequent quotations from this edition are denoted by *E3*.

pirates and hoped, in the event of being captured by them, “to be quit of the adventure for some casks of brandy” (Labat 153). The deposition of Thomas Phips, a carpenter pressed into serving on a pirate ship, indicates that Labat had grounds to expect preferential treatment from French pirates. In 1683, French buccaneers under the command of one John Hamlyn (aka Jean Hamlin) seized English and Dutch ships but (reluctantly) let French ships pass through. They tortured British crews and passengers in much the same way as de Lussan’s buccaneers had tortured Spaniards, but treated the Dutch more civilly.¹⁹ Although national identity had some effect on French and English buccaneer crews, eventually few of them resisted the temptation presented by their own nations’ merchant ships.

Unsurprisingly, among the privateers of the War of Spanish Succession were former buccaneers such as Exquemelin and Dampier. As Rediker and Linebaugh have pointed out, “some of the old-timers had served on Jamaican privateers during the War of Spanish Succession, then taken part in the new piracies after the Treaty of Utrecht” (Linebaugh, *Hydra*, 159). The infamous Edward Teach, known as Blackbeard, is thought to have begun his career as a privateer on English ships sailing out of Jamaica during the war.

It would seem, then, that the transition from buccaneers to wartime privateers to Golden Age pirates was transformative and evolutionary rather than radical or revolutionary. A large mercenary colonial force, whose initial formation dated back to the 1660’s, and which had long served the interests of the French and British empires, was gradually turning against the increasingly significant Atlantic merchant marines of those nations.

But the political and economic climate after 1713 had changed. The legal status of these men, many of whom were former privateers like Edward Teach and Benjamin Hornigold, was

¹⁹ See *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial: North America and the West Indies 1574-1739*. CD-ROM. London: Routledge: Public Record Office, 2000. 519-21. Further references to this text are denoted by *CSP*. More details on Phips’ deposition can be found in Chapter 3.

much less ambiguous. The pirates of the Golden Age could not justify their captures as easily as their predecessors once had. In 1675, John Rhodes & Co. were able to confuse Massachusetts authorities with a falsified commission from the Duke of Orange and probably bribed their way off the scaffold (Jameson 75). In 1722, the crew of Bartholomew Roberts had to resort to individual claims of being forced to participate in piratical acts by others. Few of them were acquitted (Johnson 250-87).

Rhodes and Roberts were part of a temporary shift of piratical operations to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The East Indies of the late 1690's saw a great deal of piratical activity initiated mostly by British ships outfitted in New York under the protection of a corrupt Governor, Colonel Fletcher (*CSP* 279-89). Operating out of Madagascar, pirates like Henry Avery attacked Arab, Mogul, and British merchantmen alike. The spoils were taken mostly to New England ports, starved for luxury commodities by the Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1663.

The buccaneers of the late seventeenth century and the pirates of 1716-26 shared, in many cases, the same values, even if the generation wheel had made its rapid turns, as it always did among colonial pirates and sailors in general (Rediker, *Villains*, 49-50). Though their justifications and claims to legality, as well as their primary targets, differed in accordance with the political and economic situation, these variously labeled men were unified by the desire to make a quick fortune and the readiness to risk their lives in taking that fortune through violent means. Buccaneers and early eighteenth century pirates also boasted a number of common cultural elements that have since become integral to the figure of the Caribbean pirate—democratic self-government, homosocial interaction, rigorously enforced loyalty and fair play towards each other, a cult of courage, hypermasculine brutality, indulgence in orgiastic spectacles of debauchery and consumption. While the buccaneers' representations, and self-representations, were significantly different from those of the early eighteenth century pirates,

they did not merely vanish unremembered in the marshes of history, as Turley implies. As I hope to demonstrate, their own imaginings laid the groundwork for a heavily mythologized and ambivalent anti-heroic figure.

Unlike Turley and Rediker, historian David Cordingly seems to make no clear distinction between an age of buccaneering, the period during the war of the Spanish Succession, and a Golden Age of piracy following the peace treaty of Utrecht. In view of multiple bridges, both historical and cultural, between Turley's age of buccaneering and Rediker's Golden Age of Piracy proper, Cordingly examines the entire period from the mid-1660's to the mid-1720's as a continuity marked by a much heightened rate of colonial depredation, whether legally sanctioned or unanimously condemned by imperial nation-states.²⁰ Following his example, I have selected archives and accounts all dating from this longer period. These include trial records and court depositions, letters between British and Spanish officials, personal narratives and journals, as well as Captain Johnson's major collection of reported stories of pirates' lives. Although the authors of these texts wrote with vastly different personal, political, and ethical agendas, and applied a multiplicity of terms to colonial sea rovers, they each engage in modes of mythmaking that contribute to the emergence of a singular, widely-recognized cultural icon—the larger-than-life figure of the colonial pirate.

One of the chief goals of this study is to show, and account for, the instantaneity of colonial pirates' entry into the cultural imaginary. So swift was this transition that, as Turley justly points out, it is “impossible to separate the “real” pirate who preyed on legitimate traders from the romanticized version accepted as the “reality” in the twentieth century (36). Even first-hand accounts of piracy dating back to the 1670's, upon close inspection, betray traces of sleight

²⁰ See Cordingly, David. *Under the Black Flag*. New York: Random House, 2006. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

of hand that cast a shadow on their authors' credibility and lead us to suspect awareness of a large audience and desire for self-aggrandizement, self-exoneration, or sensationalism. The discernible distortions introduced by witnesses and reporters, who all share a claim for veracity, result in the loading of the colonial pirate figure with a number of features, often contradictory, most of which have remained in the cultural imaginary of the Western world.

But before we attempt to map out this early stage in the creation of the colonial pirate mythos, we must place the process in its broader historical framework, of which the political history related so far is only an aspect. The multiplicity of conflicts between European empires in the period delineated by these texts is itself the result of deep economic transformations that reverberated in the politics, but also the cultures of the time. To understand these is to understand a large part of the fascination that propelled the pirate to an eminent position in the popular cultures of the metropolises and colonies of Britain, France, Holland, and Spain.

1. 3. COLONIAL PIRACY ON THE CANVASS OF ITS TIME

In his remarkable cross-section of eighteenth century England since the accession of George II, historian Paul Langford writes:

A history of luxury and attitudes to luxury would come very close to being a history of the eighteenth century. There is a sense in which politics in this period is about the distribution of this luxury, religion about the attempt to control it, public polemic about generating and regulating it, and social policy about confining it to those who did not produce it.²¹

We could do worse than to add one more item to Langford's impressive list: popular culture, which sought to challenge the selective distribution of luxury commodities and new wealth

²¹ See Langford, Paul. *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1989. 3-4. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition.

through social satire and what Langford himself identifies as an insatiable public “interest in the deeds and misdeeds of criminals.” Indeed, few among the underprivileged classes thought that there was something fundamentally immoral about the highway robbery of a middle-class lady with disposable income (Langford 156-7). The notorious criminal Jack Sheppard was a legend among the lower classes who celebrated his successful escapes from a punitive system perceived by many as tailored and enforced to protect the wealthy from the poor.²² Public executions of incorrigible criminals, among whom were many pirates, although meant as deterrents, became spectacles “as likely to promote compassion for the victim as a sense of just retribution” (Linebaugh, *Hanged* 158). The last stanza of the popular *Ballad of Captain Kidd* had his crew revel in their infamy and boast, not without grounds, that “Some thousands they will flock / To Execution Dock / Where we must stand the shock and must die” (Jameson 257).

Execution Dock in London was not the only stage upon which crowds eagerly soaked in condemned pirates’ ‘dying behaviors.’ Jamaica, Barbados, and Antigua routinely saw pirates swing on their gallows. In North America, pirates extended their activities as far up as New York, Massachusetts, and Newfoundland. The execution of John Quelch, accused of piracy in Boston in 1704, was attended by 100 to 150 boats full of people. The six condemned had to go “by Water to the place of Execution, being Crowded and thronged on all sides with Multitudes of Spectators” (*Ibid.*). Quelch was not famous by any means. Yet, the mere fact that he was to be executed for piracy drew enormous attention. Owning up to its audience, the execution became a drama in several acts. It was opened by Cotton Mather, who assured the crowd that God “wouldest not Suffer [the condemned] to continue in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity, and in the Possession of the Devil” (*Ibid.* 279). The sermon was followed by a reportedly defiant

²² For further reading about Sheppard’s fabled prison escapes and his status as a folk legend, see: Linebaugh, Paul. *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*. London, New York: Verso, 2003. 7-41. Also: Mullan and Reid, *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture*, 179-84.

appearance by Captain Quelch who, “when on the Stage... pulled off his Hat and bowed to the Spectators” (*Ibid.* 281). To the disappointment of Judge Sewall and the ministers, Quelch did not show the expected humbleness and repentance. He went so far as to accuse his accusers of treachery— some of them directly profited from his death. Regardless of this ‘gall,’ the hanging of the pirate caused, in Judge Sewall’s words, “such a Screech of the Women that my wife heard it... a full mile from the place” (*Ibid.* 278). This single occasion reveals much about the various ways in which officials, clergymen, and commoners perceived pirates and other condemned criminals.

One of the most important goals of this study is to show how different class subjectivities resulted in disparate, often conflicting, modes of pirate mythmaking. The source of the lower classes’ fascination with successful criminals and pirates was no mystery. To those who struggled for basic sustenance in the new age of luxury, a pirate’s life outside the law and mainstream culture became charged with connotations of freedom, justice, egalitarianism, and most importantly, economic opportunity. Because the pirate was portrayed exclusively as an unrepentant outlaw and an anti-social outsider, he became a tool for the political ventriloquism of controversial views. Playwrights Charles Johnson and John Gay echoed their audiences’ disgruntlement with state corruption through the frank speeches of characters such as Johnson’s Piraquio and Boreal, and through the actions of highwayman Macheath in Gay’s *Polly* who disguises himself as the black pirate Morano and begins to undermine the plantation economy by organizing escaped slaves.²³

But the pirate figure did not appeal only to the underprivileged, marginalized, and subversive elements of eighteenth century British society. Paradoxically enough, it fascinated to

²³ See: Gay, John. *Polly: An Opera. Being the Second Part of The Beggar's Opera*. London: Printed for T. Evans, 1777.

an equal extent members of the rising middle class who comprised the great majority of the reading public and the great majority of actual pirates' victims. The readers of Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pyrates* were mostly those whose new wealth the law was designed to protect from such rogues as depicted in the collection. Yet, for many of them, the pirate figure struck chords of individualism, opportunism, and rapid upward class mobility which echoed essential middle-class values and aspirations. As Langford observes, there was hardly a royal subject in eighteenth century Britain who did not strive to appear and act as a gentleman or a lady of means. While the lower classes, mostly devoid of resources, engaged in satirical parody, the *nouveau riches* middle classes were far more resourceful and serious in mimicking the aristocracy. Their desire to ascend the social ladder is clearly echoed in the pirate figure of many popular novels. David Cordingly notes that a number of pirate novels and films portray "the pirate captain as an aristocrat, or as an educated man of some standing in society, who has taken to piracy as the result of some misfortune" (Cordingly 17). Thus legitimized, the pirate (representing the aggressive capitalist) gains new wealth and demands an entry into the exclusive higher strata of British society.

Robert Dryden has argued compellingly that the rising English middle class wished to appropriate the pirate figure as a representation of their own desires for upward mobility and social recognition. Dryden observes that *Captain Singleton*, along with other novels by Defoe, can be read as a middle-class manual on how to amass, preserve, and legitimate a fortune.²⁴ This appropriation is certainly part of what Simon During terms 'the civil Imaginary' and defines as the secular production of narrative "representations of manners, taste, behavior, utterances for imitation by individual lives." But like the rogue figures in Fielding and Smollett that During reflects on, the representations of pirates in middle-class writers (Defoe, Johnson, Snelgrave)

²⁴ See Dryden, Robert. "Successful Pirates and Capitalist Fantasies." Diss. Louisiana State University. 2000. 18-19.

often exceed (ideologically) ethical prescriptions and “disencumber themselves of their politics.”²⁵ Defoe’s Singleton may be a role model for upward mobility but the roles he takes on during his ascent are well beyond the pale of ‘good taste.’ For this reason, Captain Johnson set out to debunk Avery’s imaginary status as King of Madagascar. But in a perfect example of representations ‘disencumbering’ themselves, he repopulated the imaginary island with dozens of pirate kings. Each had his own kingdom and throne, his own harem, and was said to be surrounded by a labyrinth like the Minotaur.²⁶

The mode of portraying (and failing to portray) pirates as economic opportunists is not confined to early works of fiction and false histories—it is visible in personal accounts by identifiable members of the middle class like William Snelgrave but also by lower-class subjects like John Cox and Bartholomew Sharp. While critics like Dryden and Daring are interested in the colonial rogue figure’s ability to attract and resist appropriation in certain ideological ‘myths,’ our study will attempt to determine where this ability comes from. By examining anti-heroic representations of pirates within a mythical framework, we will seek to understand how and why disparate ideologies channeled the ‘primary’ representational forces of myth.

Often, the middle-class agenda in pirate representations placed the emphasis on economic opportunity and individualism, as well as a general distaste for the excesses of debauchery, gambling, and drinking to which many historical pirates were prone. But how did pirates who did not subscribe to middle-class values perceive themselves? The vast majority of actual pirates were representatives of the uneducated, often indentured and exploited, ‘unsettled poor’. Many common sailors seem to have associated the pirate’s life with better victuals and freedom from exploitation. For them, sea-roving outside the restrictive bounds of society was sometimes its

²⁵ Daring, Simon. “Literature – Nationalism’s other?” *Nation and Narration*. Comp. and Ed. Homi Bhabha. 142-4.

²⁶ Compare Johnson 49 and 61.

own reward (Rediker, *Villains* 55). Their unique perspective is revealed not only in the few texts they produced, but can also be gleaned from court depositions and accounts by literate observers.

The emphasis in texts inflected by commoners generally fell on community rather than individual, excess rather than moderation, retribution to the ruling class rather than respect for authority, unapologetic joy of transgression rather than vicarious enjoyment thereof. To do justice to the multi-layered mythmaking of the colonial pirate figure, we need to take into account the voices of regular buccaneers under Bartholomew Sharp and of Golden Age pirates some of whose perspective survived in brief correspondences, court depositions, and trial records.

With the possible exception of Raveneau de Lussan's account and the letters of the Spanish Governor of Panama, none of the texts in the immediate focus of this study were authored by identifiable members of the British, French, or Spanish metropole aristocracy. Yet, all the elements 'rescued' by Lord Byron's poem "The Corsair" (1814) were present in earlier imaginings. Over a century after the rewriting of Henry Morgan into a noble leader of piratical scum, Byron's poem presented the same tragic figure but without any hint of imperfection. Gone are even the more acceptable transgressive features like debauchery which initially linked the pirate figure with that of the Libertine. Hans Turley points out that the difference of class affiliation had always set these two cultural icons apart, the Libertine being unfailingly recognized as a born aristocrat whose transgressions within the bounds of society, although mirroring some of the pirate's transgressions without, were tolerated due to his high social status (Turley 39-40). Byron's Conrad, loosely based on corsairs operating in Greek and Turkish waters, seems intended to strike out both the Libertine and the transgressive pirate from the cultural imaginary. The poet's voice merged with that of the Corsair to scorn the "vain lord of

wantonness and ease” in common pirates (and in the readers), warning them that the path of excess reaches a point where “pleasure cannot please.”²⁷

Constructed as ethically and aesthetically opposed to his own immoral subjects, Byron’s Conrad continued the tradition of Defoe’s Captain Singleton who claims high birth and constantly looks down upon his lowly associates. The opposition can be traced to Exquemelin’s first English translation, which attempted to dissociate Henry Morgan from his buccaneer army. One of the most apparent precursors to Byron’s aloof and noble leader was William Snelgrave’s rendition of Captain Davis in *A New Account of Guinea*, which we will examine as a pinnacle in early anti-heroic construction.²⁸ However, Byron’s stress on the natural leader’s divine right is much more absolute than Snelgrave’s essentially middle-class portrayal. The corsair towers above his subjects, with whom “he mingles not but to command” (Byron 7).

What we have, then, is a high aristocrat’s secondary appropriation. He accepted constructions of the noble pirate captain by middle-class reporters and bent them to his own ideological purposes. By adopting and enhancing Snelgrave’s idea that morality and moderation are signs of the high-born rendered especially visible among common pirates, Byron attempted to restore artistically the ‘hydrarchy’ that common pirates historically managed to turn upside down (Linebaugh, *Hydra* 154-6).

At a time of major imperial expansion, a peak in the African slave trade, and an unprecedented commercial growth, the colonial pirate entered popular culture with a different yet equally fascinating face for every beholder. As variegated as the modes of mythmaking may be, within an anthropological framework they reveal more than social or economic stratification. While the narrative agendas in these sources generate seemingly very different pirate figures,

²⁷ See Byron, Lord. “The Corsair.” *The Select Poetical Works of Lord Byron*. Paris and Lyons: B. Cormon and Blanc, 1836. 5.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of Snelgrave, see Chapter 3. 2-5.

there is a common underlying pattern of ritualistic textual sacrifice, a common operation of the pirate as a near-mythical anti-hero. By focusing on witness accounts from the height of colonial piracy, I wish to not only capture multiple perspectives on historical events and characters, which is the goal of an ethnographer, but also to trace the pattern of symbolic sacrifice in early textual representations of the colonial pirate figure, which is the goal of a literary critic.

This is not a quest for origins or realities of pirate life, but rather an investigative analysis of writing as a cultural ritual in which perceived realities play a much more important role. Critic Myra Jehlen has argued quite brilliantly that the perspective of an observed cultural other is more recoverable in texts like Captain John Smith's account of meeting Powaton that were written shortly after the event. She refers to this type of analysis as looking for 'history before the fact.'²⁹ To paraphrase her resonant term, in our side-by-side readings of texts by observers and participating observers, we will be looking for 'self-representation before representation.'

1. 4. THE COLONIAL PIRATE: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

In representations so ambivalent and repetitious as to signal a cultural fixation, volume after volume of criminal biography have fixed the pirates of the early modern Caribbean as objects of popular fascination, glamorization, and, I think, nostalgia since the late seventeenth century.

—Erin Mackie³⁰

There seems to be a long-standing and unhealthy divide between those who contextualize the colonial pirate figure as derivative from a larger tradition of exoticized roguery and those who argue for his highly subversive, even unparalleled, qualities.

²⁹ See Jehlen, Myra. "History before the Fact; Or, Captain John Smith's Unfinished Symphony." *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993). 677-92.

³⁰ See Mackie, Erin. "Welcome the Outlaw: Pirates, Maroons, and Caribbean Countercultures." *Cultural Critique* 59 (2005). 24.

In his 1906 study *The Literature of Roguery*, Frank Wadleigh Chandler offered a highly comprehensive (and thus necessarily imprecise) overview of three centuries of literary texts he called “anatomies” of the criminal type. He situated the *General History of Pyrates* within a series of 1720’s works modeled after *Histoire Générale des Larrons* and comprising of *The Memoirs of Gamesters*, *The Lives of Highwaymen*, and *The Newgate Calendars*. All of these works, Chandler argued, collected the best examples of an earlier genre “as the vogue of the single criminal pamphlet showed signs of decline at the end of the seventeenth century” (140).

When speaking of pirates, contemporary cultural historians such as John Mullan and Christopher Reid also limit the discussion to a more generic criminal figure. A less typical example is Erin Mackie’s essay exploring the operation of circum-Atlantic cultural nostalgia in which colonial pirates are seen as an early kind of glamorized frontier outlaw (24). Paul Linebaugh also seems to place them in a larger category with the sonorous name of “the picaresque proletariat” (Linebaugh, *Hanged* 119).

The opposite tendency—that of focusing exclusively on the pirate figure’s unique qualities—is visible in Paul Rediker’s works and, to a lesser extent, in Hans Turley’s study. To be sure, both approaches are absolutely valid and can be equally fruitful. What is not beneficial is the seeming lack of critical dialog between them. Perhaps perceiving this divide, Linebaugh and Rediker have collaborated more recently to show that highwaymen and colonial fortune-hunters drew from the same pool of disgruntled laborers (Linebaugh, *Hydra* 157-60).

In text and in reality, the divide between land- and sea-based roguery was neither absent nor absolute. The case for the simultaneous uniformity and uniqueness of European pirates was made as early as 1675 in the opening of a *The Grand Pyrate*:

The World hath been long entertained with Accounts of Highway-men and Land-Robbers, but Piracies and Sea-Robbers being for the most part either under the guard &

protection of some States... or on the pretence of a Commission from some Prince engaged in a War with his Neighbours; therefore it is hoped that the following Account shall be received and read generally, since it contains some of the passages of the most signal Sea-Robber, that perhaps this Age had known...³¹

In no uncertain terms, the ‘impartial hand’ that authored the gripping story of Captain George Cusack situated the pirate both within and without a tradition of vicarious criminal ‘entertainment.’

The pirate figure’s kinship to the highwayman, later affirmed in John Gay’s *Polly*, is indisputable. But equally beyond dispute is the fact that the pirate offered unique opportunities for the imagination. The *Grand Pyrate* identified one of the central qualities setting pirates apart from highwaymen—their ability to ‘navigate’ supranational waters by shifting, breaking, or feigning allegiances. The historic link between European sea-rovers and sovereign states would later be severed for good, turning Golden Age Pirates into the first supranational criminal subjects.

But the connection between pirates and heads of state would not dwindle as easily in literature, as playwright Charles Johnson’s pirate king Arviragus evinced in 1721. It is this connection that had enabled the classical pirate Dionides in Thomas Lodge’s *Of Manie Famous Pirats* (1593) to confront Alexander the Great with the claim that the only difference between them is that of scale. Quoted misleadingly by Chandler as “a bit of picaresque philosophy,” this early text in fact highlights the pirate figure’s unique ability to deconstruct statehood, one that neither highwaymen nor picaresque rogues could match (Chandler 140). Even the legendary “Prince of Thieves” operated as a source of justice within the realm. Characterized by Yirmiyahu Yovel as “the first great anti-hero of Western literature,” the picaro Guzman embarks on an early

³¹ See Impartial Hand, *The Grand Pyrate: Or, The Life and Death of Capt. George Cusack, The Great Sea-Robber*. London: Printed for Jonathan Edwin, 1675. 3. For more on Cusack, see Chapter 3:5.

modern pilgrimage for true values. Yovel reads him as a literary outlet for dissent for Spanish intellectuals who conceived of themselves as “the other within.”³² Unlike the free-roaming pirate, Guzman does not (and cannot) generate an alternative order within the busy landscape of Western Europe.

A firm believer in extratextual foundations would have no trouble arguing that the pirate’s ability to deconstruct state authority was earned by the confrontations between Rome and the pirates of Asia Minor as well as by the well-known existence of North African pirate states along the Barbary Coast. With the onset of colonialism and the emergence of buccaneers, the pirate figure became associated with the passage to the South Seas and other unknown regions in the world’s periphery. Together, the old and the new associations laid the foundations of such imaginings as Captain Misson’s Utopian pirate state of Libertalia. Though undoubtedly roguish in essence, the colonial pirate was an anti-hero of a higher order. While accommodating most of the features of the likeable picaresque villain and even the folk hero, he or she also provided colonial writers with the means to address not only the ongoing crisis of religious and state institutions but also the new realities of global trade, hyperconsumption, and upward class mobility.

1. 5. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The four core chapters of this study are organized in a way that may initially suggest a transition from fact to fiction. Upon closer examination, however, the transition inscribed by these texts proves to be from greater to lesser *claim* to objectivity. Unlike the Boston merchant Edward Uring, desperate to convince the judge that he did not co-operate with pirates, popular historian Captain Johnson could afford to admit, on occasion, that his information came from

³² See Yovel, Yirmiyahu. “The Birth of the Picaro from the Death of Shame.” *Social Research*. 70:4 (Winter 2003).

less-than-reliable sources.³³ Regardless of the extent of their claim to historical truth, however, all of the texts we will analyze in detail tap into mythological archetypes even as they are fashioning a ‘new’ kind of literary anti-hero.

The archival chapter examines court depositions, personal letters, newspaper articles, and other archival miscellany. Read through Captain William Snelgrave’s account of being captured by pirates in 1719, many of these sources can be shown to contribute to the forging of a new kind of colonial anti-hero.

The chapter on Bartholomew Sharp and his men takes us back to the buccaneering period. Armed with some necessary ‘prescience’ we will attempt to identify earlier precursors of colonial pirate lore in the first person accounts of five different English buccaneers who participated in the same campaign.

The next chapter examines the perspective of an impoverished French aristocrat turned buccaneer. He and his countrymen (Pere Labat and Voltaire) will provide us with the means to identify unique mythmaking opportunities that occur in the cultural space between nations (English, French, Spanish) and also between classes (aristocrats, professionals, the clergy, and commoners).

The two chapters on buccaneers present us most clearly with examples of self-heroicizing which nevertheless resulted in anti-heroic portrayal. More reasons for the failure to censor transgression will be tackled in the beginning of the next chapter on Exquemelin and Johnson. The last of the core chapters will trace the elements that were carried over from the most famous buccaneering epic to the most famous Golden Age pirate collection and beyond.

Although Johnson’s *General History of the Pyrates* is not strictly speaking a witness account, it contains and interprets a multiplicity of more and less reliable sources. Furthermore,

³³ Compare Jameson 76-84 to Johnson 6.

historians continue to look to it for a wealth of ‘facts’ about colonial piracy. It is hoped that including Johnson in this study will deepen critical understanding and caution. It is also hoped that situating it in the context of what was a literary as well as cultural process of mythmaking would establish points of connections between the present study and the works of literary scholars like Dryden, Baer, and especially Turley. Finally, in view of our main argument, the anti-heroic and near-mythical images of pirates in the General History, many of which continue to influence our cultural imaginary, make it impossible to overlook.

Besides nominating Snelgrave’s Davis as vantage point for our analysis of anti-heroic mythmaking, the archival chapter will continue to identify the historical conditions and rhetorical situations that spurred certain imaginings about pirates. For various reasons, the often gory truth about piratical acts, and about pirates themselves, was convenient to none. The depositions of sailors accused in piracy were skewed well beyond the expected agenda of their authors who wished nothing more than to exonerate themselves. As we will observe, these text contributed to the mythmaking of colonial piracy in several surprising ways.

But while distortions may have brought a degree of ‘literariness’ to historical documents about colonial piracy, this does not amount to saying that they necessarily resulted in mythical representations. Indeed, in many cases they did not. Care must be taken to define what mythologizing means exactly and to demonstrate to what extent certain trends in documentary representations can be seen as exhibiting, prefiguring, or assuming mythical qualities and elements. The methodology chapter will provide the tools necessary to distil mythical elements and to outline specific instances of a complex cultural process through which individuals with various representational agendas engage in mythical thinking and arrive at a sort of symbolic equilibrium. Out of multiplicities of individual bias emerges something greater—a portrayal of the pirate as a larger-than-life and highly ambivalent figure whose singularity makes him an

attractive landing site for a number of cultural anxieties. He wields with ease such conflicting attributes as demonic sadism next to heroic courage, anarchy next to democratic self-government, entrepreneurial spirit next to an utterly amoral and iconoclastic ‘sacred Hunger for Gold.’³⁴

Representational trends already present in court depositions and other witness reports were enhanced in trial records published in metropole newspapers and periodicals which made no secret of their taste for sensation (Langford 156-7). Public interest in defiant criminals did not begin with John Applebee’s exploitation of Newgate prisoners. The exploits of buccaneer and later Golden Age pirates were often marketed as ‘adventures’ even by those who otherwise condemned them as low-life thieves. There is evidence suggesting that pirates themselves had a clear sense of being in the public’s eye and were well aware of the divided opinions about their crimes. The anonymous commoner under Bartholomew Sharp wondered how the buccaneers’ raids were being interpreted in England.³⁵ Johnson told of the surgeon Scudamore who asked a deserting sailor “in a leering Manner, whether he would not be so kind, as to put him... into *the Gazette*.” His irony was evidently only partial, for he had earlier “gloried in having been the first Surgeon” to sign the pirate articles (271-2). Johnson also told the memorable story of Captain Massey who turned himself in and confessed to his piratical deeds in a public trial, calmly requesting that the Royal Navy execute him or else make full use of his abilities by appointing him as officer (*Ibid.* 310-1). Needless to say, this overt attempt to convert infamy to fame misfired but the anecdote illustrates an important point: many pirates, like those around them, operated under the illusion that misdeeds at sea, if lucrative or heroic enough, would buy them immunity from the law. It was a dream that came true for at least one pirate—the buccaneer

³⁴ See Chapter 4, the narrative of John Cox (*J1*).

³⁵ See Chapter 4, anonymous narrative (*J5*).

Henry Morgan. He not only bribed his way out of the noose but also purchased the post of Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica. Another pirate, Henry Avery, lived this dream in legend only by becoming a fabled King of Madagascar.

Witness accounts of English and French buccaneers' activities in the Caribbean and the Spanish Main help us identify some of the earlier precursors of colonial pirate lore. Like the authors of court depositions, the writers of these first-person accounts could only benefit from steering away from facts. In most cases, they had time between the event and the act of writing to come up with imaginative ways of obscuring and twisting the reality of their exploits. As Raveneau de Lussan's account reveals, some buccaneers consciously sought to project a ferocious, superhuman, image in order to be able to overcome unfavorable odds and avoid unnecessary battles. The tactic of intimidation, later employed by Golden Age pirates such as Roberts and Blackbeard, was a staple of the sea raider and became an important source of material for demonic representations of pirates as 'Furies from Hell.'

At the same time, other aspects of the historical and rhetorical situation resulted in glamorized representations of buccaneers and Golden Age pirates as extreme offshoots of the mythical hero. Aware of the heightened popular interest in their 'adventures,' buccaneer writers like de Lussan, Sharp, and his men, romanticized themselves as dashing, chivalrous rogues. Meanwhile, their publishers stressed on national and religious justifications for their depredations on the Spanish, presenting them as a scourge of bloodthirsty patriots.

Yet, even the most selectively blind publishers did not neglect to advertise the moral transgressions found in these accounts. The indelible violence embedded in them led to the construction of the buccaneer as a new kind of anti-hero imagined by some as a new species. Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*, the greatest source of buccaneer lore, struggled to reconcile positive portrayals of buccaneer prowess, courage, and loyalty, with the harsh reality of

atrocities and excess. Much of this ambivalence was retained and amplified in Captain Johnson's sketches of Golden Age pirates.

* * *

This inquiry is expected to profit several humanitarian disciplines. The field of literary criticism will further the validity of extending its scope to archival material that was, until recently, the exclusive domain of historians, historiographers, and ethnographers. Just as the history of literature comprises an important aspect of any historian's approach to the colonial period, so should the literature of historical texts enrich a literary scholar's perspective. At the same time, looking at these texts as representations and constructions rather than as faithful historical accounts should inspire more caution in scholars whose goal it is to distinguish fact from fiction. Considering the rhetorical purposes and target audiences for which these texts were produced is essential to judging the extent of their reliability as sources of historical data. For instance, Captain Johnson's *General History of the Pyrates*, one of the most substantial sources for colonial pirate ethnographers, has been almost universally considered to be fairly reliable. Philip Gosse, a mid-twentieth century historian, relates a number of the stories found in Johnson as historical fact, including the highly questionable and entirely uncorroborated story of Captain Misson's Madagascar utopian state of Libertalia (194-200). Christopher Hill has likewise accepted the story as fact, issuing a call to other historians to search for the Old World's reactionaries among pirates such as the deist Misson.³⁶ While the call itself is valid, evidence found in the Misson chapter is more likely to lead us to a disgruntled middle-class subject fantasizing within the old dominions.

³⁶ See Hill, Christopher, "Radical Pirates?" *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*. Eds. M. Jacob, J. Jacob. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984. 17-32.

While contemporary historians and ethnographers such as Rediker, Linebaugh, and Turley are more careful to disclaim the authenticity of parts of Johnson's text, and especially the Misson chapter, they often refer to it indirectly, reiterating conclusions that earlier historians such as Gosse have based on it. David Cordingly is aware that the famous description of Blackbeard, which in many ways ensured his symbolic immortality, comes from Johnson's General History and is pieced together from hearsay and fanciful speculation. Still, he makes a distinction between historical characters turned legend, such as Blackbeard, from Captain Hook, Long John Silver, and other famous fictional pirates (13). It is a distinction that the present study intends to blur. Blackbeard did indeed exist, but the fierce image that survived to join the ranks of other famous pirates was already fictionalized. Johnson himself invokes the imagination in describing Edward Teach and likens him to a meteor and a fury from Hell (84-5). As a product of (partly collaborative) cultural representation, Johnson's Blackbeard seems closer to Berry's Hook and Stevenson's Silver than to the actual person who terrorized North Carolina for a little upward of a year and who was much less sensationally described by an eyewitness as a "tall spare man with a very black beard which he wore very long."³⁷ The leap from this 'spare' description to the image of a wraith from hell (one who allegedly took five shots and twenty stabs to kill) is perhaps the most radical instance of mythopoeia at work.

The issue of reliability concerns not only the author of the General History. As this study will show, no account of piracy should be regarded uncritically, as a purely, or even mostly, factual source. There is a pressing need to re-evaluate and re-assess these sources before we could make claims concerning colonial pirates' historical role. By addressing issues of representation and author bias, the present study will consign certain portrayals of pirates, including pirates' own, to the realm of mythmaking speculation and draw conclusions about why

³⁷ See: Konstam, Angus. *Pirates 1660-1730*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1998. 18.

such representations were preferred and retained. For instance, we will be less concerned with whether archaeological evidence corroborates, as Cordingly argues it does, accounts of pirates tying silk ribbons to their pistols and in their hair, and more concerned about why this particular detail, once recorded, was preserved and continuously emphasized (14).

Because the theoretical emphasis of the present study falls on mythmaking elements—a feature predicated on issues of cultural production and thus independent of genre conventions—it need not differentiate between texts claiming veracity and texts conceding their own fictional nature. Indeed, an exploration of mythological elements in colonial pirate reports and narratives will necessarily lead to a discussion of the ways in which the pirate as a cultural icon was adopted into literature proper. The chapter on Captain Johnson’s *History* will also touch upon Defoe’s *Captain Singleton* and *The King of Pyrates* in the context of previous findings. In this sense, it is hoped that the current study will form a prequel to John Dryden’s exploration of middle-class imaginings of pirates in literature and theater. This part of the discussion will likely contribute to discourse on the rise of the British novel, a phenomenon that has recently been seen as stemming from colonial travel writing.

Most of the text examined here describe events and deal with subjects engaged in the Atlantic system of colonial commerce, production, and slave trade. This study will help implicate the pirate, and imaginings of the pirate, in the kinds of circulation of technology, ideas, commodities, and bodies that are central to the fields of Atlantic and Diaspora studies. Attention will be paid to elements of mythmaking which position the pirate identity, real and imaginary, in an ‘apposite’ racial, national, religious, sexual, and ethical space. In a time of increasingly stringent ideological binaries, the colonial pirate was neither *this* nor *that*. Although essentially white, he sailed in multinational crews, mingled with Amerindians and worked the riggings of a ship alongside African slaves, some of whom earned their freedom and stayed on. Although

Christian by default, he kidnapped, tortured, and murdered other Christians, and was often portrayed as reveling in the damnation of his own soul. Although predominantly male, he dressed up and cross-dressed, engaged in rape, licentiousness, and allegedly in sodomy.

Hans Turley has made a number of important observations on “the pirate’s refusal to be pinned down into *any* dichotomous position in either the economic or the sexual model” (41-2). Ambivalent features cohabitating in the pirate figure set it in opposition to both dipoles of a binary opposition. I will analyze these features as resulting not merely in the creation of an incredibly polyvalent popular cultural icon but as venturing into the sacred symbolical domain of myth. Novelist Andrew Lytle writes that the controlling image, in our case the pirate figure, must often contain, without reconciling, “the opposites which make a whole: the two in one contained by a single form.”³⁸ Constructed by opposition to either pole in a binary cultural structure, the pirate is celebrated as both traitor and national hero, beast and nobleman, hypermasculine debaucher and cross-dressing homosexual. He is an early modern shapeshifter who embodies, transforms, and interprets the most sacred cultural mythemes of the colonial era.

³⁸ See Lytle, Andrew. “The Working Novelist and the Mythmaking Process.” *Myth and Mythmaking*. Ed. Henry Alexander Murray. New York: G. Braziller, 1960. 149.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2. 1. MYTH: A WORKING DEFINITION

If we are to demonstrate convincingly that witness accounts of colonial piracy carry recognizable elements of mythmaking, we must first take care to define what myth is. Laying the theoretical framework upon which such an argument obviously rests should enable us to identify mythical qualities, patterns, and digressions. It will also naturally set the limitations to seeing these texts as purely mythical.

Twentieth century anthropologists have unanimously departed from the simplistic view of myth as “a pre-scientific ‘theory’ of nature, supposedly peculiar to an early period or stage in human evolution.”³⁹ Unfortunately, unanimity ended with this departure. A plethora of competing definitions and theories has filled the void, re-enacting the very fragmentation and ‘privatization’ of myth that thinkers like Sophia Heller have outlined.

In a recent survey essay, Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko has usefully compiled a set of twelve distinct critical approaches to the study of myth. Six of these approaches are more relevant to this study: myth as source of cognitive categories, as form of symbolic expression, as projection of the subconscious, as world view, as mirror of culture, and as result of a historical situation (*Sacred Narrative* 47). Most of them are complementary; some overlap. While the list illustrates the multiplicity of disciplines, (psychology, ethnography, religious studies, etc.) that have turned their attention to mythological material, it says precious little about what exactly constitutes a myth.

³⁹ See Honko, Lauri. “The Problem of Defining Myth.” *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Ed. Alan Dundes. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984, 41.

In 1955, Claude Levi-Strauss, the father of Structural Anthropology, famously contended that “the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction.”⁴⁰ Although it would seem at first glance to be a reiteration of the pre-scientific definition, he prefaced this statement by a broader definition of mythical thought as a timeless phenomenon that “always works from the awareness of oppositions towards their progressive mediation” (“The Structural Study of Myth” 440). In other works, he posited the existence of a “pragmatizer,” a non-specific member of the community who needs to embody abstract relationships in order to grasp them.⁴¹

Contemporary theorists have found this definition to be too constrictive, not only because it seems to account mainly for creation myths, but also because it still implies a primitive confusion between reality and magic. To minimize this implication, Lawrence Hatab has revised Levi-Strauss’s definition as follows: “A myth is not *meant* to be an explanation but rather a presentation of something which can *not* be explained (in the sense of an objective account).”⁴²

Hatab’s revision wishes to circumvent the difficult question of whether the myth-teller must be its unconditional believer. The problem is that other theorists have used precisely this condition to distinguish myth from the fairy tale. In David Bidney’s words, philosopher Susanne K. Langer has argued that “unlike fairy tales, myths are taken with ‘religious seriousness’ either as historic fact or as mystic truth.”⁴³ Working against Wundt’s historical progression in human thought that she sees as inherited from Vico, Langer envisioned a diachronic shift from “the egocentric interest of the folk tale . . . [to] . . . the objective, universal interest of the nature-

⁴⁰ See Levi-Strauss, Claude. “The Structural Study of Myth.” *Journal of American Folklore*. 68 (1955), 443.

⁴¹ See Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1963, 229.

⁴² See Hatab, Lawrence J. *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths*. La Salle: Open Court, 1990. 8.

⁴³ See Bidney, David. “The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution.” *American Anthropologist, New Series*. 52:1 (Jan.-Mar. 1950). 17-8.

myth.” Interestingly enough, she proposed the “culture-hero” as a “transitional stage” between the two, a point to which we will return later (qtd. in Bidney 18).

Bidney’s own contribution lies in the proposal that a text’s classification as either a fairy tale or a myth is contingent upon the psycho-cultural context in which it is told (22-3). Myth then becomes the label of an outsider for what, at some period in time and in a certain cultural context, was perceived earnestly as a sacred text. The same text or oral narrative may become a fairytale if it ceases to be retold in earnest. At the same time, myth acquires its modern connotation of a delusion or deliberate lie only through the value judgment of a perspective lying outside of its operation. This important distinction between myth and fairytale opened the door to Harry Slochower’s 1970 definition of “mythopoesis” as emerging from “situations in which literal meanings could no longer be tolerated by a later society, which then re-created the ancient stories in new guises.⁴⁴

The problem with distinguishing myth, fairytale, and mythopoesis solely by shades of sincerity or the degree of readers’ tolerance for the literal meaning, is obvious. In order for myth to exist as a viable concept, we need to assume the existence of an utterly naïve mythical thinker who is then enlightened in stages. If he or she knows the myth is not to be taken literally, it becomes a fairytale. And if he or she alters the language to be even more enjoyable, the fairytale becomes mythopoetic. But who is to say what the individual attitude to a text or oral source may be? In most cases, this judgment comes from without and as such carries an agenda: an anthropologist may talk about a myth becoming a fairytale under the pressures of scientific discourse or a literary critic may ‘expose’ a novelist’s work as private mythopoeia. In either scenario, myth becomes a euphemism for lack of self- and world-awareness. Though with noble

⁴⁴ Slochower, Harry. “What Mythopoetic Means.” *Mythosphere: A Journal for Image, Myth, and Symbol*. 2:2 (2000). 255-62.

intent, Langer, Bidney and Slochower's approach merely substitutes a psycho-cultural evolution of human thought in place of Vico's temporal one.

The work of contemporary anthropologist Eric Dardel deserves a mention at this point because it resists both 'evolutionary' models but in order to do so, it takes a mystical turn. In "The Mythic," he argues for a radical degree of separation between modern thought and the "mythic stage" in which the "relation between stone and ancestor"—one 'being' fully equivalent to the other—was not "weakened by centuries of grammar and philosophy" (*Sacred Narrative* 227). Dardel shows how the 'essence' of the mythic as a 'long word' embodied by the entire tribe itself exceeds the forms of narrative, aesthetics, and logic which it only appears to adopt. While this may seem like a compliment, Dardel concludes that '[p]rimitive mentality differs from the civilized chiefly in that the conscious mind is far less developed in scope and intensity. Functions such as thinking, willing, etc., are not yet differentiated; they are preconscious" (*Sacred Narrative* 247). Even anthropologists unburdened by the paranoia of Western guilt would have to admit that this claim is far beyond the demonstrable. Quarantining the primitive from the modern and arguing that one cannot access the other is not a real solution—eventually, Dardel's conception of the mythic begins to seem as yet another symptom that modern theorists of myth have lost all hermeneutic faith.

Despite the current crisis in mythical theory, anthropologist Percy S. Cohen has arrived at what I consider to be a working definition. While neither flawless nor succinct, it seems to synthesize most of the features implied in Honko's overview and at the same time manages to distinguish myth more meaningfully from other kinds of written or oral narrative. Cohen writes:

The chief characteristics of myth are as follows: a myth is a narrative of events; the narrative has a sacred quality; the sacred communication is made in symbolic form; at least some of the events and objects which occur in the myth neither occur nor exist in

the world other than that of myth itself; and the narrative refers in dramatic form to origins or transformations. The narrative quality distinguishes a myth from a general idea or set of ideas, such as a cosmology. The sacred quality and the reference to origins and transformations distinguish myth from legend and other types of folk-tale. The narration of events and reference to objects unknown outside the world of myth differentiates myth from history or pseudo-history.⁴⁵

Regrettably, the full potential of Cohen's definition has not been recognized so far. Note that he distinguishes myth from legend and folk-tale not only in terms of 'sacredness' but also in terms of its more universal frame of reference. Narrative events in myths often have meta-universal implications for the culture that produces them and the individuals that reproduce them. At the same time, sacredness is not synonymous with sincerity, much less with naïveté. As evinced by modern proponents of Intelligent Design, for instance, one does not need to believe the literal meaning to find a sacred code in the narrative. Sacredness is in fact a product of the perceived relevance of the encoded 'origins and transformations' to the subject's own psycho-cultural makeup.

We can thus circumvent the 'evolutionary fallacy' by evaluating the sacredness of a particular text in terms of the observable and discrete relationship between the cultural and historic context, the narrating subject, and the text itself. This is by no means a ground-breaking approach for the field of literary studies. Yet, for many anthropologists and ethnographers who attempt to look at the bigger picture the proposed inclusion of the individual story-teller may come as a shock even as it does away with the impossibility of gauging an entire culture's level of sincerity. It is hoped that the comparative study of competing accounts by Sharp's men in

⁴⁵ Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth." *Man*. 4:3 (Sept. 1969), 337.

Chapter 4 would inspire more analysts of myth to pay attention to the narrative voice and, if prudent, to compare different versions of the same myth told within the same culture.

In identifying the narrative voice behind the Venda myth of Python and his two wives as belonging to a jealous first wife poised to take down her rival, René Girard has made a step in the right direction. But even he admittedly ‘amalgamated and slightly condensed’ two versions of the myth.⁴⁶ One could argue that the more cohesive the culture and the more established the myth, the more inessential differences in versions would be. Even so, the level of similarity would be a good way to measure cultural cohesion. The early modern texts we will study reveal a much lesser degree of cultural cohesion than the Python myth, which warrants further our consideration of the narrating subjects. This will be essential in the chapter on Sharp’s men where we will compare five different accounts of the same historical event.

2. 2. COLONIAL PIRATE ACCOUNTS AS EARLY MODERN TEXTS

In order to apply meaningfully a broad anthropological framework to our case study, we need to complicate it a bit further. We must take into account the rapid fragmentation of early eighteenth century British culture, and more precisely the increasing awareness thereof. In early modern societies it becomes possible for outsider subjectivity to develop within the same nation, culture, and time period. It is precisely this phenomenon that Yovel highlights in his conception of the Spanish *picaro* as literary outlet for dissenting intellectuals. The concept of “a Cultural other within” needs no explication nowadays. England at the turn of the eighteenth century, even more than Spain of a century before, boasted a plethora of dissenting voices. Though society was fragmented mainly along the lines of class and religion, as Paul Langford shows, the subgroups within these categories were surprisingly numerous. Writers, publishers, and readers of the

⁴⁶ Girard, René. “Python and His Two Wives: An Exemplary Scapegoat Myth.” In Williams, James G., ed. *The Girard Reader*. New York: Crossroad, 1996. 119-20.

period, engaged in increasingly pluralistic public debates on issues ranging from Papism to dressing appropriately for one's station. Often meeting with derision and ostracism, those engaged in the turbulence of early 18th Century print culture were becoming increasingly aware of such concepts as private truth.

Describing the modern "personalization of myth," theorist Sophia Heller writes:

Personal myth involves abstracting the narrative structure from the old stories and transposing them onto today's. So that, for example, one's life experiences and obstacles or one's depression is located within a larger, impersonal context, nestled in a timeless and ubiquitous pattern that infuses every "hero's journey" and "descent to the underworld" ...⁴⁷

What Heller describes is the present stage of a process through which the cohesive mythology of an oral community such as Ancient Greece was transformed into a 1926 conception of artist Paul Klee's worldview as a "private mythology" (66). The texts under our scrutiny are variously located between two ideal extremes: the total unity of oral mythology and a total state of modern fragmentation. Early witness accounts of colonial piracy reflect, as they cannot help but do, economic and religious factions of the day. But what really makes them 'modern' is a permeating uncertainty in the universal truth of their mythical departures. It is precisely this awareness that charges single texts with disparate mythical elements of competing, often contradictory, valence.

Even in a post-modern age of private truths, mythmaking is never a purely individual act. Its success is still measured by a work of art's ability to 'coerce' on a universal level. Externalizing our coerced parts as victims of an artist's mythopoeia, more popularly termed a 'vision,' we fancy ourselves more resistant and self-reflexive than our 'primitive' predecessors

⁴⁷ See Heller, Sophia. *The Absence of Myth*. Albany: U of New York P, 2006. 66.

whom we tend to imagine as gullible ‘consumers’ of myth. In doing that, we insert a wedge between the relative ‘rewards’ of sacredness (belief) and entertainment (suspension of disbelief). English print culture around the turn of the eighteenth century provides us with perhaps the earliest specific textual manifestations that betray this split. In the context of a long-term transformation from public to private myth, Addison and Steele’s goal to “enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality” marks the juncture at which readers and writers, weary with overconsumption of the few undisputedly sacred texts in their culture, began to privilege such renditions as were more digestible and pleasurable.

What does it mean to say that, heavy footprints of myth notwithstanding, witness accounts of early colonial piracy belong to an essentially modern discourse? Susanne K. Langer has argued that the modern epoch is defined by “a mighty and revolutionary generative idea: the dichotomy of all reality into inner experience and outer world, subject and object, private reality and public truth.”⁴⁸ In pre-modern societies, myth as a sacred narrative thrives within the broad overlap between individual perspective and communal belief. The act of retelling a myth in such a society is a ritual performance which, in the words of Jeffrey Alexander, “energizes the participants and attaches them to each other, increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience, the relevant ‘community’ at large.”⁴⁹ In other words, the pre-modern individual derives his or her identity from the ritual performances of their culture, without differentiating between public truth and private reality. By contrast, modern performances are marked with a degree of reflexivity, a permeating awareness that the audiences

⁴⁸ Langer, Susanne. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*. New York: New American Library, 1948. 19.

⁴⁹ Alexander, Jeffrey C. “Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy.” *Sociological Theory* 22:4 (December 2004), 527.

they attempt to affect are fragmented into multiple imaginary communities and may or may not decode the symbolic content ‘properly.’

Within this theoretical framework, early colonial pirate mythmaking emerges as an array of textual performances clearly footed in the modern epoch. Buccaneers were the first early modern pirate figures not because they traversed the frontiers of colonial expansion but because their various mythmaking, both self-authored and committed by publishers, exhibited awareness of a critical audience which may or may not buy into the sacred structures proposed in their narratives. Even the least sophisticated of voices, the anonymous buccaneer under Bartholomew Sharp’s command, realized that his performances on and off the page were being enjoyed but also scrutinized by a disparate public in England.

Because of this awareness, many writers and publishers of early colonial pirate accounts sought to alternate their apologist discourse, targeting different audiences with different sets of sacred content. And even if the pirate accounts examined here formed a single ritual performance with a consistent sacred content and a unity of purpose, which they do not, for an increasingly stratified British readership no single mythical figure could possibly be decoded from them. The folk hero myth and the myth of the pirate king were keyed to appeal to the lower classes. The middle classes were invited to see the pirate as the most extreme and colorful colonial entrepreneur. The high-born were asked to ponder the possibility of noble pirates naturally presiding over rabble.

Fragmented audiences were partially responsible for the colonial freebooter’s anti-heroic portrayal in print. While the more inveterately moral among readers were lulled by disclaimers condemning pirates as demonic servants of the devil, those with affinity to the extreme and transgressive were invited to celebrate their heroic feats and partake in their subversive sexual and cultural performances. Often, these two experiences commingled inseparably. As if to be

able to oscillate more fluently between mythical demons and heroes, early colonial pirates also acquired attributes of the Trickster and Shape-Shifter figures.

The detectable presence of early modern fragmentation in the core texts compels us to conceive of colonial pirate mythmaking not as a widely-believed mythology or mythos but rather as a conglomerate of near-private truths with widely varied sacred content, each with limited range of cultural operation. These private truths' kinship to myth lies in the fact that even the most manipulative of authors wove into the fabric of their texts elements of universality which attempted to enlist the pirate figure into a relatively coherent mythical super-narrative. Their ideological purposes may have varied from nation-building to covert social critique to middle-class fantasies of uncurbed capitalism but the universal aspect of the pirate ethos—an underlying meditation on self-sacrifice on the altar of individual freedom –is the sacred thread that binds them together.

Before we address the nature of this self-sacrifice, it is important to underscore that no single text discussed in this study possesses all of the characteristics Cohen assigns to myth. However, when examined together, these accounts can be clearly seen as working towards a relatively unified mythos. In all of them, 'sacredness' is implicitly or explicitly ascribed to material wealth and the consumption thereof. Even the driest of narrative voices communicate this sacred quality through meticulous recounting of loot or imaginary pirate treasure. In buccaneer accounts, sacred structures from the Old World such as religious denomination and national identity became subservient to what buccaneer John Cox boldly proclaimed the 'sacred Hunger for Gold.' Exquemelin and de Lussan reported that Catholic French buccaneers frequently put up with their British companions at the promise of greater loot. Reports and accounts written during colonial piracy's Golden Age continued to flirt with the idea of the sea-

rover as an extreme colonial investor and aggressive social climber for whom fortune was the only idol.

Upon cursory examination of the core texts, a feature that in Cohen's definition sets myth apart from false history or legend seems to be missing—namely, the reference to supernatural, fantastic events and creatures. Closer readings, however, reveal a pattern. Though often understated, attributes from a number of mythological archetypes make their appearance. A number of participants in buccaneer raids sought to portray themselves and/or their companions as beings of mythical courage and dexterity, capable of overcoming odds of twenty to one. Based on such exaggerations, their publishers and printers nominated them as national scions. The buccaneer genre also set in motion a tendency to portray the colonial pirate as a new species of man-beast, one endowed with great tenacity and admirable resourcefulness but also with a terribly inverted moral compass. Alexander Exquemelin's account of the origins of the Brethren of the Coast was the first to construct this new species of sea-rover as a creature born in exotic climates out of incredible hardships and tribulations. On the other end of the spectrum, sermons towards the Golden Age began to condemn the pirate as a demon, the way the buccaneer had been perceived in the eyes of the Spanish. In false histories, he figured as a 'Devil Incarnate' even while he was celebrated as an exceptionally courageous combatant. In short, the foremost candidate for the role of a supernatural creature in early accounts of colonial piracy was the pirate himself.

Supernatural courage and strength are elements intimately tied with another aspect of myth. Cohen points out that unlike legend myth refers in a dramatic form to 'origins and transformations.' The texts we will discuss make a number of such references, some obvious, some only visible when the text is approached with Cohen's definition of myth in mind. The dynamic inscribed by the myth of Avery—a cabin boy turned pirate turned island king—was one

of both origins and transformations. It captured the popular belief expressed most clearly in Charles Johnson's 1721 play that successful pirates may become founders of new colonial states. In the play, Piracquo and Boreal, both loyal subjects of the Pirate King, wonder if he is any different from other sovereigns, positing piracy as coterminous with civilization (*The Successful Pyrate* 3). Decades earlier, French buccaneer Raveneau de Lussan's search for 'the oldest pirates of America' among Amerindians also bespoke a perception of piracy as a constant companion of human beings ever since they first set sail.⁵⁰ Addressing both origins and transformations, Captain Johnson obsessively revisited the moment of turning pirate, arguing implicitly that one cannot become *Hostis humanis generis* unless one already is.

In Captain Johnson's *General History*, the pirate as a supernatural species came into sharper focus. He was often portrayed as a demonically cruel 'enemy of Mankind' but just as often he was depicted as a freedom-fighter and utopian dreamer. Johnson's collection of court depositions, criminal pamphlets and rumor reflected and accelerated the colonial pirate figure's transformation into a new order of literary anti-hero of a near-mythical caliber.

In *How Novels Work*, John Mullan has identified two major contemporary uses of the term 'anti-hero' in literary criticism. It has been applied to "blundering, foolish protagonists" like Schweik and Yossarian who are "good men baffled by the world." Another definition of anti-hero, and less problematic for Mullan, is "a protagonist who draws us into sympathy despite doing things that should appall us."⁵¹ Reflected in this distinction is a problem of moral indeterminacy: is the anti-hero naturally good, yet (comically) unlikeable or naturally evil, yet (tragically) compelling? The short answer is that in contemporary novels he or she can be either or both at once. These "transformations in the status of the hero" have taken place as a result of

⁵⁰ de Lussan, Raveneau, Siur. *A Journal of a Voyage made into the South Sea by the Bucaniers or Freebooters of America*. London: Printed for Tho. Newborough, 1698. 49. See Chapter 5 for more.

⁵¹ Mullan, John. *How Novels Work*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 2006. 89-90.

what Fredric Jameson calls “a modulation from some ‘original’ solar myth through the levels of romance, epic and tragedy, comedy and realism, to that of the demonic and ironic, of the contemporary anti-hero.”⁵² In terms of genres, this modal literary fragmentation of the hero is manifest in the colonial travel narrative’s rehashing and repositioning of elements from the chivalric epic, the mystery plays, and the picaresque. It is clearly a stage in the modern internalization and privatization of myth we outlined earlier. To contextualize anti-heroic representations of the colonial pirate should then be equivalent to analyzing the mythical elements they contain.

What kind of anti-hero is outlined by colonial pirate figures of early modern accounts? In his analysis of Johnson’s *Captain Fly*, Turley contends that “English society’s dialectic of fear and admiration of the pirate indicates a conflict between the pirate’s representation as legal or economic criminal and his portrayal as a literary antihero.” Turley sees the former image as product of the discourse of “normative sexuality” or “private domesticity” while the latter he links to “sexually deviant subjectivity” (75). In other words, the pirate was criminalized as a sodomite by some while vicariously enjoyed by others who re-imagined him as a likeable anti-hero.

To construct such an opposition between anti-hero and condemned criminal requires that we split the figure who ‘draws us into sympathy’ from the one that does ‘things that should appall us.’ It seems to negate the possibility of authors and readers who pursued normative agendas while enjoying sexual deviance. In our analysis, the portrayal of the pirate as an early modern antihero incorporates and is in fact contingent upon his image of a hardened economic criminal. Turley is right to argue that colonial discourse on normative and deviant sexuality

⁵² Jameson, Fredric. “From The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.” McKeon, Michael. *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. 407.

appropriated representations of pirates even in witness accounts. However, we hope to show that the result of this and other projections is not a clear representational split between stigmatized criminal and enjoyable transgressor but a discursive ‘modality’ of the anti-hero on the levels of both individual and intra-societal representation. Approaching the texts as modern fragments hearkening back to an old mythical framework, we will attempt to show that criminality and enjoyment of piratical anti-heroes are in fact interdependent.

2. 3. THE COLONIAL PIRATE AS A ‘SELF-SELECTED’ SCAPEGOAT

One way to account for what has since become a perpetual bias towards the unrepentant pirate figure is to recognize reports contained in Johnson and other sources as part of the traditional genre of ‘dying speeches.’ In numerous pamphlets of seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the condemned criminal addressing the crowd from the gallows was allowed, even required, to both shock and invoke sympathy. But this is only the first step towards a true explanation, one which happens to lie outside the scope of even the broadest literary historians such as Mullan and Reid. To address the question of why imminent punishment made certain subversive performances both permissible and eminently readable, we will have to examine the pirate as a mythical anti-hero in the light of ritual sacrifice.

For our purposes, Andrew Lytle’s ‘apposites which make a whole’ summarizes the result of a process through which the colonial pirate figure has acquired over the centuries a high degree of moral ambivalence. But, as René Girard rightfully points out, “the sonorous term ambivalence” merely denotes “a problem that remains to be solved” (*Violence and the Sacred* 1). Fortunately for us, Girard’s unraveling of ritual sacrifice and his theorizing of mimetic desire goes a long way to explain why the pirate figure is able to host apposite attributes.

Girard conceptualizes ritual sacrifice within any culture as a ‘scapegoating’ through which “two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or

responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters.” The selection of the victim is arbitrary and brought about by a culmination in mimetic crisis. Mimesis in Girard’s thought is a reciprocal process that cannot provide any real resolution—the subject and object strive to imitate and outdo each other and themselves as mirrored in the other. The two or more people involved in this dynamic eventually turn into an ‘undifferentiated’ mob that seeks to restore harmony through the sacrifice of a surrogate victim (*Reader* 12).

Before we elaborate, a clarification is necessary. The concept of mimetic rivalry as outlined by Girard is not to be confused with Homi Bhabha’s notion of mimicry as an ‘ironic compromise’ imposed by a ‘disciplinary double.’⁵³ The former operates between individuals within a culture while the latter is defined as a domination strategy across cultures. The two can be seen in relation if we entertain the idea that mimetic rivalry is in effect on the intercultural level, in which case what Bhabha sees as a double-edged device of mock agreement and imposed identity would constitute one of several ways in which mimetic rivalry perpetuates itself. Like an individual, the culture that perceives itself as dominant or leading in the race for the ideal object may seek to preserve its advantage by orchestrating or staging an equilibrium (on its terms). What Bhabha calls ‘slippage’ is the awareness permeating any performance—that of falling short—which eventually ruptures the mock equilibrium and restores the rivalry. Thus, mimicry can be conceived of as one of the doomed strategies for resolving mimetic desire.

A proper reconciliation between two concepts of this complexity level merits a separate treatise. For our purposes, suffice it to say that a weak intra-cultural analog of the intercultural dynamic described by Bhabha as mimicry is applicable in cases where a strongly middle-class subject writes a lower-class Other. However, since we are interested in the near-mythical (as opposed to ideological) production of this and other configurations, Girard’s mimetic rivalry

⁵³ See Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 122-3.

culminating in ritual sacrifice seems to be more productive for its broader scope, as well as for its relevance to intra-cultural processes.⁵⁴

In Girard's view, most myths describe a historical event in which an arbitrary scapegoat was sacrificed to restore order at a time of social or natural crisis. Although the mob selects a victim more or less randomly, "ethnic and religious minorities" as well as any "abnormal" members of society are said to possess "preferential signs of victimage" and are more likely to be targeted near the climax of mimetic rivalry (Girard, *Reader* 119; 112). In this light, Turley's observation that Johnson's Captain England "and his ilk can be set up as antiheroes precisely because they transgress in so many public cultural ways" will surely lead us to reinterpret key pirate figure performances related by outsiders as imagined and magnified signs of victimage (Turley 76).

Initially, the scapegoat is ascribed negative supernatural powers that make him or her culpable for the kind of crisis the group is experiencing and also 'guarantees' that the sacrifice will be effective. Once the victim is disposed of, however, he or she "is revealed as a founding ancestor or a divinity." Girard terms this phenomenon "the second transference of the sacred," the first being the blame placed on the victim for having the supernatural ability to have caused the crisis in the first place (*Reader* 119).

An outlaw nearing the point of retribution, such as a pirate about to be hanged, is thus expected to invoke both transferences of the sacred. For one, he must continue to embody a negative force like Thomas Morris in Captain Johnson's *History* who announced himself as a plague. But because death is virtually certain, a condemned criminal is also allowed to shine with part of the tranquility that he or she is about to restore. Thus, the captured and doomed Mary

⁵⁴ It should also be noted that the word 'mimicry' in this analysis will only be used in its traditional sense.

Read is allowed to glorify the colonial pirate as a courageous fighter for social justice and economic equality (159).

But what really unlocks the door to a coterminous influx of both positive and negative powers in a great number of pirate figures is not the certainty of public execution. If it were then buccaneers of the earlier period would have little claim to the title of cultural scapegoat. If it were, then not much would set apart the pirate from landlocked criminals whose performances on London's Execution Dock incited shock, stirred sympathy, and restored social order all in one stroke. What enables the colonial pirate figure to operate much more intensely than picaros and highwaymen as both demon and hero is the fact that the colonial pirate was often seen as complicit in his own ritual sacrifice. One example of many was the pirate Ingram who impressed the sailor Joyce with the threat that he "shall be hang'd" for his honesty "as well as we for our Roguery" (qtd. In Turley 39). It is one of our central contentions that the ambivalent portrayal of a near-mythical early modern anti-hero in witness accounts of colonial piracy is enabled by the motif of a self-selected scapegoat. Bent on a 'voyage to Hell,' the pirate figure acquires along the way every major contemporary cultural anxiety that needs to be 'resolved.' And because he assists in his sacrifice, he can co-opt both demonic and benign powers to attain the status of a highly polarized anti-hero.

Although we are beginning to see how the traditionally slippery aspect of 'ambivalence' in the colonial pirate figure can be tackled as the product of cultural scapegoating, a direct application of Girard's theory of mimetic violence to our case study presents some difficulties. First, in a strictly Girardian framework, the scapegoat does not select him or herself for annihilation but is the reluctant object of 'irrational' violence. In order to resolve this apparent problem, we need to remember that we are looking at a cultural icon's manifestation in text and not an actual person committing ritual suicide. In other words, a literary tendency to represent

early colonial pirates as self-sacrificial may or may not reflect any historical truth and their peculiar scapegoating may or may not have resulted in any actual physical sacrifice. Still, if we approach textual representations of early colonial pirates—even those promulgated by witnesses and direct participants—as externalized and aestheticized reproductions of mimesis and sacrifice operating as a kind of cultural valve, we can go a long way in dissecting the culture that produced them. Mullan and Reid among others have identified the pirate figure’s heightened relevance to the colonial period in that he could be conceived of as an extreme investor. Along with this ‘new’ projection, he was also imagined as an aggressive social climber (Dryden), and sexual deviant (Turley). The ‘mimetic rivalries’ in which he was variously imagined to excel run the full gamut of contemporary cultural anxieties.

The literary nature of a pirate figure’s self-scapegoating also resolves the second problem in applying a strict Girardian framework to our analysis—the fact that in most textual examples of anti-heroic pirates there seems to be no strict division between the two transferences of the sacred, malign and benign. In the telling and even self-telling of their lives and deeds, pirate figures’ qualities seem to alternate frequently between the demonic and heroic. By contrast, a ‘classical’ scapegoat is worshipped as a benign agent for having brought back rain or otherwise restored order only after the sacrifice.

To account for this difference, we suggest that if the party engaged in scapegoating projects onto its target awareness in the inevitability of its sacrifice, then the negative and positive transferences of the sacred may *appear* confluent or reversed. Writing always takes place ‘after’ the fact of sacrifice and in it the life of the scapegoat is ‘revealed’ to have been sacred and benign all along. In writing, the moment of sacrifice is revisited and reconstituted as a heroic triumph in the case of surviving pirates and as a tragic loss in the case of deceased ones. Creating a cultural vacuum, this imaginative ritual act essentially posits a new ideal target for

mimetic rivalry and perpetuates the cycle of crisis. A version of this process takes place even in sources authored by participating buccaneers and Golden Age pirates. Although they find it impossible to obliterate incriminating details, the path to justification invariably passes through the valley of heroic self-sacrifice.

The process through which a past scapegoat is erected into an irreplaceable cultural icon has already been schematized by performance theorist Joseph Roach under the name of surrogation. He captures both the aspect of retroactive imagining and the function of perpetuating mimetic desire: “Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds... The intended substitute either cannot fulfill expectations, creating a deficit, or actually exceeds them, creating a surplus. Then too the surrogate-elect may prove to be a divisive choice...”⁵⁵

The more intensely a scapegoat is imagined as self-selected, the more ‘heroic’ and irreplaceable he or she may appear in retrospective. Revisiting of the sacrifice in ritual performances, of which narration is one, inverts chaos and order to create a new object for mimetic rivalry. One would be absolutely correct to perceive in this dynamic the possibility of defining the mythical hero as an ‘inverted’ cultural scapegoat who is sacrificed on the altar of mimetic rivalry in order to reconstitute desire and perpetuate ritual violence. While away, the hero can be imagined as a Heracles battling Hydras to restore the symbolic order of the universe. It is at home, however, that he actually accomplishes this goal. At home, the hero is a raging Oedipus in danger of the same communal violence that heroicized him.

Although Girard never conceptualizes overtly the figure of a self-destructive scapegoat, in his reading of an Aztec creation myth, he points out “the free and voluntary aspect” of

⁵⁵ See Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. 3. Subsequent quotations come from this edition.

Nanauatzin's sacrifice "for such a wonderful cause as the birth of the sun" and goes on to posit a hidden "collective murder rather than a self-sacrifice" (*Scapegoat* 59). In his discussion of Aeschylus, he speaks of Freud's famous death wish as "a last surrender to mythological thinking" carrying the recognition that "reciprocal violence" needs to be transformed into "ritual violence" (Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 144-5). Thus, Oedipus can be seen as a 'literary' scapegoat consciously presented as a volunteer in his self-destruction by a Greek culture that needed to ritualize its mimetic rivalries—the collective murder of the scapegoat is presented as a 'tragic end.' Though Achilles actually dies by the hand of another mortal man, like Oedipus, his tragedy stems from envisioned self-sacrifice in the service of restoring order. The 'tragic flaw'—Achilles' wrath and Oedipus's ambition—is a thinly veiled, singular, and highly abstracted 'sign of victimage' invoked to explain why the hero self-destructed.

In this context, the tragic hero as a self-destructive, self-scapegoating 'monstrous double' is only a shade away from the self-sacrificing anti-hero. Both carry enough potential to be retroactively imagined as 'forefathers,' i. e. objects of mimetic desire. The shade of difference between hero and anti-hero, brought into focus by buccaneering narratives, lies entirely in what constitutes his desire to self-sacrifice—whether it is greed or patriotism, wrath or submission to divine will, sadism or righteous vengeance. For those at home who nominated buccaneers as national heroes, their self-sacrifice needed to be as patriotic as it was extraordinary. On the other hand, some buccaneers themselves embraced the anti-heroic portrayal by flaunting the selfish and avaricious nature of their motives. In either case, readers' sympathies were elicited through emphasis on self-destruction and tapped into the potential of a 'primal' mythical archetype—the volunteering ritual scapegoat.

A common motif in buccaneer accounts were attacks characterized by suicidal recklessness, often resulting in the greatest captures. When the first English translator of

Buccaneers of America dubbed Morgan and his fellow raiders “beyond mortal Men,” he conveyed their allegedly superhuman prowess with weapons but also their pact with death.⁵⁶ Decades later, Captain Johnson echoed this most essential aspect of the colonial pirate ethos in Roberts’s now famous motto: “a merry Life, and a short one” (244).

In reality, for many sailors during piracy’s Golden Age ‘going upon the account’ was a calculated gamble. The first two decades of the eighteenth century saw a steady flow of Royal pardons, especially under the rule of George I. Yet, the image of the colonial pirate that has persisted in the imagination is not that of a moderate risk-taker but that of an all-out desperado. Thanks to works like A. O. Exquemelin’s *Buccaneers of America*, much of this construction was already in place by the turn of the eighteenth century. As we will see, the image of the suicidal sea-rover permeates not only such lore-laden works as Captain Johnson’s *General History of the Pyrates* but even the reports of eye-witnesses.⁵⁷

2. 4. ATLANTIC CONNECTIONS

Before we begin our analysis, it would perhaps be useful to some readers to identify more specific points of interconnection between an essentially anthropological methodology and an ideology- or economy-based approach more widely practiced today by post-colonialists. At the advent of Atlantic Studies, Patrick Manning conceptualized ‘the tragic experience of slavery in the modern world’ as a tale of multiform and polyvalent sacrifice. Though dominated by Europeans’ sacrifice of Africans on the altar of colonization, the Atlantic slave trade, in Manning’s re-telling, involved other forms of sacrifice as well:

African families performed sacrifices in memory of ancestors, to renew the earth’s fertility, and to pay tribute to their rulers. Merchants and planters in Africa and elsewhere

⁵⁶ In Exquemelin (Crooke ed.) *Aa*.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3. 4.

sacrificed the enjoyment of their current wealth for investments intended to bring later profit. Christians celebrated the ritual of the Eucharist, to participate in God's sacrifice of his son for the salvation of man. The meanings of these and other sacrifices came to overlap inextricably through the experience of slavery.⁵⁸

Among the 'other' sacrifices Manning mentions must be added the peculiar 'investment' of lower-class fortune hunters. Though implicated directly in the Atlantic slave trade, colonial buccaneers and pirates were neither master nor slave. Many of them fancied themselves and were fancied as entrepreneurs yet the only capital they could wager was their own body. Though this wager brought them closer to the extreme physical 'investment' of slaves, the elective nature of turning pirate and their subject position of white 'Christians' set them radically apart from the African.

Paul Gilroy's conception of bilateral cultural interflow between "oppressor and oppressed" challenged stale notions of circum-Atlantic circulation as a "top-to-bottom" movement of knowledge and power.⁵⁹ A similar challenge is issued by the colonial sea-rover's dissociation from the master-slave axis. In the following texts, this dissociation is manifested in attitudes varying from the liberation of and empowerment of African slaves in the Spanish Main to the gruesome burning of English slave-ships together with their human cargo. In their encounters with Amerindian and African slaves, colonial pirates opted for the more profitable among destruction, re-enslavement, and liberation. In the two extreme cases, their performances struck deep into the ethos of colonialism. Ruthless destruction of the kind depicted by buccaneer chroniclers and by Charles Johnson forced contemporaries to confront the violence embedded in the daily operation of the plantation economy. The other extreme, liberation, afforded unusual

⁵⁸ See Manning, Patrick. "Tragedy and Sacrifice in the History of Slavery." Karras, Alan L. et al. *Atlantic American Societies: From Columbus Through Abolition, 1492-1888*. London, New York: Routledge, 1992. 41-2.

⁵⁹ See Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Harvard UP, 1993. 2.

opportunities for empowerment to some Africans and Amerindians. For instance, in an article on Mosquito Indian history, Nicholas Rogers has detailed their relationship with buccaneers and pirates. In many cases, it amounted to servitude. Still, these Indian groups were able to capitalize on the conflicting interests of pirates and the British crown, which left them armed and much more prepared to tackle the net of European conquest.⁶⁰ In the following texts, a similar dynamic is revealed between buccaneers and friendly tribes of the Darien.

The varying exchanges between Caribbean pirates and non-European subjects, whose nature seemed to have been determined entirely by utility, contribute to the unique construction of the colonial pirate as a separate species. While the Mediterranean corsair was racialized and constructed as a demonic traitor “turn’d Turk,” the colonial pirate could not be imagined merely as a religious or national defector to another realm. He seemed to be governed by another source of sacredness, an alternative moral code which could be imagined as both infinitely corrupt and infinitely egalitarian. The early witness accounts examined in this study share few commonalities but one of them is the overall impetus to imagine the pirate as a member of a different species, one that is capable of both great evil and great good.

The conventional tools of cultural criticism fall short of being able to account for the complexities of a ‘global’ piratical subjectivity and the ways in which it reflected and enriched the colonial imaginary of early modern England. One way to begin to unravel this question is by examining the mythical thought invested in rendering the pirate’s real and perceived qualities, his real and perceived self-damnation, sacrifice, and benign powers. Such examination would further and expand our insight into some of the patterns of colonial violence identified by Manning. For while our methodology is broad, the individual agendas in scapegoating the pirate

⁶⁰ See Rogers, Nicholas. “Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast.” *Eighteenth-Century Life*. 23:3 (Fall 2002), 119-121.

figure can be as specific as a slave-ship captain's desire to displace and immolate the violence embedded in his own occupation.

CHAPTER 3

‘TRUE AND PERFECT’ ACCOUNTS OF SEA BANDITS

Robust but not Herculean to the sight
No giant frame sets forth his common height;
Yet, in the whole, who paused to look again,
Saw more than marks the crowd of vulgar men;

—Lord Byron, *The Corsair*

3. 1. INTRODUCTION

The correspondences between state officials, court depositions and testimonies, newspaper articles, and personal accounts we will explore are mostly authored by non-participating observers and present arguably the most objective perspective on piracy. Some accounts of participating parties will also be considered here in order to establish parallels and points of difference in the mythmaking approach of outsiders vs. insiders. The primary sources in this chapter are dated primarily after 1700 and reflect some of the transition from buccaneering to the all-out piracies of the Golden Age.

Taking license from Girard’s insistence that both myths and near-mythological texts such as accounts of medieval witchcraft document “the existence of real victims,” our first goal would be to identify specific historic events and conditions that afforded opportunities for the cultural scapegoating and mythmaking of colonial pirates (*Scapegoat* 57). These will be signaled by certain textual events that our methodology should allow us to unravel. Not every fabrication, distortion, selection, recreated dialogue, unintentional slip, or intentional elision would be relevant to our inquiry. But if a seemingly trivial repetition of ‘Treasyre’ in the writings of a New England constable contributes to our understanding of the colonial pirate figure’s larger-than-life status, then it should be recognized as more than one man’s wishful thinking. If a captive moved

by the relative kindness of one pirate captain next to another lapsed in a eulogy, then we should be able to identify an instance in the pattern of anti-heroic portrayal. And if an infamous pirate captain of common birth proposed in an audacious letter to outdo a Lt. General in gentlemanly behavior, we must acknowledge his performance as a deliberate subversion of class boundaries. His subsequent transformation into a benign anti-hero suggests that such performances of aggressive upward mobility rendered him a convenient scapegoat for the anxieties of an infinitely stratified middle class (Langford 75).

The imaginings strewn across and between the lines of archival material do not fit a stereotypical notion of what constitutes a myth. There will be no easily recognizable fabulous creatures, fantastic transformations, and magic streaming out of the page. Nevertheless, between them these texts manage to outline the pattern of an ambivalent demonic/heroic figure that is at once steeped in mythical tradition and quintessentially modern. Early colonial pirates often posed and were interpreted by some as traditional folk heroes. Literate members of the middle classes and the clergy tended to portray them as ignorant lower-class demi-demons bent on self-destruction. Often, these two representations coexisted within a single source.

Regardless of perspective, the excesses in pirates' signature performances—heroism to brutality, sexual liberation to lasciviousness, consumption to orgy, democracy to anarchy—made them an attractive site for mythical thought and cultural scapegoating. In Girard's terms, the pirate figure was ascribed enough markers of exceptionality to be selected as a scapegoat for not one but several distinct kinds of mimetic rivalry. Perhaps the most controversial one was the mimetic rivalry for embodiment of the 'successful businessman,' on which we will focus most of our attention.

3. 2. CAPTAIN SNELGRAVE ‘RECALLS’

Among first-hand reports from non-participating witnesses, few need less explication as mythmaking texts than Captain William Snelgrave’s *A New Account of Guinea*.⁶¹ Infamous for being among the first to defend the Atlantic slave trade, Snelgrave related in Book III of his collected memoirs his slave-ship’s capture by the pirate Cocklyn in 1719 near Sierra Leone.⁶² He interacted not only with his immediate captors but also with pirate Captains Davis and la Bouche who had at this time joined forces with Cocklyn’s skeleton crew. After a series of “narrow Escapes from Death,” Snelgrave managed to win Davis’ favor and enjoyed his protection until the pirate Captain fell in a skirmish at the Portuguese colony of Princess Island (Panaitan) in the Bay of Guinea (1732). Davis’ demise caused his crew to retreat and leave Snelgrave behind. The same crew later elected Bartholomew Roberts as their captain who was perhaps the most successful and controversial English pirate of the Golden Age.

It would be relevant to our inquiry to establish the time lapse between the actual events Snelgrave narrates in Book III and his recollections on paper. An early manuscript of his account, ‘discovered’ by Robin Law in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, does not contain his dramatic encounter with pirates Cocklyn and Davis.⁶³ Yet, because he states in the introduction that he had “writ [the account of his capture] several Years ago,” and because he seems to refer to the Davis Chapter in Captain Johnson’s 1724 *General History*, we can date Book III between 1724 and 1732, the time of his last return to England.⁶⁴

⁶¹ See Snelgrave, William. *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave-Trade*. London: Knapton, 1734. In subsequent references to this edition I have omitted the quotation marks that the original has at the beginning of each new line.

⁶² For a brief discussion of Snelgrave’s defense of slavery and its reverberations see: Boulukos, George E. “Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 40:2 (2007), 243-4.

⁶³ See Law, Robin and William Snelgrave. “The Original Manuscript Version of William Snelgrave’s ‘New Account of Some Parts of Guinea’.” *History in Africa*. 17 (1990). 367-72.

⁶⁴ See first page of Snelgrave’s preface. For the possible reference to Johnson see 285.

Although the exact time is impossible to pinpoint, Snelgrave appears to have written the story of his capture at least five years after it took place, which prompts him to speak of “Remembrance” (214). There is further evidence that the 1734 publication of these collected accounts entailed substantial editing. Robin Law compares the manuscript of Books I and II to the text of *A new account of some parts of Guinea* and concludes: “Although the changes are essentially stylistic rather than substantive ... anyone wishing to base an inference on precise nuances of Snelgrave's wording would be well advised to consult the original manuscript as well as the published version” (369).

As there is no original manuscript of Book III, we cannot distinguish Snelgrave's voice from that of an invisible editor or an older, more mindful and forgetful author. But, as we will soon see, an unreliable source on colonial piracy by a non-participating witness is the rule rather than the exception. Also a rule is the general reluctance on the part of ethnographers and historians to problematize the reliability of such witnesses.⁶⁵

Snelgrave's dramatized account will form the backbone of this chapter. His narrative liberties highlight certain tendencies in a number of comparatively less distorted sources. These include reports by other non-participating witnesses but also documents authored by sailors implicated in piracy. In the analysis of each document, we will briefly consider its historical context in an attempt to identify the historical conditions that gave rise to certain distorted and eventually near-mythical representations of pirates. After gaining a sense of the rhetorical purpose a text was intended to serve, we will explore intertextual links and attempt to assess the cultural work it actually performed. The final step would be to situate the cultural production in these texts within a theoretical framework which prefigures certain tendencies in depicting pirates.

⁶⁵ Rediker makes much of Snelgrave's observations in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 271-5.

If the colonial pirate figure was indeed mythologized as a self-scapegoating, self-sacrificing anti-hero, we would expect to find not only the motifs of excess, anti-social behavior, and misanthropic violence aiming to set him apart from mainstream culture, but also the motif of self-destructiveness and the possibility it unlocks for an array of positive representations. These include imaginings of the pirate as a folk hero, successful entrepreneur and social climber, and even as colonial state-builder and sovereign. The remaining three sections of this chapter are ordered in a way that highlights this Girardian process of constructing a mythicized literary anti-hero: from demonizing to self-sacrifice to glorification.

3. 3. DEMONS “ON A VOYAGE TO HELL”

As a successful slave ship captain, Snelgrave valued nothing more than order above and below deck. It is with considerable shock that he reported a morning visit to his captured ship paid by the crews of Cocklyn and Davis. The pirates are said to have poured buckets of alcohol on each other “in their Wantonness.” In retrospect, this orgy must have struck Snelgrave even more for he invokes a comparison to the buccaneering age, perhaps Morgan’s sack of Panama: “They ... made such Waste and Destruction, that I am sure a numerous set of such Villains would in a short time, have ruined a great City” (Snelgrave 234).

Written by a non-participating, Christian, middle-class subject, Snelgrave’s account unsurprisingly made references to Hell, the Devil, or destruction of the soul on almost every page. Such references are in keeping with his subject position but also with a long-standing tradition of portraying first European corsairs and later buccaneers as demons, a scourge, and a plague.⁶⁶ In depicting the destruction wrought on his ship, he also followed a beaten path. A

⁶⁶ For unequivocally demonized corsairs, see: Daborne, Robert. *A Christian turn’d Turke*. London: Printed for William Barrenger, 1612. Also: Impartial Hand, *The Grand Pyrate*. London: Printed for Jonathan Edwin, 1675.

Boston News-Letter article of August 22, 1720 related Bartholomew Roberts' recent capture of the *Samuel* in these terms:

The first thing the Pirates did, was to strip both Passengers and Seamen of all their Money and Cloths which they had on board, with a loaded Pistol held to every ones breast ready to shoot him down, who did not immediately give an account of both, and resign them up. The next thing they did was, with madness and rage to tare up the Hatches, enter the Hould [*sic*] like a parcel of Furies, where with Axes, Cutlashes [*sic*], etc., they cut, tore, and broke open Trunks, Boxes, Cases and Bales . . . (Jameson 315)

The furies from Greek mythology must have seemed an especially fitting comparison for Captain Johnson revisits the image in his *General History* several years later to flesh out one of the most resonant early descriptions of a Golden Age pirate. According to Johnson, Blackbeard's fearsome accoutrements included "three Brace of Pistols" and "lighted Matches under his Hat, which appearing on each Side of his Face, his Eyes naturally looking fierce and wild, made him altogether such a Figure, that Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful." Completing the transition from Greek mythology to the more commonplace arsenal of Christian symbolism, Captain Johnson adds that Blackbeard's "Frolicks of Wickedness, were so extravagant, as if he aimed at making his Men believe he was a Devil incarnate" (85). An incident involving brimstone and fire seals the infamous pirate's portrayal as an arch demon.

Prefacing the climax of demonizing are Johnson's musings on the inverted nature of the pirates' value system. "In the Commonwealth of Pyrates," he wrote, "he who goes the greatest Length of Wickedness, is looked upon with a kind of Envy amongst them, as a Person of a more extraordinary Gallantry" (*Ibid.*). In the chapter on Roberts, his crew is said to have "lived in Defiance" of divine power, their sins begging for "inevitable Destruction" (219).

As in Snelgrave's account, moments of unequivocal Christian condemnation in the *General History* are alternated moments of open admiration. Not so in Cotton Mather's sermon, delivered on the occasion of one of the first pirate executions in New England.⁶⁷ In it, the relentless preacher offered the condemned no hope for divine forgiveness. Mather took "the most amazing Impenitency" that he mostly projected on John Quelch and his men as a sure sign that God had given up on their salvation. The preacher hailed the execution itself as a "horrible Spectacle" put on to deter other potential sinners. He was convinced that there were many sinners in attendance, not only among underpaid sailors and colonials but also among the more affluent who had dealt with the pirates prior to their arrest.⁶⁸

Mather's speech provides us with perhaps the most classical rendition of a scapegoating ritual in text. The pirates were targeted as conspicuously successful colonial fortune-hunters that violated moral and legal strictures to excel in the mimetic rivalry. Because of this, they were imagined as possessing demonic powers and selected for sacrifice. In the world of the sermon, the two transferences of the sacred are clearly separated, and even though the beneficial results of the scapegoats' sacrifice are recognized (deterrence equals tranquility), the preacher refuses to credit the pirates for this restoration. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that the sermon took place prior to a rather tentative execution and thus expended all of its energies to ensure that the sacrifice indeed took place. The condemned were only offered the dubious comfort that an actual trial may await them "before the awful Tribunal of God."

In our analysis, Mather's presentation of Quelch and his men as carrying "part of the Satanick Image ... on their Souls" is a case of the scapegoat effect (first transference of the sacred) nominated as cause. Rather than gasp in 'astonishment' at 'Examples of Evil Pursuing

⁶⁷ Published in Jameson, ed., 279-83.

⁶⁸ Quelch insinuated that the judge and other high-ranking officials in the colony had received bribes that they pocketed but did not provide the usual protection in return. In Jameson, ed., 315-7.

Sinners,’ as Mather recommended, we can engage in some reverse engineering of this evil’s source (qtd. in Jameson 282; 280). The sermon aims to generate the social ostracism necessary to render the scapegoat’s sacrifice beneficial. It does so by methodically inscribing a satanic halo around individuals who may have been guilty of no more than petty theft from the Dutch yet were now made a spectacle of as the source of all evil.

John D. Cox has made an astute observation on the role of devilry in mystery plays: “Where society was concerned, the devil’s opposition defined community by default, illustrating emblematically what community was not by opposing what it was.” The stage devil exemplified “the defeat of virtue in the life of the community.”⁶⁹ Or, in our terms, a theatrical scapegoat was conjured up to resolve an envisioned mimetic crisis (the pursuit of virtue) in which no single community member could claim victory. While mystery plays’ popularity had faded by the Elizabethan period, the role of Lucifer and the stage devils as stock symbols of anti-social behavior was fragmented and redistributed among actual anti-social types of which the pirate was one. Reflecting this early modern re-humanizing of the demonic, Quelch and his men are said to possess parts of the satanic image, and Johnson’s Blackbeard is said to have play-acted ‘the Devil Incarnate.’

To a critical historian, the sheer intensity of Mather’s sermon indicates that the distinction it dramatically polices—demon vs. true Christian—was not a clear one in the minds of his audience. Extreme vilification and condemnation were necessary to purge impermissible perceptions of the colonial pirate as a radical entrepreneur. But to condemn the pirate as a demonic presence, one must first learn to recognize him. Mather had to address the burning question on everyone’s minds—how does one tell a pirate from a common sailor? Redundancy

⁶⁹ See Cox, John D. *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 19; 60.

notwithstanding, three of the six sins the sermon condemns pirates of are “Profanity,” “Swearing,” and “Cursing” (qtd. in Jameson 280).

This motif was echoed in the *Boston News-Letter*, whose chronicler related that Roberts’ men spoke in a language quite unlike normal Englishmen: “There was nothing heard among the Pirates all the while, but Cursing, Swearing, Dam’ing and Blaspheming to the greatest degree imaginable” (qtd. in Jameson 315). William Snelgrave also furthered this popular perception and, like Mather, turned pirates’ speech patterns into ‘preferential signs of victimage’ that signaled their link to the demonic underworld. Reflecting on the “melancholy Circumstances” of his capture, he heard “the execrable Oaths and Blasphemies” of Cocklyn’s crew, which “shock’d me to such a degree, that in Hell it self I thought there could not be worse.” The image invoked the by-then commonplace connection between cursing and the Devil imprinted on the popular imagination by pamphlets on witchcraft like Henry Goodcole’s *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer*.⁷⁰ But while a blaspheming woman at Newgate is an extraordinary enough figure to catch the Devil’s eye, a cursing pirate among cursing sailors may remain inconspicuous. Thus, Snelgrave took care to distinguish the pirate not only from the God-fearing Christian subject but also from the common sailor: “for tho’ many Seafaring Men are given to swearing and taking God’s Name in vain, yet I could not have imagined, human Nature could ever so far degenerate” (217). Later in Snelgrave’s narrative, the pirates’ Quarter-master is said to have died ‘cursing his Maker in so shocking a manner, that it made a great Impression on several new entered Men” (251).

Written after Johnson’s *General History*, Snelgrave’s memory of especially blasphemous pirates may well have been augmented by the ‘biographical’ chapter on the blasphemous Captain

⁷⁰ See Goodcole, Henry. *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Savvyer a Witch: Late of Edmonton*. London: Printed for William Butler, 1621.

Fly. Hans Turley has made the crucial point that Johnson's Fly, through several dramatically constructed and just as dramatically censored speeches, is set apart from ordinary seamen who "may swear as much as pirates, but their oaths do not get written down" (88). The goal of such representations, made explicit by Snelgrave, is to "shock" readers into visualizing the colonial sea robber as a creature unlike any in what Byron called 'the crowd of vulgar men,' especially those he looked most alike—common sailors.

In his discussion of Captain Johnson's chapter on the pirate Fly, Turley goes on to identify profanity as "one of the building blocks for the foundation of pirate mythos" (88). In our analysis, however, informed by Girard's mimetic theory, depictions of the pirate as an extreme and unapologetic blasphemer are not part of any foundation in the real sense. Instead, they are secondary markers of ascribed difference through which the colonial pirate was being selected and singled out for symbolic sacrifice.

This literary sacrifice has its roots in actual ritual performances like Mather's sermon delivered on the occasion of one of the first pirate executions in New England. Though emphasized by Mather, profanity was glaringly insufficient to explain why the convicted had to hang without jury or a real trial. The ritual foundation for scapegoating Quelch and his men as demons lay in their perceived disruption of a perceived colonial tranquility. By bringing stolen 'wealth' to Massachusetts 'only to be hanged for it,' the unfortunate pirate attracted the attention of a 'crowd' deeply engaged in the mimetic rivalries of colonial wealth-making. Blasphemy was one of the imagined external effects of an imaginary core of evil that could only be purged through death. It is the death and not the everyday blaspheming of the Quarter-master in Snelgrave that earns the possibility of redeeming several newly-entered men. The execution of John Quelch and his mates, in Mather's vision, would not only restore order but also deter those who wish to disrupt it again, thereby saving souls from damnation. This gift that keeps on giving

represents, in Girard's terms, the 'second transference of the sacred'—the act of ascribing to the scapegoat great beneficial powers after the sacrifice has been carried out.

For these beneficial powers to have a lasting effect, the symbolic scapegoating of the colonial pirate as a demon must not cease even after the fact of his death. In the spring of 1717, the famous "Black Sam" Bellamy and 142 of his men shipwrecked at Cape Cod in a former slave galley, *the Whydah*. Cyprian Southack, a commoner, wrote to the Massachusetts Governor Shute, listing a number of men who plundered the wreck before the local Esquire could put a stop to it. To this he added that he is "of the mind that the Curner and Jurey should have nothing for buering aney of thes men After they New them to be Pirats" (Jameson 299-300). Though his main concern in the letter was to ruin reputations, Southack also managed to convey distaste for the idea of pirates receiving proper Christian burial. Not only is the pirate barred access to rites granted to even the most heinous criminals in England, but the spectacle of his corpse would make a long-lasting impression of the kind anxiously sought by Mather.

Southack's extreme position, following the spirit if not the dictum of Mather's invective, seems calculated to please his superiors by reflecting the kind of official legal rhetoric that, in Turley's words, sought to "demonstrate the extraordinary contrast... between piracy and other crimes" (48). Quelch and his comrades, prior to their execution, heard Attorney General Sewall speak in much the same manner as the Puritan preacher. Inverting cause and effect, Sewall interpreted the provision for summary execution of pirates on ships as "a sign [that piracy is of] a very different Nature than any Crime committed upon the Land; for Robbers and Murderers, and even Traytors themselves mayn't be put to Death without passing a formal Tryal" (qtd. in Turley 48). In keeping with the spirit of this remarkable law, Quelch and his mates were tried and convicted without jury, probably because many of their colonial peers would have been confused enough by their beneficial influence to acquit them of all charges.

In the name of maintaining social order, it was essential for the colonies of New England to execute pirates like Quelch as sworn enemies of all of humankind, not as banes of the affluent, boosters of the local economy, and tempters of the most corrupt. Echoing the official party line of his time, Governor Nicholson of Virginia called Blackbeard and his crew “great rogues and enemies to all mankind,” warning the Council of Trade and Plantations that his colony is “in a state of war” with them. Despite these extreme pronouncements, he revealed in the same letter that the Carolina colony was in a state of most lucrative amity with these same pirates.⁷¹

Sewall’s speech and Nicholson’s rhetoric highlight some of the historical conditions which facilitated both the legal condemnation and the symbolic scapegoating of colonial pirates. In many cases, it was impossible to prove a pirate’s guilt beyond doubt while the immediate benefits of his presence in colonial ports were especially hard to ignore in a New England stifled economically by the Navigation and Staple Acts. Leading up to the turn of the eighteenth century, piracy was rampant in the North American colonies. Many of them outfitted and returned to New York, where they enjoyed the protection of the corrupt governor Fletcher. They operated primarily around Madagascar and their growing audacity prompted acts of Parliament 11 and 12 Will. III, Ch. 7 which authorized colonial admiralty courts to try accused pirates on the spot rather than ship them back to England for trial.

Demonic vilification of the kind espoused by Mather provided religious backing to the letter of the Civil Law and Statute, which was beginning to be enforced in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Quoted in Johnson’s *History*, the section took great care to differentiate this hostile enemy of humankind from commissioned privateers, legitimate traders, and navy fleets backed by newly-formed states. This remarkable law classified the pirate as a “*Hostis humanis*

⁷¹ See “Governor Nicholson to the Council of Trade and Plantations. June 10, 1700.” *CSP*. Item 523, Vol. 18 (1700), 307-28.

generis, a common enemy to all mankind with whom neither Faith nor Oath is to be kept” (Johnson 377).⁷² In order to draw absolute lines which were often blurred in reality, pirates had to be given a Latin name and treated almost as a separate species of human. This species encompassed anyone who operated outside of “a Commonwealth, a Court, a Treasury, Consent and Concord of Citizens.” In a fascinating blend of legal, ethical, and biological discourse, pirates were deemed to lack the basic qualities (‘faith’ and ‘oath’) necessary to establish any kind of social contract with other human beings. Interestingly enough, *Hostis humanis generis* is a term still used today in international maritime law. Its charged semantics carry the legacy of demonizing pirates in a period when they were most commonplace.

* * *

One might suppose that alleged participants in piratical acts would offer more accurate reports debunking some of the extremely negative outside representations of pirates and one would be wrong. The trend of vilification, indulged for transparent ideological purposes by colonial officials, judges, and of course preachers, ironically found affirmation in many court depositions by common sailors. The depositions of Southack and Joyce are examples of lower-class subjects who pursued their own ends by giving the authorities the kind of pirate they wanted: a blaspheming, murdering demon. Sailors and commoners on trial for piracy sought to obscure the reality of their deeds. Like Joyce, many of them ironically contributed to the vilification rather than the glorification of colonial pirates.

Court depositions by sailors constitute the bulk of archival material about actual piratical acts. One would suppose that these texts are suspect primarily because nearly all of them were transcribed by court scribes and officials. In fact, by far the greatest source of distortion seems to be the author himself who harnessed popular perceptions of pirates in attempting to persuade the

⁷² Hans Turley has traced this rhetoric back to William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. 28.

judge that he was forced. As a result, many sailors' depositions fell within one of the two categories outlined jestingly by Captain Johnson: "a Heap of sly Insinuations, drawn from a known Fact" and "all Invention, and nothing true in it" (Johnson 455).

In order to convince the court that they had been forced, sailors on trial for piracy selected and probably invented incidents aimed to show that their lives aboard the pirate ship were constantly under threat. A number of depositions intended to prove their author's innocence thus feature a gleeful, trigger-happy pirate like Ingram who was allegedly capable of dispatching the accused if they offered the least bit of resistance or provocation. Cases in point are the depositions of James Donovan and Alexander Machonothys. Their very lives hinged upon the constructed villainy of John Brown who allegedly swore that "for a small matter he would shute [*sic*] Machonothy thro the head as soon as he would a dog and he should never tell his story" (Jameson 298). Their portrayal tapped into the official stereotype of how pirates spoke and what they were capable of in order to convince the judge that the two deponents were at no point willing accessories to the crimes committed by Bellamy's crew.

Owen Morris, another allegedly forced deponent, painted a vivid scene in which Bellamy's crew put the matter of his release to vote. But in doing so, they were said to have expressed themselves "in a Violent manner saying no, Dam him, they would first shoot him or Whip him to Death at the Mast" (Jameson 300). Morris is notably vague, refusing to name any particular party guilty of forcing him to sail with the pirates. Seth Smith, another prisoner from Bellamy's crew, made his unwillingness to frame any of his companions perfectly clear. He testified that "he was abused by Several of the Pyrates that were Drowned... but knew nothing against the Rest of the Pyrates in Prison" (Johnson 309). Even Donovan and Machonothy, who named John Brown repeatedly, never told the judge the mysterious story which he supposedly forbade them to tell, perhaps because it would have incriminated them as well. The selection of a

scapegoat, often someone who was still at large or had died or had already been proven guilty (as in the case of John Brown), was a much safer card to play than open betrayal. This practical dynamic resulted in a body of texts authored by captured pirates that only ‘selected’ further the colonial pirate figure as a murdering demon.

In order to construct the most credible scapegoat, sailors on trial projected stereotypical characteristics of the fierce colonial pirate figure onto an arbitrary crewmate. At large, however, for many of them the goal of mimetic rivalry was exactly the opposite—to embody the stereotype. Captain Johnson foregrounded this dynamic in the story of George Lowther and his men, providing an ‘explanation’ for their behavior that furthered notions of the demonic sea rover. After a successful capture, Lowther and his crew are said to have indulged in “unheard of Debaucheries, with drinking, swearing and rioting, in which there seemed to be a kind of Emulation among them, resembling rather Devils than Men, striving who should outdo one another in new invented Oaths and Execrations” (312). Johnson’s rendition combines three sinful aspects of pirates’ celebrations, essentially arguing that the purpose of their mimetic rivalry was to embody the Devil himself. He later revisited this idea in his famous depiction of Blackbeard. Johnson was technically correct. Anyone who equated colonial sea robbers with ‘devils incarnate’ could interpret their mimetic rivalry for the ‘ideal pirate’ in no other way. Coming from an indirect reporter, Johnson’s testimony bears the inflections of a ‘secondary’ rivalry—that for emulating the ideal colonial subject—in which the goal was to scapegoat lower-class pirates in the name of a ‘tranquil’ global trade.

A first-hand witness of buccaneer excesses, Captain Woodes Rogers, provided a different explanation for pirates’ riotous behavior: “...they drank and gam’d till they spent all; and during

those Revels, there was no distinction between the Captain and Crew.”⁷³ While Rogers may have wished to merely emphasize that even buccaneer captains acted no better than the rest, his observation conveys another important function of performed excess—to solidify the pirate community by obliterating differences, as any group ritual invariably attempts to do. However, as Girard argues in “Mimesis and Violence,” the indifferentiation sought by ritual performances invariably escalates into mimetic crisis as certain members of the community are perceived to ‘outdo’ others (Girard, *Reader* 9-11).

That pirates themselves were engaged in mimetic rivalry is confirmed in an unexpected way by a character in Snelgrave’s account. James Griffin, an old school-fellow of his, is said to have approached him “with four Pistols in his Girdle, and a broad Sword in his Hand.” Realizing that his frightful persona caused Snelgrave to plead amnesia about their “boyish Pranks,” Griffin toned down his act and furnished his old friend with the following explanation: “He supposed I took him to be one of the Pirate’s Crew, because I saw him armed in that manner; but that he was a forc’d Man... and the reason of his being so armed, was to prevent their imposing on him” (214).

Griffin intervenes several times in the narrative to prevent a malicious faction from hurting his friend. He succeeds in stopping the pirate boatswain not only by threatening to “cleave his head asunder” but also by invoking the pirate code, imploring all present “to observe strictly that Maxim established amongst them, not to permit any ill usage to their Prisoners after Quarter given” (Snelgrave 219). Thus, while ‘pretending’ to be a ferocious rogue and noble thief, Griffin in all likelihood propelled an intra-communal rivalry to mimic the perfect pirate. Characteristically, this ideal figure most closely embodied in Snelgrave’s account by Captain Davis seems composed of equal parts violence and justice, baseness and nobility. To deconstruct

⁷³ See Rogers, Woodes. *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*. Santa Barbara: The Narrative Press, 2004. xvii.

this ambivalence, we need now to affix our beam on one crucial aspect of the demonized colonial pirate figure.

3. 4. FROM SELF-DAMNATION TO SELF-SACRIFICE

While multiple references to hell in Snelgrave's account are to be expected, their rhetorical delivery can come as a surprise at first. Of the nine explicit references to hell and hell-fire, no less than eight come from the mouths of pirates. Of these eight instances, six portray their speaker(s) as not only embracing hell but eagerly asking for prompt admittance (210; 227; 242; 264). In only two instances, pirates show signs of repentance (249; 271). One of those two cases is the dying Quarter-master who initially fears "he should be punished, as he deserved, in Hell-fire, which so often in their vile discourse he had made light of" but later dies "cursing his Maker" (249; 251).

The single reference from a non-pirate comes from Snelgrave who observes that fouler language than the one used by Cocklyn's crew could not be heard even in hell itself. Even in that case, 'hell' seems to pour out of the pirates' mouths, making them active agents in their own damnation. Cocklyn's crew, like Johnson's Captain Fly, 'revels in the profanity, in the "sodomy" of his tongue in ways impossible for individuals tied down by conventions of decorum' (Turley 88). Snelgrave's shock stems from hearing voluntary speech acts aimed at 'degenerating' human nature (217).

By far the most dramatic references to hell occur in the scene where Davis's ship catches fire while the crew is busy drinking. Snelgrave writes: "I heard a loud shout upon the Main-deck, with a Huzza, ' *For a brave blast to go to Hell with,*' which was repeated several times. This not only much surprised me, but also many of the new entered Pirates," who are said to have exclaimed, "We shall suffer for our Villanies [*sic*] in Hell Fire" (270-1). Juxtaposing the new recruits with "the old harden'd Rogues" as he did in the scene with the dying Quarter-master,

Snelgrave effectively completes a portrait of the Golden Age pirate as a consciously hell-bound agent of destruction and self-destruction. Likewise, a Boston News-Letter article on Roberts' men (many of whom formerly served under Davis) reported their express desire to never share the sad fate of Captain Kidd but "put fire with one of their Pistols to their Powder, and go all merrily to Hell together!" (Jameson 281). Suicidal recklessness, of which many successful pirates like Roberts were known to have plenty, is being re-imagined in these scenes as deliberate suicide and embracing of damnation.

More clearly than even Johnson's false history, Snelgrave's narrative presents the pirate's 'Voyage to Hell' as a series of conscious choices which become easier further down the slope. The pattern begins with a scene in which the Quarter-master wishes to exact respect from the newly-captured Snelgrave by saying that "he hoped he should be sent to Hell one of these days by a Cannon Ball." It continues with the casting overboard of religious books because they might "prevent some of their Comrades from going on in their Voyage to Hell" and culminates in Cocklyn's pronouncement on the occasion of a potential gunpowder explosion that "it would have been a noble blast, to have gone to Hell with" (210; 227; 264). The scene of the actual fire is used to ground the symbolic pattern of deliberate self-annihilation.

When read against a scene in Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), the fire scene in Snelgrave's narrative betrays the central goal of its dramatic presentation—to select and extract the 'hardened rogue' out of the crowd of common seamen who are all in peril of becoming hardened like him. As in the case of speech patterns, the resemblance is disturbing. The sailors in Smollett, moved by nature's wrath, "broke the chests belonging to the officers; dressed themselves in their clothes; drank their liquors without ceremony; and drunkenness, tumult, and confusion, ensued." When asked by the purser what their expected lot in the other world would be if they die 'in the commission of robbery' one of

them replies “Why, hell, I suppose.”⁷⁴ Like Snelgrave’s hardened rogues, the sailor speaks of his damnation “with great deliberation” and the only difference between his words and those of Cocklyn’s men seems to be volume level. But while Smollett’s sailors were moved by the proximity of death to act as pirates, Snelgrave’s rogues are presented as doing the exact opposite—it is because they have acted as pirates that they welcome death and damnation as a form of self-punishment. The difference is crucial. Smollett’s sailor, a fictional character, wields the unmistakable sarcasm of a lower-class social critic who has nothing to lose from finally speaking his mind. Cocklyn’s men, in a supposedly historical account, are presented as gleeful self-scapegoaters who cannot wait to rid society of their demonic selves.

Although superficially similar to demonic representations, the fire scene in *A New Account* in fact focuses on the ‘surprise’ that a ‘true’ pirate consciously pursues death and eternal damnation. This self-scapegoating, somewhat dismissible in the case of ‘old harden’d Rogues’ like Cocklyn and the Quarter-master, at the same time enables the construction of a tragic anti-hero like Captain Davis. In a speech delivered to shield Snelgrave from temptations by common pirates eager to turn him into an accomplice through generous gifts, Davis reiterates the motif of self-destruction / damnation in a radically different manner: “I am for allowing every body to go to the Devil in their own way” (242). The emphasis has shifted from damnation itself to an individual’s freedom to choose his or her own path. The accent now falls on Davis’ own stylized and stylish descent as a ‘noble’ middle-class pirate captain besieged and engulfed by lower-class devilry.

⁷⁴ See Smollett, Tobias George. *The Adventures of Roderick Random*. London: Printed for Harrison and Co., 1780. 130.

3. 5. ANTI-HERO

3. 5. 1. NOT QUITE THE TEMPTER

In *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*, Nathan Johnston argues that “pulp press” narratives of the period “associated mundane and criminal temptations and opened up the possibility that the Devil could be experienced vicariously in populist and semi-literate culture.” By placing emphasis on the temptation aspect, the pulp press encouraged readers to identify with the criminal and closed the gap between mundane, commonplace experience and heinous crime.⁷⁵

Pirate accounts’ contribution to the ‘domestication’ of temptation is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the scenes where Snelgrave’s probity is tested by the pirates. “Many of them were so ignorant,” he writes, “as to think their Gift would have been legal.” Ignorance of moral and legal matters is the mundane face of a common pirate’s demonic affiliation. Rather than perceive logic in the desire to make him an accessory or else dispose of him, the shrewd slave-ship captain presents a typical conflict of lower-class ignorance and corruption vs. the constructed ‘honesty’ of middle-class business practice.

The temptation scenes also further the portrayal of Davis as a tragic hero presiding over demonic riff-raff. In contrast to his misguided crew, he is hailed as a keen judge of both Snelgrave’s integrity and the moral implications of such temptation. He is said to have rewarded the slave-ship captain’s integrity by restoring “what is left of his private Adventure” (242). As with his ‘sophisticated’ take on self-damnation, Davis seems to rise once again above the moral depravity of his environment—a device that presents readers with a continuous example of the

⁷⁵ See Johnston, Nathan. *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. 142-3.

Devil's powers but also allows them to sympathize, as Johnston suggest, with a self-reflexive middle-class rogue who can relapse into supreme nobility and generosity.

Temptation such as the one described by Snelgrave was a literally mundane activity for many Golden Age pirates who needed to convert potential witnesses into accessories and more often than not found them receptive. Reported acts of 'random' generosity have become an attractive landing site for mythical constructions of pirates as tempters and testers. Two decades before Snelgrave, Henry Watson, captured in the East Indies by pirates out of Rhode Island, insisted that despite the pirates' multiple moral and legal trespasses they returned his clothes and treated him kindly. "Afterwards," he writes, "they put it to the vote whether I should bring the money or not, and at about one o'clock they gave me a boat and ten Arabs." Although an unsophisticated story-teller, Watson conveys the impression that the crew of the *John and Rebecca* were moved to 'reverse' his ransoming through the courage he displayed in confronting them. The vote in his favor comes soon after his pronouncement that he would take the first opportunity to elude them.⁷⁶

Although he makes no rhetorical gestures that would betray an authorial awareness of the kind Snelgrave demonstrated in constructing Davis, Watson's account nevertheless contributed to the same mythical trope later furthered by the slave-ship captain—that of the pirate as equal parts demonic tempter and perceptive treasure-giver. An anti-hero sitting on newly-captured treasure may upon a whim or good judgment bestow gifts upon those who can match his courage or impress him with their moral fortitude. Conversely, a coward may expect to be beaten 'sadly' the way Ingram was said to have treated Robert Joyce (qtd. in Turley 39).

Such instances help lay the groundwork that would eventually facilitate the pirate's entry in juvenilia. In Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and Berry's *Peter Pan*, the pirate has a dual role as

⁷⁶ See "Narrative of Mr. Henry Watson." *CSP*. Item 224, Vol. 16 (1697-98), 106–8.

both arch villain and chief validator of a boy's courage and moral fiber. The fiscal aspects of rewarding courage have faded—Stevenson's Jim finds the true reward to be the initiation into confident adulthood, not actual gold of the kind Cocklyn and Davis used to buy the favor of governors and harlots.

A most curious triad is formed by Watson's deposition, the pamphlet reporting Joyce's court testimony, and Snelgrave's account: the first is rewarded for his honesty and courage and claims his gift, the second is beaten as a coward but warned that he "shall be hang'd" for his honesty "as well as we for our Roguery," while the third refuses a 'false' reward from rogues to gain the 'real' prize from a distinctly anti-heroic pirate captain. The transition from a first-hand report to a court pamphlet to a clearly distorted personal account is accompanied by transformation of the Golden Age pirate figure from a whimsical lower-class sea bandit to a blasphemous, yet likeable brute bent on self-destruction, to a noble thief endowed with enough moral acumen to render him a tragic anti-hero.

Incorporating Watson's pirates' generosity and Ingram's certainty of death into a persona of extraordinary leadership talents, the successful slaver Snelgrave imagines the successful pirate Davis as his mimetic rival in emulating the ideal captain of a colonial enterprise. His very first description of the pirate captain invokes two major qualities: generosity and the ability to keep a large crew "in good order" (199). Incidentally, these are the same qualities that Snelgrave seeks to demonstrate to readers of his account through stories of the ways in which he handled crew and cargo during slave-trading. However, Davis appears to outshine the author from the very first meeting. Piracy is upgraded from a specific form of crime to a tragic flaw. It carries with it the certainty of damnation which allows the pirate leader to 'shine' during his inevitable descent into hell. Although just as certain, Davis's death is quite unlike that of the 'common sort' of pirates like Cocklyn who are said to be "doubly on the side of the Gallows" (217). The "most

generous humane” Captain Davis is allowed to perish slowly, gloriously, and almost supernaturally—like a tragic hero of legendary proportions:

Captain *Davis*, tho’ he had four Shots in divers parts of his Body, yet continued running towards the Boat: But being closely pursued, a fifth Shot made him fall, and the *Portuguese* being amazed at his great Strength and Courage, cut his Throat, that they might be sure of him. (283)

Because the historical Davis was long dead, and perhaps because Snelgrave found his treatment in Johnson’s *General History* inadequate next to his own imaginative remembrance, he was resurrected as a textual scapegoat of a near-mythical magnitude. For Captain Snelgrave, the noble pirate Captain Davis presented an opportunity to project and sacrifice symbolically the morally controversial qualities that characterized an exceedingly successful colonial captain. Displaced on a piratical figure was Snelgrave’s preoccupation with his own moral trespasses, evidence of which can be found in his infamous defense of the Atlantic slave trade as a case of benefits outweighing the negatives (61-2). If a highly successful pirate captain was condemned as a criminal, this would not only undermine Snelgrave’s central argument but would also cause a fracture in his self-image as a moral slaver. Thus, he conjured up a piratical foil of himself that could be symbolically scapegoated for his vile thievery while retroactively imagined as a self-sacrificial tragic hero.

The perceived self-sacrifice of Snelgrave’s Davis is so intense that the two transferences of the sacred appear completely reversed, rendering him an almost entirely positive force throughout his textual ‘life.’ He is imagined to have acted as a damper of the piratical scourge, using his almost supernatural leadership abilities to maintain order and impose high moral values upon rowdy, even demonic, commoners. What is normally the first transference of the sacred—i. e. a perceived destructive influence of the scapegoat—appears to unfold after Davis’s death.

Bartholomew Roberts embodies the evil said to have risen out of Davis's ashes, destined to destroy 'above one Hundred Sail of Ships' (Snelgrave 260).

Reading Snelgrave's Davis against the figure of John Cusack, a corsair of the mid-seventeenth century, reveals some significant similarities and differences. Introduced by 'an Impartial Hand' as "the most Signal Sea-Robber, that perhaps this Age hath known," Cusack is said to have been "encourag'd with success" to exhibit "a most daring boldness" but also to improve "in his villainous course of life" and accomplish "unparallell'd Crimes" for which he was "put to death" (*The Great Pyrate* 3-4). Though 'unparalleled,' Cusack's singular villainy was clearly seen as stemming from "the guard & protection of some *States*." This critique may have originated in the corsair's mind for he is said to have renamed one of his prizes into the *Valiant Prince* (7). Such significant details give us grounds to argue that the corsair is being scapegoated as the most disruptive and disturbing effigy of a greedy yet 'successful' royal head of state.⁷⁷

Unlike Snelgrave's Davis, however, Cusack does not enjoy a reversal of transferences that may cause the author to dwell on the corsair's positive qualities while alive. The two transferences are clearly separated through emphasis on death as a *fait accompli*. Especially visible on the title page itself, which advertises 'Life and Death' in capital letters, and likewise couples 'notorious Robberies' with 'Tryal, Condemnation, and Execution,' the dynamic licenses the author to speak of success and extraordinary boldness but does not 'de-demonize' his subject.

While this much more 'anti' than 'heroic' portrayal could well be due to authorial distance and the fact that Snelgrave was likely 'charmed' by his captor, I would also like to suggest another factor. In the decades between 1670's and 1720's, strata of the middling sort

⁷⁷ In Joseph Roach, the normal usage of effigy is said to refer to "a crudely fabricated image of a person, commonly one that is destroyed in his or her stead." More abstractly defined by him, a performed effigy "fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original" (36-7). For a direct connection between Roach's effigy and Girard's scapegoat (also "monstrous double"), see Roach 41.

occupied much of the vacuum between Princes and commoners. Cusack the mid-seventeenth century corsair must be more emphatically evil in order to dissociate the effigy (a greedy pirate) from its signified (a greedy prince). The Impartial Hand chose to stay anonymous rather than risk being held culpable for this critique, however muted. By contrast, Davis' operation as a scapegoat in the mimetic rivalry for the perfect colonial captain renders him much more sympathetic because he is an effigy (foil) of Snelgrave himself. With the rise of the middle class came a subject position engaged in the kind of rivalry for profit that would single out the pirate figure as an anti-entrepreneur.

Davis' heroic demise in the text of *A New Account* restored Snelgrave's moral tranquility as a law-abiding captain of a slave ship. In doing so, he presented his middle-class readership with similar opportunities to load his piratical anti-hero with their own real or perceived mimetic crises. Because his perspective on Davis can only be corroborated by another middle-class subject with even less credibility (Captain Johnson) we are left to speculate as to how the lower and upper class would have rewritten this particular historical figure.

While the motif of the aloof pirate captain would probably have appealed to the upper classes long before Byron's appropriation, a case could be made for the limited cultural appeal of this particular anti-hero among the lower classes. His benign powers (enabled by his perceived self-sacrifice to the depravity of his companions) seem to stem from 'natural' nobility, intellect, and morality. In other words, Snelgrave's Davis embodies the middling sort's developing cultural myth of 'high birth' revealed and reclaimed through one's manifested leadership abilities. We see a very similar dynamic at work in Defoe's *Captain Singleton*, who emerges as a natural leader among the pirates because he is a nobleman stolen at birth by a gypsy woman (243). What bespeaks middle-class bias in such scenarios is not the claim of high birth per se but emphasis on the pirate captain's degree of separation from the 'base sort,' which happened to

coincide with the quintessential goal of the aspiring middle-class colonial subject. Like Singleton, Davis becomes a literary means to express the “passion for aping the manners and morals of the gentry more strictly defined” (Langford 67).

3. 5. 2. NOT QUITE A KING

By contrast, lower-class representations of the pirate captain did not juxtapose him to his crew but instead celebrated him as the most successful social and economic climber among them, one who is willing to share his success with any courageous sailor. Popular ballads tended to emphasize another, more culturally universal, mimetic rivalry in which pirate figures operated as self-selected scapegoats: the pursuit of wealth. In the ballad “Bold Captain Avery,”⁷⁸ the fabled Pirate King beckoned “young sailors of courage so bold / That venture for money” and promised to clothe them with gold. Change into opulent attire clearly signaled the promise of upward class mobility for the whole crew. The powerful image of undifferentiated access to luxury the ballad presented recalls the kinds of orgiastic performances through which Cocklyn and Davis’s crews celebrated successful captures and sought to ritualistically enforce equality.

Paul Langford points out that early eighteenth century England was a culture increasingly obsessed by access to wealth and status (3; 61). For profit-seeking colonials of all social and economic tiers, piracy and trading with pirates presented opportunities to enrich themselves far beyond the limits of their station and occupation. The Golden Age pirate was thus envisioned by some as an unbridled entrepreneur who dared to pursue what was taken to be everyone’s dream. A prime example was the popular myth of the Pirate King built around the figure of Henry Avery, a relatively inconspicuous marauder of the East Indies. By the time his deeds reached the

⁷⁸ See Anonymous. “Bold Captain Avery.” Woodcut. London: John Pitts, c1830.

genre of the popular ballad, the legality and morality of his exploits went entirely unquestioned—another signal of a dominant lower-class perspective.⁷⁹

While actual rape and murder morphed into a metaphorical conquest of an Oriental princess, the name of Avery's ship, *the Fancy*, was significantly retained in the ballad.⁸⁰ Not only that, but its implications were metaphorically explored in a detailed description of the ship: "She's moulder'd like wax work and sails like the wind / She's all things in readiness and fit for our design..." The pirate ship echoed Phoebus's chariot and Daedalus' waxen wings, embodying and propelling young commoners' aspirations of class ascendance.

But even before the fabled fact of a popular ballad, imaginations were at work transforming an essentially criminal act into the pursuit of a culturally sanctified dream. Unlike Snelgrave's selection of Davis as a tragic figure 'gone astray' by mixing with commoners, the selection of the pirate as an extreme colonial entrepreneur involved as much self-fashioning as it did the wishful thinking of others. It was Avery himself that chose to name his ship *the Fancy*, inviting precisely such interpretations as those made by the balladeer(s). After each successful capture, the name of his ship fulfilled its symbolic significance. *The Fancy* entered ship and port logs but even more importantly it entered oral culture through rumor. From there, the name together with that of its captain became imprinted in the popular imaginary.

Avery was one of many pirates who used their ship's name as a bid for immortality. Fifteen years after the rapid rise and fall of the Frenchman Jean Hamlyn, the name of his ship, *La Trompeuse*, was used in sailor circles as a verb meaning 'to go a-pirating.'⁸¹ Bartholomew

⁷⁹ See also the discussion of manuscript *J5* in Chapter 4.

⁸⁰ An 1898 American version of the ballad did substitute 'Fancy' with 'Fanny' for the sexual innuendo: 'A ship call'd the Fanny will pleasure your mind.' See Sellers, Edwin Jaquett. *Captain John Avery: President Judge at the Whorekill in Delaware Bay*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1898. 14.

⁸¹ 'The Trump Card,' meaning that he hoisted whatever colors would signal to his prey that his ship was hostile. For a use of the ship's name as a verb, see: "Captain Josiah Daniell to Governor Markham." *CSP*. Item 76 vii, Vol. 16 (1697-1698), 45.

Roberts, arguably the most famous pirate of the Golden Age, also knew that one of the greatest symbolic acts in a pirate captain's career was the naming of his flagship. Upon capturing the man-of-war *The Good Fortune*, Roberts renamed it into *The Royal Fortune*, conflating the notion of luck with the ultimate prize he was after—social status through wealth. He recycled the name to refer to at least four different flagships in his rapidly evolving career. Evidently, the name carried so much of his self-image that it had to jump ships. His lengthy chapter in Johnson's *History* celebrated him as an anti-hero comparable to Snelgrave's Davis and culminated in one of the most spectacular deaths in the collection.⁸²

More so than Avery, Roberts seems to have used his ship's deck as a stage on which he performed an ideal 'gentleman pirate' and self-made royalty. His 1720 letter to Lt. General Mathew attempted to magnify his reputation as a royal outlaw through a series of calculated rhetorical gestures. Feigning a gentleman's affronted air, Roberts accused Matthews of occasioning the hostilities against the colony through his rudeness: "Had you come off as you ought to a done and drank a glass of wine with me and my company, I should not harmed the least vessell in your harbour."⁸³ This tongue-in-cheek statement implies that if Lt. General Mathew had only recognized Roberts as his equal the pirate would have been content to leave peacefully.

Probing deeper, we sense that the pirate intentionally sought to offend Matthews by suggesting a hypothetical drinking session not limited to 'gentlemen officers' as in the regular navy or merchant marine, but democratically including the entire crew. Roberts's rhetoric resists the kind of opposition that a middle-class subject like Snelgrave projected upon Davis. What is more, the pirate clearly associates courage on the battlefield with one's ability to hold a drink

⁸² For more on Johnson's Roberts, see Chapter 7.

⁸³ See "Inventory of goods taken on board the sloop *Relief*." CSP. Item 251 v, Vol. 32 (1720-1721), 169.

and one's readiness to lapse into an alcoholic orgy. He proposes to outdo Mathew in battle after being supposedly denied the opportunity to drink him under the table. The image of a single glass of wine is obviously an ironic understatement. Symbolizing both gentlemanly bonding and aristocratic moderation, the single glass is transformed by Roberts into a symptom of staleness and weakness. Even while he 'apes' the ruling classes, the pirate captain constructs himself as a different kind of nobleman—a democratic leader of 'the people,' one who matches and exceeds the courage of those who serve under him.

In Percy Cohen's definition, myth is above all a sacred narrative referring to origins and transformations. The symbolic gestures of Roberts and his crew sought to construct the pirate as both transcender and transformer of social hierarchies. Through such performances, the Golden Age pirate saw himself and was seen by some as being the most radical example of the kind of cultural metamorphosis many contemporaries pursued—i. e. the legitimization of wealth into high status. For middle-class outsiders such as Snelgrave and Johnson, the Golden Age pirate's mythmaking into a successful entrepreneur and social climber was both fascinating and threatening. After all, Captain Davis had to perform the dual function of embodying middle-class aspirations while scapegoating himself to restore the slave-ship captain's moral tranquility. Likewise, Johnson's Captain Roberts projected (on the day of his inevitable destruction, dressed in crimson and gold) the image of a clear winner in the mimetic rivalry for the perfect colonial captain (243).

In his own staged mimetic rivalry, Roberts not only envisioned himself as a superior kind of aristocrat but also radically and perhaps ironically refused to wear one of the stereotypical 'signs of victimage' projected onto Golden Age pirates—excessive violence. In his letter to Matthews, he added insult to insult by accusing the Ltd. Governor of barbarity, warning him that if he abused but one of his captured men he should expect no quarter. A second reference to

gentlemanly behavior, this time in the context of military ethics, again proves that the pirate consciously constructed himself as the nobler man and fancied himself morally superior to a royal governor (*CSP*, “Inventory of goods” 169).

Roberts’s performative utterance stages the kind of social ‘dream’ explored by the myth of the Pirate King—an individualistic *tour de force* that could carry its successful performer, regardless of origin, to the very top of the social ladder. A precedent was set by the buccaneer Henry Morgan some four decades earlier but it was not until Avery’s exploits off Madagascar that the myth developed its full cultural potential. In few words, Roberts managed to forge the image of a self-proclaimed king of the sea, grown to such strength that he is able to mock, subvert, and even supersede, colonial authority.

The pirate’s tongue-in-cheek humor seems to indicate a degree of awareness that his unabashed claims to royalty and supremacy through courage and superior constitution would appeal to many commoners. While Johnson mocked Anstis’s men who, “for the greater Grandeur,” called themselves Commodores and Lords, there were those among their contemporaries who would have regarded such performances differently (175). Johnson’s normative mockery, like Steele’s “Satyr upon Grooms,” seems targeted at anyone who strove to ‘ape’ the gentry. Steele was able to assure his alarmed reader that grooms’ performative wings can be clipped simply by giving them less wages and less means to save their wages for calculated imitation of their masters.⁸⁴ Unlike grooms, Golden age pirates like Anstis, Davis, and Roberts aped Commodores and Lords in spaces lying outside the economic or political jurisdiction of the dominant culture—it was for this exact reason that they had to be portrayed as doomed.

⁸⁴ See Steele, Richard. *The Spectator*. No. 88, Monday, June 11, 1711.

Regardless of satire's sting and deterrence unto death, many colonials overhearing the content of Roberts' letter would have been guilty of such mimicry and could perhaps identify with the audacious pirate's unsubstantiated claim to gentlemanly status. With this audience in mind, the rhetorical conjuring of a supposedly denied glass of wine can be read as an intentional parody of actual social interactions and a creative rationalization of theft as lower-class vengeance. For many aspiring members of the lower and even middle classes, a drink with the Lt. General would mark a step up the social ladder. This drink was more often than not denied to them. Of course, most would hesitate to seek satisfaction by declaring literal war against all of society but that someone like Roberts could go to such an extreme must have excited some sympathy and constituted the kind of sensation that was the stuff of ballads. As history would have it, Roberts was appropriated by the middle and upper classes for his gentlemanly aspirations while Avery lent his name to the Pirate King for having chanced upon a distant female relative of the Mogul.

The wine glass denied is not the only rhetorical gesture inviting us to read the historical exchange between Roberts and Matthews as a willful performance meant to charm the public. The famous pirate's challenge to authority is echoed in a brief account following his letter in the Calendar of State Papers. One Henry Fowle reports of a demand issued by the pirates under Roberts that Captain Henkson send them his ship's rudder. Such flippant requests not only boosted the image of fearlessness and total domination pirates sought to project on the enemy—they were also ripe for adoption by rumor because they dramatized a reversal of traditional social roles. Whether or not Captain Henkson actually surrendered his ship's rudder is immaterial—the image itself is resonant enough to rise above the hypothetical and become mythically true. This particular pirate crew seems to have been fond of creating a discursive space in which they were monarchs of both ocean and land. They were reported in the Boston News-Letter to have made

jokes about the King's leniency, treating him as someone they could easily manipulate into pardoning them (Jameson 280). Their gall was somewhat reasonable. If one's timing was good, peaceful retirement as a planter or merchant was just as viable an option as being hung on the gallows. Frequent proposals and royal proclamations of pardon, especially under the rule of George I, furnished many sailors with the conditions necessary to imagine piracy as an alternative reality in which they could make untold fortunes and purchase the king's favor.

But even when unwarranted, performative reversals of high and low enacted consciously by pirate crews like those of Anstis, Davis, and Roberts contributed to a 'rags-to-riches' cultural narrative which imagined the pirate as a cabin boy turned self-made king. A related aspect of this cultural narrative, especially visible in the performances and reports of lower-class sailors and pirates, was the motif of piracy as social vengeance that Roberts invoked jestingly in his letter. In its more overt and sincere forms, found in Snelgrave and in witness reports of Bellamy's activities, the motif of the avenger constituted a necessary half of the folk hero myth.

3. 5. 3. NOT QUITE A FOLK HERO: "THEY PRETENDED TO BE ROBIN HOODS MEN"

The two main attributes of a folk hero are well-known. The Robin Hood of the ballads avenged the wronged regardless of their status and lived by "levies on the superfluity of the higher orders" which he generously imparted on poor husbandmen and yeomen.⁸⁵ Witness reports of colonial piracy echo claims to both of these attributes. In Snelgrave's account and other reports by outsiders, representations of Golden Age pirates as avengers and levelers of injustice were not only echoed but also characteristically undercut, enhancing yet another anti-heroic aspect of the pirate figure.

Near the Sierra Leone delta, a boat from Cocklyn's pirate ship found most of Snelgrave's crew of 80 men reluctant to take up arms in defense of the Company's goods and "generally glad

⁸⁵ See Child, Francis James ed. *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1904. 255.

of an opportunity of entering with them” (203). Despite the arms chest being locked by a saboteur, Snelgrave does manage to compel some of his sailors to put up a fight, thus incurring the wrath of the pirate Boatswain. In an incredibly long and lucky action sequence, the Boatswain fails to make an example of Snelgrave, whose men are said to eventually interfere on his behalf: “For God’s sake don’t kill our Captain, for we never were with a better Man” (207). Although initially the pirates take to punishing some sailors for their impudence, eventually they are pacified by the Quarter-master who assures Snelgrave that “My Life was safe provided none of my People complained against me” (209).

This promise is reiterated some hours later when Snelgrave meets a figure identified as the Commander. In his earlier recounting of the events leading up to Cocklyn’s encounter with Davis and la Bouche, Snelgrave had labeled the former and his crew “a set of the basest and most cruel Villains that ever were” and had regretted being taken by them rather than by Davis who, by contrast, “was a generous Man” (199). Yet now the Commander, who could be no other than the base Cocklyn, is reported as having delivered the following speech:

I am sorry you have met with bad usage after Quarter given, but ‘tis the Fortune of War sometimes. I expect you will answer truly to all such Questions as I shall ask you: otherwise you shall be cut to pieces ; but if you tell the Truth, and your Men make no Complaints against you, you shall be kindly used ; and this shall be the best Voyage you ever made in your Life, as you shall find by what shall be given you. (212)

Setting aside for now the resonant sequence of Torture, Truth, and Treasure, let us focus instead on the Commander’s depiction as avenger of ill-treated sailors. The motif recurs frequently in Snelgrave’s narrative—it is later echoed by Captain Davis who is said to have reminded

Cocklyn's rowdy crew that "their Reasons for going a pirating were to revenge themselves on base Merchants, and cruel Commanders of Ships."⁸⁶

The Commander figure of the first speech remains unnamed in Snelgrave's account, perhaps because he is clearly a conflation of Davis, Cocklyn, and any other pirate who all made a lasting impression on their captive by claiming to be dispensers of social justice. This image was often by pirates of the Golden Age whose conscience bothered them and who lacked the buccaneers' excuse of being patriotic punishers of Spain. Among them was "Black Sam" Bellamy, one of the better known pirates of the Golden Age, who began his short career as captain in 1716, only a few years before Cocklyn and Davis.⁸⁷

In a court deposition, Thomas Checkley, a common mariner who came into contact with Bellamy's men in 1717, reported that "they pretended to be Robbin Hoods Men." Although Checkley himself, testifying before a humorless New England court, expressed deep skepticism towards this image, he admitted that his shipmate Sean was moved by it sufficiently to join the pirates. Sean reportedly announced his joining the pirates by climbing on the riggings and releasing a rope—a simple voluntary act initiating his transformation into a Merry Man of the sea (Jameson 304).

Checkley and Snelgrave's reports of sailors eager to turn pirate find numerous confirmations in the archives. Sir Thomas Lynch, who secretly courted Lawrence de Graff so he could use of the buccaneer's military force as a garrison, confirmed that even in an earlier period pirates were often accommodated by a willing prey. He wrote: "Captain North's, a ship of twenty or thirty guns, was so strong that the pirates themselves said they durst not have boarded her if

⁸⁶ See 216 for the reiteration by Cocklyn, 225 for Davis' speech.

⁸⁷ Bellamy's generosity towards his men quickly earned him another, much more revealing nickname: The Prince of Pirates. His most notable capture was that of the 300-ton slave galley *Whydah*, which became his flagship. Having plundered more than fifty ships in less than a year, the fearsome 28-gun galley sank in a storm near the Massachusetts shore, taking with her most of the 146 men aboard, including her young captain. Its demise fueled rumors about treasure and well-coined strangers throughout the nearby colonies.

captain and men had not most villainously surrendered.”⁸⁸ Just how the Governor learned of the pirates’ perspective on this conflict never becomes clear. In any case, in his report the villainy of pirates spills over to the unmotivated protectors of someone else’s merchandize, who seem to have been eager to dispose of their responsibilities and become complicit in this economic transgression.

Some decades later, in the New England trial against alleged members of Bellamy’s crew, a Captain Brett vouched that “it was the Custome among the Pyrates to force no Prisoners, but those that remained with them were Voluntiers” (Jameson 308). Lt. Governor Bennett of Bermuda also observed that “when they take a vessel, some of the sailors generally turn to them.”⁸⁹ Around the same time, convicted pirates John Philps and John Archer stated in their depositions that the reasons they had turned to piracy had to do with the rough life and cruel treatment of sailors in the merchant marine (Cordingly 134). Historians David Cordingly and Marcus Rediker provide substantial textual evidence that complaints about vicious captains torturing and murdering their men were well-founded (Cordingly 132-5) (Rediker, *Devil* 216). Such were the harsh realities that made it possible for Golden Age pirates to construct themselves as folk avengers.

Whether or not the pirates of the *Whydah* actually believed they were the Merry Men of the High Seas is immaterial. The fact remains that they were actively engaged in re-enacting an old legend that they found applicable to their own lives aboard a pirate ship. Reports of Captain Bellamy and his crew prove that the construction of colonial pirates as folk heroes was a cultural process in which at least some of them participated with full awareness. Their mythical thinking transformed the ocean into a boundless Sherwood Forest and turned them into noble thieves who

⁸⁸ See “Sir Thomas Lynch to William Blathwayt. Feb 22, 1683.” *CSP*. Item 963, Vol. 11 (1681-1685), 392-3.

⁸⁹ See “Lt. Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations. July 30, 1717.” *CSP*. Item 677, Vol. 29 (1716-1717), 360.

purportedly sought to bridge the gap between rich ship-owners and slaving sailors, affluent planters and struggling colonial subjects.

In the introduction to his *General History*, Captain Johnson made the case that the chief causes of turning pirate were less than noble, including idleness and laziness. Yet, he also argued that idleness, as in unemployment, was often due to “hard Fate” rather than inclination (4). In one instance, he even sided with starved sailors who had a good reason to mutiny (114-5). As a prime example of the anti-heroic approach, he allowed the more famous of his pirate figures to embody some of the lofty ideals that Snelgrave’s Davis is said to have put forth. Captain Bellamy is among those who are allowed to voice social justifications for turning pirate. In the chapter on him, Captain Johnson writes he “can’t pass by in Silence” the pirate captain’s recruitment speech to the crew of a captured prize. What follows is a creative reconstruction based on such sources as Checkley’s deposition. Bellamy is said to have exclaimed: “They vilify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob the Poor under the Cover of Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our own Courage” (Johnson 587). The now-fabled pirate captain goes on to rebuke cruel masters and hypocritical clergy, much like his legendary archetype Robin Hood.

Members of the upper classes often ‘exposed’ Golden Age pirates’ mimicry of the folk hero through emphasis on the senseless, violent excesses that marked so-called pirate justice. Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Virginia and sworn enemy of the notorious Blackbeard, wrote in 1724 that “those barbarous Wretches can be moved to cut off the Nose & Ears of a Master for but correcting his own Sailors.” Somewhat immodestly, he went on to identify himself as “the principal object of their vengeance.”⁹⁰ Spotswood’s letter reflects the perspective

⁹⁰ See “Col. Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations. June 16, 1724.” *CSP*. Item 210, Vol. 34 (1724-1725), 112-20.

of those in power whom the Robin Hood analogy would have allotted the role of Sheriffs of Nottingham. This perspective, along with its obverse, was given voice and enhanced in Johnson's *History*. The pirate Captain England is said to have rewarded a merchant captain with "an easy Death" for being "a good Master to his Men" after his crew grew weary of whipping him (Johnson 135).

We can perhaps excuse Captain Johnson's ambivalence on the matter of folk hero vs. cold-blooded killer as a general historian's desire to echo the representational range of his sources. However, even single and more reliable sources like Spotswood rendered Roberts in less than unequivocal colors. It seems that, although misapplied, a pirate's audacity could win him sincere admirers even among those he pestered most. In a letter to the Boart of Trade, Spotswood held Roberts in open admiration, marveling at

the boldness of this fellow, who last year with no more than a sloop of 10 guns and 60 men, ventured into Trepassy in Newfoundland where there were a great number of merchant ships, upwards of 1200 men and 40 ps. of cannon, and yet for want of courage in this headless multitude, plundered and burnt divers ships there, and made such as he pleased prisoners.⁹¹

This scene of a Golden Age pirate triumphant against incredible odds is reminiscent of buccaneers' raids described by Exquemelin. Even as it celebrates Roberts' outstanding courage and also his curiously beneficial power to expose shortcomings in the 'headless multitude,' it also contributes to the project of selecting the colonial pirate figure for symbolic sacrifice. By portraying the pirate as a lion raging among sheep, Spotswood licensed the kind of representation we find in Johnson's chapter on Mary Read. In a speech attributed to the famous

⁹¹ See "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations. May 31, 1721." *CSP*. Item 513, Vol. 32 (1720-1721), 326-9.

woman pirate, the leitmotif of extraordinary courage is linked to the image of the pirate as a self-selected anti-hero:

—She answer'd, that as to hanging, she thought it no great Hardship, for, were it not for that, every cowardly Fellow would turn Pyrate, and so infest the Seas, that Men of Courage must starve:—That if it was put to the Choice of the Pyrates, they would not have Punishment less than Death, the Fear of which kept some dastardly Rogues honest; that many of those who are now cheating the Widows and Orphans, and oppressing their poor Neighbors, who have no money to obtain Justice, would then rob at Sea, and the Ocean would be crowded with Rogues, like the Land, and no Merchant would venture out; so that the Trade, in a little Time, would not be worth following. (158-9)

In this remarkable passage, courage is taken to be a pirate's central quality. As in the case of the epic hero, courage serves to weed out the accidental dilettantes from the truly elect. Leaning on this most basic of heroic qualities, the diction is able to gain enough audacity to propose that the pirate trade is part of the economic equilibrium and a more honest occupation than that of some land-based oppressors. Through embracing the certainty of self-destruction as punishment for his open dishonesty, the pirate earns an implicit claim one of the attributes of the folk hero—he obtains his own justice in a world characterized by even greater depravity at the top.

3. 5. 4. NOT QUITE THE TRICKSTER

Constructions of the colonial pirate as an ambivalent antihero could take more literal 'shapes' by borrowing elements from the mythical trickster/shapeshifter figure. This, too, was a representation facilitated by 'factual' reports. A number of sources reveal the ease with which the identity of a pirate could be donned and doffed, much to Cotton Mather's horror, charging

every high seas encounter with uncertainty. In one such report, trickster-like representation is made even more poignant by pirates' awareness of their special transformative powers.

On October 18, 1683, the carpenter Thomas Phips testified before an English court in the form of a deposition transcribed by one Edwin Stede. Delivered upon oath, the text claims to be "A true and perfect narrative and relation of all the horrid and villainous murders, robberies, spoils, and piracies committed as well in the American as the African seas by John Hamlyn, a Frenchman, who was commander of a French ship of thirty guns called La Trompeuse."⁹² Shifting uneasily from first to third person, this liberal transcription by Stede does its best to meet the high expectations set by such a dramatic title.

As a legal form, depositions of accused pirates had no other purpose than to convince the court of their author's innocence. Most examples related in Johnson's *History* and included in Jameson's collection of documents are naturally preoccupied with establishing their authors' innocence through a series of carefully selected, often dramatized or entirely imaginary, incidents. The deposition of another carpenter, Owen Morris, is centered exclusively on providing evidence of his being pressed into service under the pirate captain Bellamy. By contrast, Stede's transcription of Phips' testimony contains only one single mentioning that Phips was forced. Stede must have edited out some of Phips' pleas to innocence in favor of a faster-paced, action-packed narrative. While he does stick to the general facts, his selectiveness results in a kind of compressed novel—replete with deceit, conspiracies, naval battles, and frequent flashes of gold. Hamlyn and his crew are portrayed as anti-heroes capable of ingenious tactics and maneuvers, but also of astounding cruelty. This representational ambivalence is reflected in the 'master trope' of the short text: transformation.

⁹² See "A true and perfect narrative... Oct 18, 1683." *CSP*. Item 1313, Vol. 11 (1681-1685), 519-21.

The pirate ship *La Trompeuse*, as its name suggests, deceived a number of British and Dutch ships into thinking her a British man-of-war or a merchant vessel in distress. When the victim drew near, the French captain revealed his identity as a pirate, thereby ‘trumping’ the other ship’s expectations. In Stede’s rendition, Hamlyn’s entire ship becomes a trickster figure capable of concealing its villainous essence by posing as any kind of ship under any nation’s flag. Its presence turned the high seas into shifting plains where signals and signs can be misleading. The just retribution eventually visited upon the pirates by H.M.S. Francis bears only a brief mentioning at the end of the narrative. Stede correctly recognized that the focus of readers’ interest, even if it is only the Judges, would fall on *La Trompeuse*’s transformative conquests.

Some two decades later, long after the rapid rise and fall of Hamlyn, the name of his ship was used in New England sailor circles as a euphemism for ‘to go upon the account’ or ‘to go a-pyrating.’⁹³ Those initiated in the sailor lingo were also privvy to the metaphor of piracy as a game of bluffing, diversion, and illusion.

Similar trickery, coupled with courage, became the object of admiration in Johnson’s depiction of Captain Davis’ amazing capture of Castle Gambia. The daring pirate and three of his men posed as peaceful merchants to infiltrate the well-guarded fortress. Once invited to dine with the Governor, “*Davis* on a sudden drew out a Pistol, clapt it to the Governor’s Breast, telling him, he must surrender the Fort and all the Riches in it, or he was a dead Man.” The pirate signaled his men outside, upon which they “executed their Part of the Scheme, like Heroes, in an Instant” (Johnson 172-3).

On the pages of the General History, exercise of pirates’ transformative power is always threatening to the status quo but not always condemned for it. For instance, in the Roberts

⁹³ See “Captain Josiah Daniell to Governor Markham.” *CSP*. Item 76 vii, Vol. 16 (1697-1698), 45.

chapter, Johnson describes the scene of a comic trial for sobriety, in which pirates stand in for honorable judges and jury (Johnson 222-3). As elsewhere in the History, the comedy springs from recorded instances of alcohol abuse that made hardened criminals look positively stupid.⁹⁴ However, what begins as a diversion on alcoholic frenzy in the floating commonwealth of pirates ends as a critique of the British justice system, which is said to have been put to shame by the straightforwardness of justice among thieves. Pirates do not merely mimic high society; their performance occasions Johnson to imagine them as nobler than the targets of their mimicry—a recognition Bartholomew Roberts would have probably demanded.

Social critique ventriloquated through an outspoken pirate figure is a possibility earned in part by archival sources that corroborate democratic practices within the Brotherhood. Owen Morris's testimony of being forced by Bellamy's crew included the description of an impromptu referendum (Jameson 307). The fact that what was being voted on was a human life merely enhanced the depiction of pirates as misguided anti-heroes who pursued ignoble ends through often noble means.

In depositions by Joyce, Morris, and Watson, the pirate emerged as a whimsical, often generous, and occasionally noble, figure. Phip's deposition underscored the pirate ship's ability to fluctuate between identities. Johnson's *General History* ascribed this transformational ability to the pirate figure itself. The trickster attributes are implicitly present in Snelgrave's project of teasing apart 'the hardened rogue' from the redeemable sailor. His Captain Davis functions as a more completely abstracted version of the trickster in his self-sacrificial performance of an anti-heroic colonial captain. His overly-successful and therefore disturbing mimicry selects him as a suitable textual scapegoat. In the figure of Captain Quelch, we have another example of

⁹⁴ See for instance "Lt. Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations. July 30, 1717." *CSP*. Item 677, Vol 29 (17-16-1717), 360-1. Bennett writes "The pirates in both vessells regaled themselves so liberally with Madera that they all got drunk and ran their own vessell on shoar..."

disturbing mimicry, one that is more overly rooted in the new entrepreneurial spirit of colonialism and its challenge to both state and religious authority.

3. 6. TREASURY'S TEMPTATIONS: PIRACY AND COLONIAL BUSINESS AS USUAL

Having identified in the figure of Snelgrave's Davis some of the main aspects of an anti-heroic pirate figure, we can now explore archival material that appears less symptomatic of mythical thought, yet helps us identify the specific economic and political conditions that informed highly ambivalent and polarized representations of colonial pirates.

Even pirates like Blackbeard and Roberts who do not seem to have consciously nurtured the image of folk heroes, found willing hands aboard every ship they captured and in nearly every colonial port, parties who were willing to relieve them of their stolen goods. This was especially true in the North American colonies, deprived of direct access to luxury commodities and slave laborers by the Navigation Acts. Lt. In 1719, Governor Spotswood of Virginia accused the entire province of North Carolina of having "sheltered and too much countenanced" many pirates, among whom the infamous Blackbeard. Apparently, Spotswood's resolute efforts to suppress piracy in the North American colonies incited his northern neighbors "to revenge on me, as the author of that project, the disappointment of their expected gain, by being the repository of all the ill-gotten wealth." The Governor of Virginia went on to condemn the Carolina governor "and others in chief station" of being the first to purchase discounted slaves from pirates, "thereby setting an example to the meaner people."⁹⁵ By virtue of such public acts, commoners received the benediction of their corrupt superiors in thinking of pirates as legitimate traders. Regardless of professed moral and legal determination, similar benedictions in the form

⁹⁵ See "Lt. Governor Spotswood to the Council of Trade and Plantations. Aug 11, 1719." *CSP*. Item 357, Vol. 31 (1719-1720), 205-9.

of royal pardons were issued from the highest legal institutions in the British Empire well into the 1740's.

The case of John Quelch and five members of his crew, executed in Massachusetts in 1703, evinces that pirate trials and executions in the colonies constituted a matter of great public interest across class and status. Part of the interest was no doubt owing to the fact that this was one of the first pirate 'trials' conducted in the North American colonies, whose local courts had only recently acquired the authority. To an even greater extent than in London, this pirate trial unearthed popular ambivalence toward piracy and heightened tensions between commoners and the governing class. The minutes of the execution were detailed in the *Boston News-Letter* and followed by an advertisement for a more extensive account currently in the works from the same publisher (Jameson 278). This follow-up publication was endorsed by Governor Dudley himself, who presided over the trial. He explained his involvement in sensationalizing the execution before the Board of Trade by saying that he "should not have directed the printing... but to satisfy and save the clamour of a rude people." These people, according to Dudley, "were greatly surprised that any body should be put to death that brought gold into the Province, and did at the time speak rudely of the proceedings against them and assisted to hide and cover those ill persons" (Jameson 284). The real goal of the article, as implied by the Governor, was to prevent popular unrest by pretending to 'satisfy' the public's evident misgivings about the execution while feeding it the proper way to view things. We will shortly put this 'alibi' to the test.

Dudley's argument testifies to the increasing ideological importance of separating the pirate figure from that of the legitimate colonial entrepreneur. Though the British Empire's success in the West Indies owed much to buccaneers' interferences in the Spanish Main, open endorsement of pirates at a time of relative peace and prosperity had become politically inconvenient. With the corrupt Colonel Fletcher gone, New England was no longer the pirate

haven it had been around the turn of the eighteenth century. Quelch's capture and execution took place at a time when the popular image of pirates in the North American colonies was particularly polarized and polemicized.

Like Governor Dudley, the *Boston Newsletter* reporter paid lip service to the 'proper view' by having the pirate captain's 'last words' to the ministers express commendable fear of divine judgment. But it is what Quelch allegedly said and did after the brief repentance scene that earned him the status of a sensational news item. He is said to have taken 'the Stage' and, inspired by a supportive crowd, "pulled off his Hat, and bowed to the spectators, and not Concerned, nor behaving himself so much like a Dying man as some would have done" (Jameson 283). Undoing the effects of Mather's frothing sermon with a few theatrical gestures, Quelch played into the crowd's favor by putting on the characteristic display of courage and defiance that audiences would increasingly come to expect of pirates, both on the gallows and on the page. After his salutations to a sympathetic audience, the pirate is reported to have exclaimed, "They should also take care how they brought Money into New-England, to be Hanged for it!"

The true last words of the pirate constitute the (real or exaggerated) performance of an unabashed opportunist who expects recognition for his selfish economic heroism. Having endangered his own life to serve his own interests and also coincidentally the interests of the burgeoning American colonies, Quelch feigned outrage at not having been exempt from the letter of the law on account of his utility. Grounded in the border regions of colonial expansion, his performance captured processes taking place at the very heart of the Empire. It exposed the dirt swept under the rug of global imperialism by bringing to the forefront capital's fearsome power to suspend morality and empathy. Shaking off both sermon and verdict, refusing to bend his knee

to divine or legal punishment, a pirate embodied this new power in a most disturbing, disruptive fashion.

On one hand, Quelch's final performance is practically (and desperately) aimed at casting off the shroud of scapegoat imposed by Mather's sermon. He appeals to his status as a contributing member of colonial culture in a vain attempt to resist 'selection.' However, other aspects of his performance, including the lack of repentance and the physical gestures to the crowd, affirm his status of a self-selected scapegoat. Although he could hardly have suspected it, his claim of being especially useful in fact heightened the intensity and efficacy of his sacrifice. If, as Joseph Roach argues, "violence is the performance of waste" and, to make its point, "must *spend* things—material objects, blood, environments," then Quelch's appeal must have had the adverse (for him) effect of rendering him an especially effective scapegoat (Roach 41). His dying behavior as reported in the *Boston News-Letter* depicts a figure suspended between devil, folk hero, court jester, and martyr. A sermon condemned him and his companions as members of the satanic army. Nevertheless, he must have seemed something of a hero to the multitude of colonials who cried so loudly upon his hanging that they were heard by Judge Sewall's wife in the quiet privacy of her home, miles away from the gallows. His theatrical gestures and sarcastic last words make him an early modern version of the court jester who, in the words of Margaret Mark and Carol Pierson, "not only lightened up the court, but also told the king truths others would be executed for telling" and thus acted "as a kind of safety valve for the kingdom."⁹⁶ Finally, his defiance of religious and legal norms constitutes a bid for a new kind of martyrdom—that of the *homo economicus* whose extreme individualistic aesthetic violates social norms and must therefore be stamped out.

⁹⁶ See Mark, Margaret and Carol S. Pierson. *The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2001. 199.

It is from this socioeconomic relevancy that Quelch's execution drew its novel and precarious 'sacredness' and commanded the attention of hundreds of colonial subjects. The newspaper article identified the gallows as a stage reserved for performance of defiance against legal and religious authorities. Had Quelch not braved the pronouncement of his death sentence and Matter's vociferous sermon and left the space for this performance vacant, his exit would have been as inconspicuous as that of his mates.

Quelch's final performance is echoed in the ballad of Captain Kidd, who in the final refrain immodestly assured listeners that "Some thousands they will flock / To Execution Dock, / Where we must stand the shock and must die." Like the audience attending the Boston execution, the balladeer never quite understands why Kidd and his men 'must die' but intuitively knows that the pirate figure must stand firm on the gallows. The foregoing stanzas, while claiming to expose Kidd's 'faults,' in fact spend a lot more time cataloging real and imaginary prizes, lingering on the image of "two hundred bars of gold" and on the captain and his crew as temporary sovereigns of the seas.⁹⁷ The main drive of the ballad seems to be an unspoken weighing of Kidd's unfortunate character flaws (he was notoriously irascible) against the considerable amount of foreign (mostly Oriental) wealth he managed to procure. Several Commons proposals for pardoning Madagascar pirates on account of their wealth indicate that this utilitarian approach to morality was not the exclusive domain of the lower classes.

Like his equally unfortunate colleague, the real-life Captain Kidd arrived to New England with his West Indies plunder only to discover that it was no longer the safe haven it had been under Colonel Fletcher. Instead, he was confronted by an exceptionally rigorous Boston governor, the Earl of Bellomont, who had sworn to "rout Pirates and Piracy entirely out of all

⁹⁷ See "Captain Kid's Farewel to the Seas; or, the Famous Pirate's Lament." In Jameson 253-7.

this north part of America.”⁹⁸ In his attempts to convict Kidd, whom he had commissioned to capture (and not join the ranks of) East Indies raiders, Bellomont was extremely begrudging and zealous. Despite Kidd’s protestations of being forced by his crew, the Earl refrained consciously from using the authority to pardon vested in him by the King himself. He took extra measures to prevent Kidd from using bribes to escape. Disturbed by a gaoler’s corruptibility, Bellomont resolved “to try the power of dull Iron against gold” and restrained Kidd in 18 pounds of iron shackles.⁹⁹ The detail of the chains’ exact weight foreshadows the precision with which Bellomont tried to catalog, recapture, and reconstitute all of Kidd’s stolen treasure. So ardent was he in making “a full discovery” that his men even ‘plundered’ the captain’s wife’s family silvers.¹⁰⁰

Bellomont’s overzealous treasure hunt belies not only preoccupation with reclaiming Oriental wealth for imperial purposes but also his desire to apprehend the exact magnitude of the pirate’s crime (and success), reflected directly in the market value of his hoard. Every piece of ‘damnified’ Muslin and Arabian gold with which Kidd tried to purchase John Gardiner’s protection was appraised and its value was added to the sum total. In this process of confiscation, reconstitution and re-invention, the miscellaneous items captured by Kidd and his crew were transformed into a singular entity to be henceforth known as Captain Kidd’s Treasure.¹⁰¹

Although he expressed nothing but contempt for Kidd’s deeds, the governor’s correspondence effectively recognized a successful pirate’s status as an extraordinary economic phenomenon. The “incredible deal of wealth” brought by Kidd and other Madagascar pirates is never seen as the rightful property of foreign kings or merchants.¹⁰² The Earl’s goal was to seize

⁹⁸ “Lord Bellomont to the Board of Trade. July 26, 1699.” In Jameson 229.

⁹⁹ “Lord Bellomont to the Board of Trade. July 26, 1699.” In Jameson 229.

¹⁰⁰ See “Petition of Sarah Kidd. July 16, 1699.” In Jameson 218.

¹⁰¹ “Lord Bellomont to the Board of Trade. July 26, 1699.” In Jameson 227.

¹⁰² “Lord Bellomont to the Board of Trade. November 29, 1699.” In Jameson 237.

this wealth for the crown in the name of imperial prosperity as opposed to individual enrichment. The lowly persons bringing such treasures from the Orient were to be shaken out of their gold and thrown in prison. The only justice served by the high and mighty Bellomont by catching them in the act of infiltrating the ‘legitimately rich’ was the restoration of ‘proper’ wealth circulation and distribution. On the pages of his hectic correspondence with the Board of Trade, pirates appear as helpless, ignorant fools who lacked the kinship networks necessary to legitimize their new wealth and status. From his inadvertently tragic portrayal, it is easy to understand why colonial women lamented the execution of John Quelch.

In his doomed treasure hunt, Bellomont was positively mesmerized by reports of pirated treasure that rumor valued at millions of pounds (qtd. in Jameson 237). The actual amounts confiscated could not possibly live up to such outlandish expectations. An otherwise forgettable captain would eventually become a name lastingly and inextricably tied to an imaginary, immense, and irrecoverable pirate treasure.

Like many others before him, Kidd participated in the creation of his own myth. Once convicted, he attempted to use public belief in his buried treasure as means of postponing his execution. He wrote a letter to the judges claiming that more treasure was buried in the East Indies in a location to which only he was privy. A recovery expedition with him aboard would have afforded him multiple opportunities to escape.¹⁰³ Once imprisoned, the captain’s air of a quarrelsome demon was shed in favor of the image of a golden hen who could bestow great rewards to those who helped him. His stratagem failed to save his life but the rumor caught on, first in New England, later throughout the world.

The historical Captain Kidd was eventually transported to England and convicted in a well-documented trial which at once sealed his fate and his immortal fame. Although his main

¹⁰³ See “William Kid to Robert Harley. May 12, 1701.” In Jameson 252-3.

cache was found and claimed for the Crown shortly after his capture, rumors of the ‘real’ treasure still being buried in scattered locations on what is today eastern Long Island are alive and well. In 1853, Charles Elmes published *The Pirates Own Book*, a popular 19th century reimagining of the scenes in Johnson’s *General History*, embellished with the author’s own “fanciful interpolations.” Hans Turley has observed that the fantasy that had at the time “set the brains of all the good people along the coast [of New England] in a ferment” was given new credence a new life (58-9). Inspired by the ferment of mythmaking, Elms added an important detail—that of Kidd’s Bible, which he supposedly buried together with the plunder. Turley calls it “a literal transferal of his identity as criminal to all of his transgressive actions” (*Ibid.*). The added detail also underscores the colonial pirate figure’s portrayal as an extreme colonial entrepreneur following an alternative set of religious and moral guidelines.

Bellomont's correspondence surrounding Kidd’s capture was one of many official records that linked pirates with indeterminate amounts of ‘treasure.’ His interim predecessor, Lieutenant Governor Stoughton of the Massachusetts Bay issued a proclamation in 1698, informing the public that “sundry wicked and ill disposed persons” have “lately landed and set on shore” with “quantitys of Foreign Coynes, silver, Gold, Bullion, Merchandize and other Treasure.” Such persons, Stoughton wrote hopefully, and in the same sentence, “may probably come into this his Ma’tys Province and transport their moneys, Merchandize and Treasure hither” (Jameson 189). Although redundancy is, on one level, typical of bureaucratic diction which favors explicitness to economy, the word ‘Treasure’ gets special treatment here. Its first occurrence employs it as a summative term, signifying that coins, silver, gold, bullion, and merchandize all constitute kinds of ‘treasure.’ Stoughton’s second use of the word, however, departs from this function and renders it utterly superfluous—serving as neither summative nor enumerative. Eventually, the effect of this repetition is that of closure—the word is invoked as a commonplace in order to

avoid lengthy and unnecessary explanation. Having taken this cultural shortcut, Stoughton did not need to identify the bearers of ‘Treasure’ as pirates, which would have been the real redundancy.

The image of pirate treasure reverberated in the popular imagination of contemporaries in a twofold manner—commoners were enticed by the idea that through it they could pry open the gateway to privilege. Those like Bellomont who already benefited from colonial production and trade often wished to ‘redeem’ it in service of the imperial project. In either case, there was a general willingness to forget how this wealth was obtained as long as it was mostly robbed from other nations, preferably other races. In 1709, The House of Commons entertained a proposal of full pardon for the Madagascar pirates whose treasure “now lies buried or useless” and could otherwise be brought “to England with safety, where it may do good.” The writers of this proposal explained soundly that the treasure, “having been taken (mostly if not wholly) from the subjects of the Great Mogull, . . . can never be restored to the owners.” The proposal went on to suggest that pirates squatting on Madagascar need to be courted, granted full immunity, and guaranteed safe passage back to England.¹⁰⁴

If this was the official language of politics, then it’s hardly surprising that pirates were perceived by many commoners as no different from the ‘legal rogues’—merchants, planters, governors, and state politicians—who all vied for maximum profit. The significant difference was that turning pirate required no initial capital and carried only a slim chance of survival. As befits ‘legal rogues,’ the backers of the Commons proposal envisioned a process of confiscation, after which the pirates would be reclaimed as able mariners and humble royal subjects, nothing more. Yet, the mere concession to special treatment for criminals who were at the same time

¹⁰⁴ See House of Commons Sessional Papers, Second Parliament of Great Britain, Session One. *A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England (1668-1741)*. Dublin, London: John Torbuck, 1742.

demonized as enemies of mankind suggests that heightened ambivalence about the colonial pirate was not limited to literary representations. The myth of a pirate turned Island King was validated by political and economic ideas such as those contained in the Commons proposal for royal pardon. Transformation from outlaw and sworn enemy of mankind to a wealthy royal subject and colonial investor was made possible through suspensions of morality and legality for the sake of enlarging Britain's share of world wealth. In the implicit rhetoric of the proposal, British raiders of the East Indies were constructed as the least savory of colonial agents, yet not without utility to the imperial project. The quantities of Arabic coin and gems Madagascar pirates had amassed, though unknown, were imagined to be great.

Among other things, the Commons proposal of 1709 signaled the failure of an earlier campaign to seize or reform the especially disruptive nest of pirates on Madagascar. A decade earlier, the Council of Trade and Plantations asked the Lord Justices of England to implement a number of cunning stratagems for putting an end to their depredations. Most of them sought to “foment divisions among the pirates.”¹⁰⁵ The Council recommended that rewards be given to pirate crews that mutiny against their captain. The proposed measures also suggested that if a pirate ship put on a desperate fight, an offer of pardon may be renewed. Thus, pirates under threat of being captured were actually encouraged to resist and extort clemency from pirate hunters who, on any given day, were much more reluctant to lose their lives in battle.

Though intended as pragmatic solutions, the Council's stratagems had side effects they could hardly have intended. For one, they amounted to a public recognition of pirate crews' loyalty and courage against superior numbers—something that commoners already disposed to celebrating pirates could hardly have overlooked. It is also clear from the overall tone that the

¹⁰⁵ See “Council of Trade and Plantations to the Lord Justices of England. Sept 1, 1698.” *CSP*. Item 788, Vol. 16 (1697-1698), 410-12.

military option was considered to be least feasible next to pardons, rewards, and bribes. These less-than-drastic measures, diplomatic and economic in their essence, bespeak a perception of East Indies piracy as an extreme form of colonial depredation to be curbed through negotiation and not open confrontation. Rewarding pirate hunters and pirate traitors was part of an on-going attempt to reseat straying economic interests within the bounds of legal naval activity. The rewards were intended to make it more appealing for common sailors to pursue outlaws than to seek their fortunes by becoming outlaws themselves.

Like the Commons proposal of 1709, the Council's letter of 1698 implicitly regarded East Indies piracy as the spirit of imperial expansion unleashed to a politically and economically detrimental degree. The goal of the House of Commons was to reclaim wealth for the crown while the Council of Trade and Plantations sought to limit profiteering to those who invested in trade and colonial production—i. e. the middle and upper classes. Commoners turned pirate undermined royal and corporate interests in the East Indies because their barbarous performances of imperial entrepreneurship caused Indian and Arab rulers to recognize British presence as predatory and invasive. An earlier Commons proposal of 1704 made the parallel between Madagascar pirates and the East India Company explicit by describing the former's acts as the carrying on of a 'Destructive Trade.'¹⁰⁶

Madagascar pirates were keenly aware of their ability to (mis)represent and subvert the English crown and corporate interests in the Orient. John Hore is reported to have raised the British flag in the port of Aden while burning two Indian ships.¹⁰⁷ This clever diversion made a number of East India Company men cringe and abhor the association. In frantic correspondences, they expressed their despair at having to convince local rulers not to avenge

¹⁰⁶ See House of Commons Sessional Papers, Sixth Parliament of Great Britain, Session One. *A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England (1668-1741)*. Dublin, London: John Torbuck, 1742.

¹⁰⁷ See "James Vernon to Council of Trade and Plantations. Dec 21, 1697." *CSP*, Item 115, Vol. 16 (1697-1698), 67-71.

such piratical acts on the Company. Like the anonymous commentator on Avery's exploits, the Company's representatives struggled to distance themselves and their activities from Hore's. Despite their protestations, the pirate figure in their renditions retains its power to expose and subvert imperial depredation. Like John Gay's beggar, John Hore and his crew effectively raised the accusation that crime is only punished in the poor.

In many ways, it was the central threat posed by Madagascar pirates, and not their centralization *per se*, that resulted in imaginings of a Pirate nation. In order to move the Council of Trade and Plantation to immediate action against them, the East India representative James Vernon prefaced his collection of grievances from stationed traders with an image intended to strike fear. He warned that if left unchecked Madagascar pirates would settle themselves "under a formed Government of robbers." This imaginary construct built on the rhetoric of the Commons proposal of 1704 which also forewarned of a "Settlement of Robbers." The damage inflicted by a pirate island in the East Indies was imagined to extend well beyond the economic realm into the very fiber of nationhood. The Commons proposal of 1704 predicted that, "They will retain the Name of *English*, and consequently all those succeeding Depredations committed by them will be charged to the Account of *England*." The reformulation of East Indies pirates as threats not only to trade but to English nationhood itself was a case of creative lobbying on the part of colonial merchants that contributed to the solidification of Madagascar as a site for the 'civilian imaginary.'

In the context of the two Commons proposals and James Vernon's summary of reports, it is no accident that both Misson's *Libertalia* in Captain Johnson's *General History* and Arviragus's island kingdom in the play by Charles Johnson were set on the island of Madagascar. Johnson used the figurative pirate state as a thinly disguised allegory for an England gone mad with imperial lust. At the same time, John Hore's implicit accusation that the

biggest robbers are those on top, symbolized by the British flag he raises at Aden, was voiced by Charles Johnson's old pirate Boreal: "I laugh to see a Scepter'd Robber at the Head of a Hundred Thousand, truss up a poor Caitiff as an Example to the rest of his Brother-Theives, for stealing two Eggs out of Form, while he is burning Cities, ravaging Countries, and depopulating Nations" (*The Successful Pyrate* 3).

Boreal's envisioning of Roman "Demi-gods" and "the Divine Son of *Ammon*" as pirates in essence constitutes an intentionally extreme attempt to project retroactively an individualistic modern aesthetic to the very beginnings of Western civilization. By showing how and why 'it has always been true' that selfish economic interest determined social conventions and institutions, Charles Johnson's pirate controversially undermined the stale concept of 'divine right.' This rhetorical move speaks directly into the heart of piracy's 'sacredness' as a trope for initial wealth accumulation.

The same trope received a curiously similar though much less dramatic treatment in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). In Book IV, he remarked that the (eventually) French colony of St. Domingo "was established by pirates and freebooters, who, for a long time, neither required the protection, nor acknowledged the authority of France." He went on to observe that "when that race of banditti became so far citizens as to acknowledge this authority, it was for a long time necessary to exercise it with very great gentleness."¹⁰⁸ The brief and seemingly historic overview constructed a somewhat mysterious 'race of banditti' with unknown or immaterial national affiliations and origins. Their French citizenship was not restored or forced upon them but rather seems to have been gradually conceded to on their own terms. Smith went on to use St. Domingo as an argument for the beneficial economic effects of erasing monopolies. In trying to account for St. Domingo's prosperity, Smith omitted to comment on the

¹⁰⁸ See Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Origins of the Wealth of Nations*. London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1895. 234.

predatory nature of the ‘trade’ carried out by its bandit race. Recognition of this economic boost would have rendered his argument for a self-regulating market somewhat unsavory. He would much rather envision the reformed freebooters on the island as a special race of modern individuals whose historical ‘temperament’ caused them to resist monopolies just enough for their sugar industry to flourish. Still, one of Adam Smith’s most quoted concepts—the ‘invisible hand’ which guides even those who act selfishly to often promote the public interest—becomes embodied, however briefly and discreetly, in the image of a pirate colony.

CHAPTER 4

THE FANCIFUL JOURNEYS OF FIVE ENGLISH BUCCANEERS

4. 1. INTRODUCTION

The anti-heroic Golden Age pirate figure owed much of his ambivalence to an earlier type of colonial sea-rover. William Snelgrave's peculiar captivity narrative featured "several old *Buccaneers*, who had been guilty of Murder and other barbarous Crimes." They were said to have been in "no ways inclined" to accept the King's Pardon and become legal privateers against Spain. Instead, "they used the King's Proclamation with great contempt, and tore it to pieces" (Snelgrave 253). While historically buccaneers were much more commonly associated with legal privateering against Spain, the term as used by Snelgrave becomes a derogatory one—they are the self-destructive 'harden'd Rogues' against whom the tragic figure of Captain Davis is pitted. This creative use of an earlier literary type as the emblem of macabre, inveterate criminality occurred at least three decades after the buccaneer's debut in the first English translation of A. O. Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America* (1684).

Snelgrave's simplistic contrast between dark-minded buccaneers and a noble pirate captain, though perfectly sensible within his own myth-making framework, obscures the fact that anti-heroic ambivalence was not a literary invention of those who portrayed Golden Age pirates like Avery and Roberts. Texts of the buccaneering period likewise featured representations of self-sacrificing rogues who struck at the same cultural anxieties in their attempt to rise above ignominy and who were similarly enlisted by others into ideological scapegoating formulae.

While anticipating most aspects of colonial pirate mythmaking, the buccaneer operated as a different kind of literary anti-hero not least because most of the sources of buccaneering narratives were implicated in the actions they depicted. Writers of autobiographical accounts sought to distance the narrative from the reality of their deeds by the practice of such techniques

as denial, apologetic distortion, euphemistic humor, and self-glorification. The anti-heroic representations found in the texts by Sharp and his men were seldom the result of deliberate attempts to stage a self-sacrificial performance of extreme transgression. Much more often, the authors intended to construct themselves as justified fortune-hunters of exceptional dexterity and determination. In short, they imagined themselves as emulators of the epic hero.

Another major difference between texts of the buccaneering period (roughly 1660-1690) and texts from the Golden Age of piracy (roughly 1690's to 1720s) was the level of violence depicted within. Although this shift can be attributed in part to a general movement of British literature toward what many perceived to be the more polite and refined language of French writers, part of it had to do with the fact that buccaneering texts were generated closer to the event. In his discussion of the apocalyptic tradition in Roman mythology, René Girard observed that “Mythological transformation moves in only one direction, toward the elimination of any traces of violence” (Girard, *Scapegoat* 94). Recalling his perception that all of mythology is rooted in specific acts of “successful” violence, we can say that in their extremely graphic character the buccaneering accounts we are about to explore mark a kind of literary beginning.

Since we ended the previous chapter with the pirate state of Madagascar being imagined as a creolized disgrace to the British nation, our analysis of five participants' accounts of the same buccaneering campaign will begin with earlier formulations of the relationship between the piratical, colonial, and national subject. From there, we will proceed to trace elements of the entrepreneurial desperado as well as elements of romantic heroicizing. Some of these elements did not have a strong presence in Golden Age pirate figures but resurfaced during the amalgamation of a wholly fictional colonial pirate. Finally, based on our first set of textual discoveries from English sources, we will attempt to outline the buccaneer as a similar yet different type of piratical anti-hero.

4. 2. NOTES ABOUT THE SOURCES

In *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-century England*, Hal Gladfelder has this to say about Moll Flanders:

All through Moll's narrative of her history and misfortunes runs a tension between confessional and evasive desire. If, on the one hand, she is drawn to disburden herself of guilt and to brag of her outlaw dexterity, on the other, she struggles to conceal as much as she can of her life, to dissociate herself from the outward traces of her activities in the world.¹⁰⁹

The perceptive critic goes on to remind us that even readers never learn the real name of Moll Flanders. While Gladfelder goes on to take issue with the spirit of Ian Watt regarding the exact nature of Moll's repentance, let us be more modest in our undertaking and instead turn our attention to several earlier examples of anonymous narrators whose autobiographical accounts also teetered between 'confessional and evasive desire.' Those who felt any guilt disburdened themselves of it. All of them bragged about their outlaw dexterity. Luckily for them, the traces of their activities were scattered halfway across the world and so dissociation would have been an easy task were it not for the fact that they, like Flanders, knew they were sitting on a great story. And what moved these men to publish self-incriminating evidence was the same reason they had committed the crimes in the first place. They sold their stories decades before John Applebee purchased his first Newgate confession.

In 1680, a year after the treaties of Nymwegen ending all hostilities between the major European states, a group of Englishmen received a commission from the Earl of Carlisle to cut logwood in the Spanish bay of Honduras. They used it as a license to raid Porto Bello and lay

¹⁰⁹ See Gladfelder, Hal. *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-century England: Beyond the Law*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001. 127.

siege to Panama, looting a number of other Spanish settlements and forts along the way.¹¹⁰ The Earl was not oblivious to or surprised by this development. He wrote to Secretary Coventry that if the Spanish did not agree to give up the logwood that the colony of Jamaica needed to expand, they “must of necessity expose their gold and silver to a number of English who are abroad and have nothing to live on but the logwood trade.”¹¹¹ Most of the men Carlisle unleashed upon the Spanish to further British colonial interests in the West Indies had been, and were still, buccaneers. Of these men, William Dampier wrote: “They were good Marks Men and so took more delight in Hunting; but neither of those enjoyments affected them so much as Privateering.”¹¹² In peacetime, their activities in the Caribbean shed all semblance of legality though none of their singular desperation and violence.

The campaign of buccaneer captains Coxon, Sawkins, and Sharp is unusual in that there exist five separate accounts of it, four of which made their way into print, some more than once.¹¹³ Though relating the same basic events, these five accounts cover a wide range of collaborative and competitive tendencies in English buccaneer mythmaking. Some of the mythical features distilled in them (such as the construction of buccaneers as national heroes) underwent complex transformations in later cultural renderings of Golden Age pirates. Most of the features—suicidal devotion to greed, transgression disguised as romance, homosocial masculinity, lower-class libertarianism, to name a few—were adopted into the pirate mythos without significant change.

¹¹⁰ For a dramatic and somewhat romanticized narrative of this campaign, see: Chapter XIV of Masefield, John. *On the Spanish Main*. London: Methuen and Co, 1906.

¹¹¹ “Governor Lord Carlisle to Secretary Coventry,” *CSP*. Item 869. 319-320.

¹¹² Dampier, William. *A New Voyage Around the World*, London: James Knapton, 1697. D2.

¹¹³ A thorough overview of the four published sources can be found in Howse, Derek, and Norman J. W. Thrower, Eds. *A Buccaneer's Atlas: Basil Ringrose's South Sea Waggoner*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1992. 261-2.

Only months after the first English edition of the widely successful *Buccaneers of America* (1684), Philip Ayres collected and published in octavo five accounts relating to buccaneering and piracy.¹¹⁴ The first account, whose author preferred to remain anonymous, concerned the activities of Bartholomew Sharp and company. The primary source of this account was the journal of John Cox, shipmaster of the *Trinity*, later appointed by his old friend Sharp as captain of the *May-flower*. The journal was substantially revised, expanded, and edited to conceal the author's identity. Archivists Derek Howse and Norman Thrower argue that the latter was done to leave readers with the impression that Bartholomew Sharp himself was the author.¹¹⁵

If this was indeed their intention, the seventeenth century editors did a poor job. A careful reading points to John Cox as author, even though the narrative refers to him in the third person.¹¹⁶ Near the opening, the narrator writes, "I sent our Canoe round the Isle..." revealing that he was in command of the *May-flower* at the time. Navigation data from the *May-flower's* voyage, originating from Cox's journal, also belies his authorship. A relation of events taking place in Sharp's absence seems to undermine Howse and Thrower's claim that Ayres wishes to present him as the author. What we can say with certainty is that Cox's journal was revised before publication—by himself, or Ayres, or another party who expanded it and tried to conceal the author's identity. Genre and stylistic differences between the raw journal and subsequent expansions are clearly visible but it is difficult to determine if these revisions were introduced by Cox himself. A comparison between the introduction and the journal expansions reveals differences in emphasis and bias which suggest that Ayres was not the one who revised the main text. Predictably, it is in the expansions that most of the mythmaking occurs.

¹¹⁴ Ayres, Philip. *The Voyages and Adventures of Capt. Barth. Sharp and others*. London, P. A. Esq: 1684.

¹¹⁵ Howse, Derek, and Norman J. W. Thrower, Eds. *A Buccaneer's Atlas: Basil Ringrose's South Sea Wagoner*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1992. 261.

¹¹⁶ See Ayres C1; C2.

The above example illustrates issues that arise in all five accounts. In considering questions of authorship, the hand of publishers and printers such as Philip Ayres, William Hacke, William Crooke, William Whitwood and others, is often an unknown quantity. For convenience only, we will refer to Cox as single author of the account (J1) in Ayres, always bearing in mind that this name probably stands for more than one person. The same applies to the other four major sources examined in this chapter, to which I will refer using the following convention: Basil Ringrose in Crooke (J2)¹¹⁷, William Dick in Whitwood (J3)¹¹⁸, Bartholomew Sharp in Hacke (J4)¹¹⁹, and Anon in Jameson (J5)¹²⁰.

Mythmaking is an incremental cultural activity or, as Harry Levin puts it, ‘a collective fantasy’ that must be shared to attain the status of a mythos.¹²¹ Our inquiry will in fact benefit from the recognition that multiple authors may have engendered the text. Although individual stakes are often indeterminate, considering each text as a multilayered anthropological record should help us map out some supra-individual processes even within a single source.

Before we probe deeper, some general observations positioning these sources in relation to one another may be helpful. Unsurprisingly, the three more honest accounts (J. Cox, W. Dick, and Anon) are also the ones whose authors attempt to remain anonymous. Advertised authors (Sharp and Ringrose) tend to distort more desperately to avoid self-incrimination, which results in a different kind of mythmaking. Cox and Dick labeled themselves pirates but expected readers to excuse their transgressions for reasons we will discuss shortly. Anon in Jameson—the least sophisticated of these five voices—does not seem concerned with moral issues. His relaxed

¹¹⁷ Ringrose, Basil. *Bucaniers of America: The Second Volume*. London: William Crooke, 1685. For more on Crooke’s defense of Morgan, see Section 6.

¹¹⁸ Published in Part III of Exquemeling, John, Ringrose, Basil. *The History of the Bucaniers of America (2nd Edition)*. London: William Whitwood, 1695.

¹¹⁹ Hacke, William. *A Collection of Original Voyages*. London: James Knapton, 1699.

¹²⁰ Published in Jameson ed. 80-133.

¹²¹ See: Levin, Harry. “Some Meanings of Myth,” *Myth and Mythmaking*. Ed. Henry Alexander Murray. New York: G. Braziller, 1960. 111.

stance in comparison to the others can be attributed to his lower-class background. His mythmaking, though seldom intentional or systematic, is no less important.

Cox and Sharp, both captains at different times, exhibited a strong apologetic tendency. However, it pulled them in radically different rhetorical directions—the former sought to charm through confession while the latter preferred censure and chivalric romanticizing. Both Anon and W. Dick identified themselves as regular buccaneers but the latter’s writing is much more literate and literary which may be due to the hand of an editor. Although a regular buccaneer like them, Ringrose was, in W. Dick’s words, “a good Scholar, and full of ingenuity [*sic.*]” who is said to have “observed more Particularities than anyone else” (*J3* 79).

Although first discovered and published by Jameson in the twentieth century, Anon’s account is nevertheless extremely relevant to our study. Inconsistent spelling, rambling, semantic confusion, and awkwardness of expression seem to point to a common, near-illiterate buccaneer, unlike Sharp, Cox, or Ringrose. Anon’s uneducated background informs the text’s selections, alterations, and omissions in subtle ways that make its study crucial to our understanding of social tiers in the mythmaking of early colonial piracy.

Our analysis will also encompass two introductions (to Cox and Ringrose) assumed to have been authored respectively by Ayres and Cooke. These two printers are the chief promoters of a strong nationalistic agenda. We’ll also consider the relationship between chapter headings in *J2*, assumed to have been authored by William Hacke, and Sharp’s text itself.

4. 3. “BEYOND MORTAL MEN”: THE AUDITION FOR NATIONAL SCIONS

The most pervasive form of mythmaking in the introductions to three of the four published accounts of Sharp’s exploits (*J1*, *J2*, *J4*) was the celebration of buccaneers as patriots whose heroics exemplify qualities allegedly intrinsic to the English nation. The reports of Sharp’s campaign appeared in the wake of Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin’s buccaneering opus

which, while profoundly entertaining, had also demolished the newly-purchased reputation of Henry Morgan, the raider of Panama. Printers like William Crooke and James Ayres wished to divert the reading public in the metropole with more tales of English ‘adventurers’ in the West Indies. But in order to do that, they needed to rescue the buccaneers from the arrows of ‘slander’. The way to accomplish this was to harbor them in the national pantheon of heroes. To complete this mythical transformation, publishers and audiences eager to get on with the adventures often needed only to give credence to English buccaneers’ own self-constructions and reinterpret them in the context of budding nationalism.

In the preface to his collection, James Ayres advertised Cox’s account as “a plain Journal, not unpleasant, and much of the same kind” as Exquemelin’s. He presented Cox’s manuscript as “a true and just Relation of what befell them in that Expedition” and qualified the English buccaneers’ deeds as ‘Adventures’ (*Jl* A2-3). Having reinforced Cox’s claim that Sharp and company acted as sanctioned avengers “in service of the Emperour of *Darien*,” Ayres made no mention of the trial for piracy that awaited some of them at home.¹²² Instead, he placed the emphasis on suffering and extraordinary feats of courage that took place far away from home—both elements characteristic of the hero myth. A modest overture initiates what will soon turn into a most irrational storm surge of nationalist sentiment.

Ayres must have realized that the audience generated by Exquemelin’s volume had been trained to read ‘buccaneer’ and ‘pirate’ as interchangeable. In glorifying Sharp’s men, he must have felt he had exposed himself to the charge of endorsing piracy. By way of self-defense, his introduction proceeded to hail the destruction of Captain Carlisle’s pirate ship, hastening to inform readers that the pirate’s crew, though “a mixture of divers Nations,” was mostly French

¹²² Three were charged, Sharp among them, under the watchful eye of the Spanish ambassador. Because they had the fortune to seize and deliver to the crown a valuable collection of Spanish maps (later published as Basil Ringrose’s *South Seas Waggoner*) they were eventually acquitted by secret order from King Charles II. See Howse and Thrower’s book for more on this intrigue.

and Dutch. (JI A4) This covert blow aimed at both of Exquemelin's national affiliations¹²³ merely prefaced a declaration of total ideological war—Ayres went on to argue that Sir Henry Morgan could not have possibly committed the atrocities detailed in *The Buccaneers of America* because, for one, he was an English gentleman of good breeding. (JI A5-7) The implicit argument is that piracy is a crime befitting the riff-raff of other nations whereas high-bred Englishmen are only capable of righteous and ingenious retaliation. To convert any readers whose logic has not yet been tranquillized by a swelling of national pride, Ayres qualified Exquemelin's writings as "an Odium on the English Nation in general." (JI a2) Thus, by interpreting and celebrating their campaign as a glorious chapter in the national narrative, the publisher hoped to condition audiences to succumb to Sharps' buccaneers' own self-aggrandizement.

An identical dynamic is at work in William Crooke's introduction to Basil Ringrose's account. Although Ringrose's perspective was quite unlike that of the French Huguenot surgeon who had recently cast an unflattering light on Henry Morgan's exploits, Crooke began by presenting the English buccaneer's account as a natural sequel. He argued that both possessed "fidelity of the Relations..., the Authors having been not onely Eye-witnesses, but also Actors in the transactions they report." (J2 A2) But just like Ayres, Ringrose's publisher went well beyond conventional attempts to recapture an audience. What followed was a list of unique 'stylistic' merits which exploded into a eulogy whose ambitious goal was to transform English buccaneers' infamy into fame, and fame into legend. Crooke cataloged:

... the candor and sincerity of the Stile, the variety and pleasantness of these Voyages, the greatness of the Attempts here related, the unparallel'd, and undaunted Courage of the *Bucaniers*, the strangeness of their performances, the

¹²³ Exquemelin is commonly thought to have been a French Huguenot exiled to Holland.

novelty of their Exploits; and withal, the glory and grandeur of Valour, which here is seen to be inherent to our English Nation, and as pregnant of great Actions in the present, as in the former Ages.” (J2 A2-3)

In a rhetoric inscribing what Benedict Anderson calls ‘*historical* fatality,’ English buccaneers’ exploits in the Caribbean are seen as merely the latest manifestations of ‘glory and grandeur’—national qualities perceived to extend endlessly back in history.¹²⁴ Later in the preface, Morgan was hailed as a “Jamaican Hero” and those under his command are said to have “acted beyond mortal men in *America*.” Crooke’s stated intent in rhetorically joining Morgan, Sharp, and their men was “to propose them unto our English Nation, as the truest patterns of undaunted and exemplary Courage” (J2 A5). The grandiloquence of these statements appealed specifically to English readers who could expect to be at once diverted and instructed in the exceptionality of their own nation. In Crooke’s invocation, heroic present and past collapse together (“in the present, as in the former Ages”), creating a simultaneity which Eric Dardel sees as characteristic of *mythic time*. “By virtue of this mythic time,” Dardel writes, “man feels united to all generations, to all the living.”¹²⁵

Though deeply characteristic of the nation, buccaneer “performances” were also recognized by Crooke as acts possessing “strangeness” and “novelty.” These qualities, said to result in the ‘variety and pleasantness’ of Ringrose’s account, seem to set them apart from national heroes of the past. But what is this new strangeness, theretofore unseen? Does it stem from Ringrose’s descriptions of exotic places, people, and customs, or was the publisher preparing audiences for voyeuristic enjoyment of transgressions related in “candor and sincerity” by the “Actors” themselves? Is “novelty” merely part of the publisher’s sales pitch or does it

¹²⁴ See Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition). London, New York: Verso, 1991. 146.

¹²⁵ See Dardel, Eric. “The Mythic.” *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*. Ed. Alan Dundes. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. 230-2.

point to a shift in the structure of the national myth? Does any of the “strangeness” have to do with a resituating of individualism and greed in the cultural value spectrum? Finally, was buccaneers’ rhetorical adoption into the pantheon of national heroes earned through their necessary involvement in such quintessentially colonial performances as ‘exploration,’ ‘discovery,’ cross-cultural contact, trade, and above all, violent exploitation?

A glorious description of Ringrose occupying the rest of the preface convinces us that its cultural work, though triggered by mundane desire to sell books, is profound and complex. The author, advertised as a gentleman on the title page, was applauded for his “Curiosity and Genius, who all along the course of this Voyage, not onely fought with his Sword in the most desperate Engagements... against the *Spaniards* but with his Pen gave us a true account of... the very *Scenes* of those Tragedies.” A gentleman warrior and bard, Ringrose was found to be “totally employed towards our information and instruction at home,” delivering moral and geographic lessons with equal facility (*J3 A3*). A new cultural icon emerges from these descriptions—the English colonial pirate/explorer who employs with equal ease sword and pen, courage and curiosity, and catalogs every ‘discovery’ in the service of imperial expansion.

As for the dishonorable parts in the account, Ringrose’s publisher Croke, like Ayres, left readers to decide whether Englishmen of good breeding were capable of such acts. This defense on the basis of intrinsic national and class integrity lacks any logic whatsoever, and that is precisely the point—it demanded readers’ unconditional belief. In addressing the chief accusation against Morgan—that he had purposefully torched Panama—Croke delivered a remarkably convoluted passage that would give a headache to anyone except loyal Englishmen. He admitted that buccaneers and Spaniards alike believed Morgan had set fire to the city, that he had been in a position to do so, but that to believe that he had done it was to “to devest [sic] him of’ merit and was not a fitting stance for any true compatriot. (*J3 a4-5*)

In 1949, anthropologist Joseph Campbell argued that in an increasingly globalized context certain ancient formulae, and specifically the mythical journey of the hero, have become “ineffective, misleading, and even pernicious.” He considered the hero myth’s central function to be the bringing up of youth to a cultural standard of maturity. But in modern societies, Campbell lamented, in which socialization is co-opted by nation-state ideologies, such myths may become “the aggrandizer of the nursery ego, not the annihilator of an infantile situation.” This is so because “the community today is the planet, not the bounded nation ... hence the patters of projected aggression which formerly served to co-ordinate the in-group now can only break it into factions.”¹²⁶ The factions of which Campbell speaks seem to be economic and political divisions within the global in-group of the twentieth century international community—yet, applying his insight to the turn of the eighteenth century is not anachronistic. Writing at the advent of global capitalism and in the lull before the rise of European nation states, Crooke was confronted with the difficult task of presenting Morgan as a tribal / regional hero *while* a pernicious destroyer of imperial infrastructure. His introduction inscribed jealousy and rivalry between Spanish, French, Dutch, and English, but it also recognized the destruction of a great colonial city as detrimental to the common economic interests of a Western Europe priming itself for global domination.

In order to bypass economic and political sensitivities and retain the national celebration, Crooke had to preserve the torching of Panama (and the military nature of Morgan’s entire campaign) as an article of faith. Shifting the emphasis from moral (i. e. economic) evaluation to the “Heroick” actions themselves, he hoped that audiences would do the same. English readers should be able to enjoy the trespasses of their own countrymen even more than they had done in

¹²⁶ See Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Second Edition: Third Printing). New York: Princeton UP: 1973. 388-9. All subsequent quotations come from this edition.

reading Exquemeling if they could assume that the “villanies” of other nations were “ten times greater.” (*J3 a2*)

On some level, both Ayres and Crooke seemed to recognize that to excise violence from the texts they were publishing was impossible, and bad for the business of selling books. Violence, however muted and disguised, was the chief source of ‘variety,’ ‘strangeness,’ and ‘pleasantness.’ The pleasures of vicarious transgression were indulged first by the publishers themselves. Pretending to defend Morgan, Ayres filled entire pages with scenes of horror that the alleged son of a respectable Monmouthshire family could not possibly have been guilty of. (*J1 A4-7*) Similarly, William Hacke, the publisher of Bartholomew Sharp’s second account, was forced to revitalize the text when its author did too good a job of censoring his piratical streak. Even readers who knew nothing about the piracy trial of 1681 and had not read Cox’s self-incriminating account of 1684 could not have missed the fact that Sharp was a ferocious pirate. While the author struggled to veil in romantic garbs acts of pillage, kidnapping, and torture, the short chapter summaries advertised them in bold print. In his desire to rivet readers, Hacke was thoroughly unsympathetic toward Sharp’s attempts to save face—he highlighted before several chapters the cities and ships sacked and burnt within. (*J4 Bb3; Bb5*)

Sharp’s inclusion alongside more reputable explorers like Captains Cowley and Wood did not move Hacke to conform the buccaneer’s tale to a higher standard of morality. He re-amplified the muffled violence in order to recover some of the quaintness of this “Journey over the Isthmus of *Darien*” and cash in on the rich personality of this particular English colonial explorer. Like in Crooke’s description of Ringrose, Sharp’s potential to beguile resided in the liberal use of the sword alongside the pen and the consequent pleasures of transgression alongside instruction.

The celebration of British buccaneers as national heroes was accompanied (perhaps even enabled) by an undercurrent of violence and transgression. If one bought Ayres and Crooke's arguments and accepted Morgan and Sharp as singular exemplars of national valor, one also had to let the piratical infiltrate contemporary constructions of the ideal national identity. This was a highly risky cultural experiment not because buccaneers had been guilty of atrocities but because the nationalist ideology Ayres and Crooke were tapping into had not caught up with the sense of commonality between subjects of major Western European kingdoms engaged in a 'bonding' imperial expansion. In fact, the publishers of buccaneering accounts took part in the genesis of the very ideology upon which their 'arguments' relied. Benedict Anderson has identified "the primacy of capitalism" as a factor in the development of nationalism and, in turn, the primacy of "print-as-commodity" in the rise of capitalism in early modern Europe (37; 34). It is through such forced rhetoric as Crooke's and Ayres' celebration of Morgan that "the nation was conceived in language, not in blood." At the end of his introduction, Crooke raised a solitary voice in praise for Henry Morgan, implicitly imploring readers to join what Anderson calls the 'unisonance' of patriotic experience (J3 a6; Anderson 145).

* * *

The accounts themselves invoked national identity only on occasion, and never as loudly as did their introductions. Yet, there was enough for a determined (or newly created) nationalist to celebrate. Ringrose described the buccaneer command structure in military terms. Anon called the motley outfit 'our armie' and referred to Captain Coxon as his 'Generall.' However, he also confessed taking comfort in numbers when at least eighty Frenchmen joined the campaign at a time when France was also at peace with Spain. Clearly, this was no regular English army. Bartholomew Sharp's narrative significantly made no mention of any French involvement.

Although he mostly credited God's grace for victories in the battlefield, he did invoke his national identity as the main reason for a romantic conquest.¹²⁷

Of the five reporters, Cox (who also underplayed French presence) was perhaps the most ardent believer in English national superiority and its 'historical fatality.' He wrote of turning the tide in a naval battle near Panama: "however nothing daunted at the disadvantage of Fight, we made a resolution rather than drown in the Sea, or beg quarter of the Spaniard, whom we used to Conquer, to run the extreamest hazard of Fire and Sword, and after a sharp Contest,..., we boarded one of them, and carried her." (*J1* 13)

Writing around the same time as Sharp's men, the French buccaneer Raveneau de Lussan saw Spaniards as naturally cowardly, his English companions as naturally cruel and treacherous, his compatriots as naturally noble and courageous. By contrast, the English buccaneers under Coxon and Sharp relied less on gross national stereotypes. William Dick even credited one Spanish crew for their exceptional courage, something de Lussan would never deign to do (*J3* 90). A lesser recognition for the same crew also came from Cox. (*J1* 14) A possible explanation for this representational difference may be the fact that the French filibuster de Lussan had to make more extensive use of the 'black legend' of Spanish degeneracy to justify his depredations against fellow Catholics.¹²⁸

The overall impetus found within the five witness accounts by Englishmen was to construct buccaneers as epic rather than merely national heroes. For indiscriminating readers, the magical creatures in these accounts were clearly the authors themselves. Feats of strength, courage, and endurance, were related with false modesty but it was most often up to publisher and reader to interpret these 'Heroicks' in a national context. Exaggerations in numbers of

¹²⁷ This episode in Sharp is discussed in detail in Section 5 of the present chapter.

¹²⁸ See Chapter 5. 4-5.

enemies vanquished occur frequently and are easy to detect because the chroniclers embellished in different places. The death of the foolhardy Captain Sawkins at Quiblo was explained by Anon as the logical result of his almost single-handed confrontation with an “abundance of People their.” (*J5* 102) In Cox’s rendition, Sawkins and several other buccaneers were met by a thousand men. (*J3* C). At the town of Arica, Anon claimed the buccaneers repulsed 700 armed men, a number which the Chilean historian Barros Arana has shown to be impossible (qtd. in Jameson 114). William Dick reported 100 Spanish slain vs. 3 wounded buccaneers at Santa Maria. (*J4* 38) Ringrose’s more conservative estimate was 26 Spanish killed vs. two wounded, with the disclaimer that only fifty of their number got to engage the enemy. (*J2* 11) A record of sorts is set by Captain Sharp himself, who claimed he and his men vanquished 70 foes in their first raid, with only two buccaneers wounded. (*J4* Aa4) In other instances, all five sources admit to not knowing what losses the enemy sustained, but always insisted they must have been great (e. g., *J1* 14).

Endurance was the subject of similar hyperboles. In Anon’s admission, the buccaneers were too tired from the long march inland and fail to outrun an Indian who reaches Puerto Villa half an hour before them (*J5* 88). However, William Dick insisted that the man, an African slave, proved no match for even fatigued buccaneers who managed to seize the town, with no losses, before he could raise its citizens. (*J3* 64)

While Ayres and Crooke encouraged readers to celebrate such near-miraculous triumphs as manifestations of intrinsic national superiority, the common buccaneers Anon, Cox, and Dick, occasionally attributed their victories to divine intervention. Like Spenser’s Red Cross Knight, they triumph with the help of God’s grace. But unlike the hero of the chivalric epic, who can only reach out for divine favor, the buccaneers’ attitude is much more mundane and arrogant: God helps them only because they help themselves. This revision to the Christian epic comes out

in Anon's use of perfunctory phrases such as 'it pleased God we won' and 'by a providenc [*sic.*] of God' (*J5* 110). The agency in these phrases reduces the divine power to a spectator granting favor to the buccaneers' arms provided that they remain suicidally courageous and only moderately covetous. William Dick, along with Anon and Cox, credited courage, greed, and desperation more often and more earnestly than "Gods infinite mercy" (*J3* 75; 83). This substitution of lofty motives with base ones constitutes a radical revision of the Christian epic hero, establishing the newly sacred content of a modern myth. It was licensed by broader economic and social transformations that will be discussed in the following section.

4. 4. "IN SERVICE OF THE EMPEROUR OF DARIEN": MYRMIDONS OF FEROCIOUS CAPITALISM

In many ways, the self-construction of buccaneers as epic heroes of the New Age is a function of their self-envisioning as ambitious colonial entrepreneurs whose avarice could be justified in the context of burgeoning capitalism. Mullan and Reid suggest that many 'polite readers' may have found tales of crime close to their own experiences "because the activities of criminals could be seen as the distorted consequence of an increasingly commercial society."¹²⁹ Curiously enough, this axis of mythmaking is explored primarily in the accounts themselves. The introductions by Crooke and Ayres generally prefer to cite revenge as the central motive of Sharp's men, boosting their image of English patriots and liberators of oppressed Amerindians. Ringrose and Sharp, cloaked in the identity of colonial explorers, attempt to evade the issue of motivation, though with little success. Cox, by contrast, not only faces the music but even sings along, extolling the universality of greed. The result is a private myth whose success hinges entirely upon readers' willingness to accept piracy as an extreme form of capitalist individualism.

¹²⁹ Mullan, John and Reid, Christopher. *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 179.

Cox begins his narrative with what Howse and Thrower justly call ‘flowery prose,’ shattering to pieces Ayres’ promise of ‘a plain Journal’:

That which often Spurs men on to the undertaking of the most difficult Adventures, is the sacred hunger of Gold; and 'twas Gold was the bait that tempted a Pack of merry Boys of us, near Three Hundred in Number, being all Souldiers of Fortune, under Command (by our own Election) of Captain *John Coxon* , to list our salves in the Service of one of the Rich West Indian Monarchs, the Emperour of *Darien* or *Durian*. (JI B)

Much of Cox’s rhetoric is, at first glance, carelessly sawing away at the branch of his own moral integrity. However, considering his contemporary audience, he may not have been as reckless as we think him. Members of the British middle and servant classes, expecting to be entertained with tales of adventure and treasure, would probably forgive and forbear, if only to get on with the story. Though feigning ignorance, the narrator is aware that he is the target of moral scrutiny. He wishes to remain anonymous and legitimizes his presence in the isthmus of Darien by crowning a local tribe leader. It is significant that, despite this awareness, he does tell his story, veiling the promise of transgressions so thinly as to actually tantalize the reader with it. But what makes him so certain that his story will command enough interest to suspend readers’ moral compass?

As in any decent novel, the first paragraph sets expectations but also provides the key to reading the rest of the text. The clues scattered through it need little explication. ‘A Pack of merry Boys’ alludes to the legend of Robin Hood. ‘Souldiers of Fortune’ signals battle, not just mere adventure. A much-inflated ‘Rich West Indian Monarch,’ liberally crowned ‘Emperour of *Darien*,’ is paraded briefly to establish the exotic setting and symbolize treasure. A parenthesized reference to democratic election of a leader spells free will, boyish camaraderie, and a degree of sophistication—all elements with great potential to kindle readers’ sympathies.

But the single most important rhetorical gesture is the quasi-riddle contained in the very first sentence. Soaring diction ends, rather unexpectedly, with reference to base human desire. What is more, ‘hunger of Gold’ is deemed, for no apparent reason, ‘sacred.’ The use of this word is far from accidental—it invokes a higher authority which has the power to validate deeds that, on first glance, may appear abhorrent.

In some sense, Cox needs to tap into the reservoir of sacredness in order to successfully convert morally sensitive readers. But necessity is not the only mother of this bold pronouncement—it is very much rooted in contemporary discourse on what constitutes vice in an era of burgeoning capitalism and global trade. It comes at a time when self-interest, a ‘private vice’, was much speculated on as an activity which may, in the words of poet/philosopher Mandeville again, bring unexpected ‘publick benefits.’ The same idea, in a much more refined and qualified form, figures in John Locke’s Two Treatises on Government in the shape of ‘the invisible hand.’ Under proper institutional frameworks, this unseen regulator may cause selfish economic actors to perform in the interest of the greater good. Greed was, needless to say, the chief vice that Mandeville and Locke tackle in their early attempts to analyze the workings of the free market.

Cox the buccaneer, lacking the intellectuals’ caution, simplifies the conception of greed to a frightful extent and affixes it as the new, though centuries-old, moral compass. Nor is he the only one to cast a doubtful eye at moral teachings against greed. He merely voices what many (especially among the lower classes) felt was the *modus operandi* of early capitalism—an unchecked free-for all, with the biggest crooks being those at the head of states and corporations, and the small-time crooks lying in ambush by the roads of England or roving the high seas. Comparisons between business venture and highway robbery, between merchants and pirates, were as common in the 1680’s as they were four decades later when Captain Johnson accused

jewel traders of being bigger pirates than Henry Avery, or two decades later when Charles Johnson wrote “The Successful Pirate.” After hearing reports of Commons proposals to pardon Madagascar pirates in order to claim their treasures for the crown, a cynical member of the lower-class would have nodded approvingly at Cox’s treatise on the universality of greed. Even so, a blasphemous claim to sacredness must surely have raised a few eyebrows even among those whose appetites for buccaneering tales had just been whetted by Exquemelin. Upon preparing his manuscript for publication, Cox must have been confronted with the problem of avoiding self-incrimination. Like a true adventurer, he opts to take the bull by the horns, forcing a mythical hand already at work in constructing pirates as adventurous businessmen.

Like any ideology, a mythical cult of greed must begin with retroactive projection instituting it as the originator that has been ‘spurring’ adventurers since time immemorial. In his appeals to both sacredness and origin, Cox follows closely Cohen’s definition. In Cohen’s footsteps, Langdon Gilkey has elaborated that myth’s “meanings concern the ultimate existential issues of actual life and the questions of human and historical destiny.”¹³⁰ Cox’s “That which often spurs men...” promises to answer at least one all-human question: “What moves us to seek danger and undergo deprivation?” The answer is intended as a surprising revelation, a radical revision of what is officially regarded as sacred and good. In a profanely Nietzschean fashion, Cox attempts to capture the actual, imperfect, state of human nature and carve a new idol out of it.

Like Crooke’s introduction to Ringrose, the statement also invokes mythic time, a connection between past and present generations of adventures. But this timeless unity in Cox is brought about by all-human kinship based on greed and not by national heroism. There is no talk

¹³⁰ See: Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science, and Theology*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970. 66.

of enriching the English nation, only individual ‘hunger.’ Thus, the mythical identity being constructed here proposes to supersede both religious and national values.

Greed, in Cox’s memorable opening, is not only constructed as a universal motivator of “most difficult Adventures.” It is also the particular motive that compelled three hundred buccaneers to seek their fortunes in the West Indies. Cox essentially gives “the sacred Hunger of Gold” credit for making the ensuing narrative possible. The buccaneer, as befits any true bard, bows to his muse before he leaps into the creative fray.

Cox realizes that he is walking a tenuous rope in proposing a base motive as central and sacred to human actions. Later in the narrative, he repeatedly employs humor to lower the moral guards of resilient readers and tempt them into nodding along. When describing one of the buccaneers’ many nights spent sleeping under the sky, he compares them to forest creatures, which he calls “Animals, less mischievous than ourselves” (*Jl* B4). What seems like an innocent, playful comparison stems from Cox’s desire to convince readers that there is nothing inherently wrong with humans acting out their animal nature in pursuit of gold. The adjective ‘mischievous’ both understates and downplays the violent extremes to which Sharp’s pirates resorted. Animals are credited with greater simplicity and honesty but not to the end of condemning deviousness in men. The desired effect is to make human avarice, and the adventures it brings, appear like a more sophisticated form of predatory behavior.¹³¹ Further in the text, Cox remarks that Spanish gold dust was well-guarded at the fort of Santa Maria, “though not so well guarded as it would have been by us” (*Jl* B5). This attempt at humor performs the much more serious cultural work of suggesting that wealth belongs to those who want it more and guard it better from the encroaching of others.

¹³¹ As we will later see in de Lussan’s account, animals and buccaneers engage in a much more haunting symbolic interplay and mythical fusion than Cox unravels here. See Chapter 5. 7.

This simplified (and roguishly appealing) model of entitlement to wealth also figures in William Dick, who concludes rather practically that the mining of gold is less “worth our time and labor” than the sacking of Spanish settlements where that gold is already amassed (*J3* 68). Likewise in Cox, gold in its natural state is presented as no different from Spanish gold, except for the latter’s greater availability. He describes the buccaneers’ crossing of a gold-bearing river and confides that “having no Chymist to refine the Ore, we thought it best to look for it where it was to be had with the King of Spains Arms on it, for we like other Children loved Pictures strangely” (*J1*, B6). The boyish charm Cox employs in the opening paragraph resurfaces to ease his audience into acceptance of pirates’ childlike hunger for shiny objects.). His brand of picaresque humor reminds us of Moll Flanders’ similarly charged comment: “these things I did not steal, but they were stolen to my hand.”¹³²

As eager as Cox is to glorify himself and his companions, some instances of mythmaking seem entirely unintentional. Those include references to democratic election of Commanders-in-Chief, as well as the dethroning of Captain Coxon based on his cowardice in battle. Another incident loaded with mythical potential that may have been unrecognized by its creator is the anecdote of the unrefined silver the buccaneers overlook unknowingly, keeping a single peg to make bullets (*J2* G5). The image of buccaneers firing silver bullets at Spaniards in attempt to capture the very same treasure they are wasting must have captured the imagination of many readers. Such incidents, initially told as little more than curiosities, compound with other reports of the same register to form an important symbolic feature—the paradoxical image of the pirate as a fabulous lower-class wastrel.

Although Cox is the only one to openly advocate the sacredness of gold lust, other sources affirm aspects of it. Cloaked in anonymity, Dick can also afford to admit that the

¹³² See Defoe, Daniel. *Moll Flanders*. New York: Courier Dover, 1996. 140.

buccaneers' foremost goal was "to satisfie our earnest Appetite of Gold" (*J3* 66). As in Cox, an appeal to simplicity and honesty accompanies the assertion that greed is as normal and universal as hunger. Ringrose, whose account supersedes Dick's (according to Crooke, the printer), chooses to retain and echo that remark. The buccaneers are after "Treasure enough, to satisfie our hungry appetite of Gold and Riches" (*J4* 12).

In addressing gold lust, Anon builds a confused ethical see-saw composed of equal parts hypocrisy and superstition. Like the other three, he aims to tantalize his audience with images of vast treasures just beyond one's reach. The first few pages of his account see the buccaneer fleet from Jamaica to the Gulf of Darien. Anon gets so wrapped up in minutia that he feels the need to give readers, and himself, a reminder of the main reason why his account is worth writing and reading. It comes in the form of a clumsy foreshadowing: "Spanish townes Plenty of Silver and golde; of which more here-after" (*J5* 87). Soon enough, another glimpse of pirate booty passes before the reader. At the sack of Puerto Villa, "a cannoe of the best plunder, as cloth of silver," sinks into the river because the buccaneers were "soe covittious to lode deepe" (*J5* 89).

The remark comes across as both honest and devious. On the one hand, the scene masquerades as a morality play, arming those illicitly engaged in covetous reading with the argument that they are, in fact, learning from a penitent sinner. On the other hand, the reference to avarice, one of the deadly sins, does not prompt any serious reflections. The moral remains entirely on the level of practicality—"Don't overload a canoe with plunder, or risk losing it." Untroubled by his piratical status and the brutalities he and his companions commit, Anon is nevertheless cautious not to "raise the Divill" through excessive transgression (*J5* 85). Like his thankfulness to God, his condemnation of excessive greed is lip service to piety.

Although seemingly the most penitent, Anon is in fact the least troubled by questions of entitlement to Spanish gold. While the other four accounts work systematically to rationalize

buccaneers as avengers of oppressed Amerindians, thwarted explorers, or honest laborers on the field of battle, Anon speaks of natives at peace with the Spanish and never tries to make the case for plundering as honest employment (*J5* 94). Unlike John Cox who is troubled enough by ethical and legal matters to invent an Amerindian Emperor as his commissioner, Anon sees no need to obscure the criminal intent of his company. Having received their ‘letpasses’ and secret blessings from Carlisle, five pirate captains resolve to cut only enough wood to supply themselves before they “make all expedition to take Portavella.” En route, they are joined by a French brigantine captained by a John Row who, “understanding our Designe, was willing to Concert with us.” (*J5* 85) Later, they are joined by a French ship, whose captain is also said to have understood the fleet’s purpose. (*J5* 88)

Not only is the common buccaneer comfortable admitting to less-than-legal designs, he also makes a point of exposing the willful intent of captains under whom he served, lest they themselves deny it. Whereas Cox, Ringrose, and Sharp, because of their leadership roles, have to invent more complex justifications, Anon’s simple defense seems to be that he was not the chief ‘designer’. Even that defense is half-baked and incriminating evidence of premeditated piracy is unwisely disclosed.

Anon’s ethical *laissez-faire* sets him apart from all other reporters and can, at least partially, be attributed to his lower-class background. As Langford notes, and as we ourselves observed in the case of Quelch’s execution, certain members of the lower classes saw condemnations of piracy as hypocritical, or worse, as policies designed to protect privilege. Sharing this attitude, Anon saw no need to wrap up his greed in an ideological package like John Cox did, equate it with natural hunger like Ringrose and Dick, or euphemize it like Sharp. Precisely because of its lack of ideological sophistication, Anon’s recently discovered account

constitutes a much more extreme treatise on covetous individualism than any of the other sources.

The buccaneers' 'earnest' hunger for gold would have likely resonated with commoners in the metropole for many of whom the pursuit of fortune required nothing short of wagering their skin. At the same time, as we will see in de Cuffy's preface to de Lussan's account, the potentially fabulous returns from pirates' extreme 'investment' in colonial depredation fascinated impoverished aristocrats and governors alike. If these had been merely patriotic reports on a military campaign against Spain, most of their appeal would likely have been lost. All five witnesses know well that the main attraction of their narrative is plunder, their sacred muse, dangled in many forms before English audiences in the metropole, few of whom desired anything more than to dip their hands into the stream of New World wealth.

More apparently in Cox than in any other account, the invented commission from an exotic Emperor of Darien conflates with buccaneers' true motives to form a curious symbolic entity with unmistakably mythical resonances. Unlike the more realistic depictions of Amerindians found in the other four accounts, he describes the alleged Emperor as "Cloathed with a loose Robe or Mantle of pure Gold, which was extraordinarily Splendid and Rich." (*J1 B5*) In case we miss the sacred content being communicated here, Cox continues: "The King was in a White Cotton Coat fringed round the bottom, about his Neck a Belt of Tygers Teeth, and a Hat of pure Gold, with a Ring... of Gold in his Nose, which is the Fashion in this Country for the people of Quality, and which for what I could perceive was the only distinction" (*J1 B5*).

With the exception of Sharp, other sources fail to match the singular intensity of Cox's Emperor. Though they do corroborate a band of gold (with varying thickness) worn by a young chief they call *Golden Cap*, none of the other attributes are mentioned. In Sharp, a golden 'wreath' is worn by a tribal leader named Don Andreas. (*J4 Aa2*) His description of the so-called

Emperor, immediately following that of Andreas, is of a barely-clothed old man with an English hat (*J4 Aa3*). Dick asserts that Don Andreas and the old Emperor were, in fact, the same person (*J3 67*). Anon presents us with a modest description of Captain Andreas and other tribesmen wearing “thinn Gould in their Noses” (*J5 93*).

Out of scattered elements, Cox, like a true bricoleur, forges a single, symbolically relevant figure. He collects and amplifies attributes of immense wealth, adding the tiger’s teeth to signify the predatory means by which such opulence is acquired. The necklace concretizes his earlier equation of physical domination with entitlement to wealth, furthering the agenda of presenting piracy as a form of brutal, and brutally honest, individualism. As if all this mythmaking were not intense enough, Cox’s cryptic comment on distinction implies that the Emperor was not the only one dressed in sheets of precious metals, thereby consciously feeding the rumor that the New World is awash in gold.

Sharp’s description of the Amerindian King, published 15 years after Cox’s account in Ayres, is lifted almost verbatim from the earlier source, down to the choice of comparing the Emperor’s golden nose ring to a ‘Cockle-shell.” (*J4 Aa4*) This obvious borrowing effectively reinforces an already established icon in the kind of retelling that is essential to the mythmaking process. Cox’s depiction is itself a transformative retelling of an earlier myth. In the 1530’s, rituals of the Muisca tribe had ignited among Spaniards the legend of ‘El Rey Dorado,’ the Golden King whose mythical kingdom many early explorers of South America dreamed of ‘discovering.’

Although not capable of performing magic or bestowing special powers, the Emperor of Darien is mythical in the sense that his garbs represent sacred qualities—the hunger for gold, and the violence embedded in pursuit of it. What begins as an attempt to legitimize buccaneers’ presence in the Spanish Main (a believable Emperor must be dressed accordingly) ends up as the

unearthing the narrative's sacred core. A mere exaggeration is transformed by reinforcement into something of much greater significance. The actual, fused in the authors' minds with the real (in the Lacanian sense) worship of gold extracted through violence, takes the form of an early modern, private mythical creation. An Amerindian leader elevated to a symbol of coveted treasure becomes the banner shaping the buccaneer community into what Sharp calls 'that great unity.' (*J4 Aa4*) While the pirate captain prefers to attribute this unity to camaraderie in deprivation and battle, Cox identifies the deeper source of camaraderie—lust after treasure.

But who was it that initiated this instance of myth-making? Was it Cox or his editor or did creation begin as a communal act? All five sources eventually admit that the Emperor of Darien was 'crowned' by the buccaneers themselves who only pretended to do his bidding. (*J4 Aa2*) The only consistent detail across all witnesses points to a symbolic contract in many ways revealed, rather than invented, by Cox. For the buccaneers, the myth served both a rational and a metaphysical purpose—it explained (poorly) their legal status but more importantly, it sealed their sacred covenant with a new kind of deity. Cloaked in anonymity, William Dick thought it safe to confess to the utility of this imagining: "Thus we disengaged from the pretended Service we had proffered unto that Emperor: I call it pretended, forasmuch as any one would easily guess, that the real intent thereof was only to serve our selves with Gold and Silver" (*J3 71*). The mythical aspect of this dynamic is just as easily guessed when Dick's words are read against Cox's account. Buccaneers' obedience to the Gold Emperor was at once mocking and true.

In "The Concept of Myth," David Bidney echoes E. B. Tyler's idea that certain myths come into being when abstract beliefs pass through the consciousness of a so-called 'pragmatizer,' i. e. a member of the community who needs to embody or personify abstract

relationships in order to grasp them.¹³³ Intentionally simplistic, this model is embedded in Levi-Strauss' excessively broad claim that "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction."¹³⁴ In the case of the Emperor of Darien, we can construe Tyler's non-specific 'pragmatizer' as an individual who sought to reconcile a number of 'contradicting' elements: greed with hunger, violence and courage with entitlement and wealth. Regardless of whether Cox was himself an example of such a pragmatizer or merely enhanced a co-operatively pragmatized symbol in order to help readers decode the sacred content of his narrative, his Emperor constitutes a key to unlock the floodgates of imagination, promising a mythopoeic river of gold to whoever heeds his call. Even readers who are not moved to follow in the steps of the three hundred adventurers can enjoy a fantastical literary encounter with a gold-laden Emperor and fantasize in his splendor.

But what sets of rituals define the worship of this new idol and how do the accounts attempt to sanctify the criminality of these acts? In his *Second Treatise on Government* (1689), John Locke maintained that humanity has a "natural common right" to all resources. Claim and property are said to be defined by the labor employed in harnessing and cultivating natural resources. Voicing an intuitive theory of entitlement, Locke would struggle to justify colonial slave labor as a special case (although deplorably so).¹³⁵ Writing around the same time, our buccaneer reporters (with the notable exception of Anon) would also struggle to rationalize their entitlement to Spanish gold in the terms of labor and cultivation set by Locke's theory, likewise skirting the issue of domination. Under the name of 'power,' the same issue had received a much

¹³³ See Bidney, David. "The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution." *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 52:1 (1950), 16.

¹³⁴ See Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1963. 229.

¹³⁵ See Locke, John Esq. *Two Treatises on Government*. London: Printed for C. and J. Rivington, 1824. 155-7. For clashes between labor / property and slavery / domination, see 143-4; 179; 234-5.

more direct treatment and condemnation in Hobbes' "Behemoth." This tract echoed the disillusionment with Old World institutions that enabled Cox's erection of a new idol.¹³⁶

Realizing that the Golden Emperor may not convert all of his readers to idolaters of greed, Cox repeatedly emphasizes the extreme deprivations and perils of buccaneer life, constructing plunder as the adequate wages for buccaneers' great labor.

Dick and Ringrose also implicitly support Cox's notion that courage and endurance had somehow earned them entitlement to Spanish gold. They write of buccaneers' initial disappointment at the amount of their shares proportionate to the risks they took. Dick depicts his companions as "determin'd to be buried in those Seas, rather than to return home without the Gold they had fought for so long, and through so many dangers" (*J3 73*). Likewise, Sharp laments the poor returns from their first raid, which left him unable to reward the courage of his men. (*J4 Aa4*)

In Sharp, emphasis on tribulations almost obliterates any mentioning of monetary rewards—victuals are more often sought after than gold. Published alongside reputable explorers, he wishes nothing more than to blend in, confiding in readers that the 'Labour' of hauling canoes over land "was a Pleasure to us..., all our Hearts being fired with a general desire to proceed to the end of our Land Expedition, that we might have the opportunity to see the fair South-Sea." (*J4 Aa3*) As far as their actual purpose goes, the brave explorers are said to 'try' their fortunes rather than seek them, let alone extract them on the tip of a cutlass. (*J4 A7*)

Unable to tiptoe around all transgressions, Sharp eventually resorts to a more ingenious apologetic. At the end of Chapter One, he refers to capturing Spanish vessels off Panama as their "main Business," secondary to peaceful trade with them. (*J4 Bb*) Likewise, William Dick refers to raiding and pillaging as a "Trade," "Profession," and "Enterprise" whose "earnest" goal is to

¹³⁶ See Hobbes, Thomas. *Tracts of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. London: Printed for W. Crooke, 1682. 21-9.

acquire more loot than one could carry. (*J2* 63; 71) Already disguised as a great expedition / adventure, Sharp's campaign dons another second mask—that of a legitimate business venture. While privateering was indeed considered lawful under valid royal commissions, Sharp's raiders had no legal status whatsoever, which fact Dick, Anon, and even Ringrose, eventually admit. Yet, the line between privateering and piracy was sufficiently hazy at the time to allow anti-Spanish buccaneers to pose, however obviously, as legitimate privateers and traders. Even Anon was aware of the thin line between a successful business venture and despicable crime. He writes of the buccaneers hoping to “meete with English, Dutch or Portugeez, to hear how our business was discourst of att home.” (*J5* 130)

The English nation, slowly awaking to its imperial purpose, was being essentially blackmailed by the likes of Cox and Sharp into sanctifying their own interpretations of extreme individualism. Their project was aided by their publishers' constructions of national scions. Partially through their own self-mythicizing, but also through the historical realities of their actions in a geopolitical environment that allowed them to thrive, buccaneers passed well enough as mercenaries and brutish businessmen. However, neither Morgan nor Sharp were ever hailed as national heroes except by those who stood to gain by selling their criminal biographies. Attitudes toward buccaneers and colonial privateers in general were already mixed. As Rediker and Linebaugh have argued, early English and French colonies in the Caribbean were dependent upon buccaneers for both military and economic protection (*Hydra*, 156). While this dependence was waning by the turn of the eighteenth century, as long as a West Indies pirate refrained from plundering ships of his own nation or censored his narrative from such instances, he could dub himself buccaneer or filibuster, privateer or national hero. Sharp's inclusion in the Hacke collection of 1699 indicates that he was at least provisionally accepted (like Basil Ringrose

before him) as an explorer figure whose observations on different climates, local produce, and trade routes, spiced though they were with violence, could be useful to the colonial project.

4. 5. BUCCANEERS AS LIBERATORS OF THE OPPRESSED

English buccaneers' self-construction as avengers of dispossessed Amerindians begins as one of several ways to legitimize their activities. As more and more ships of their own nation fell prey to colonial pirates, this line of defense would evolve naturally into the conception of Golden Age pirates as folk heroes. All five sources participate in the liberator defense although to varying extent:

William Dick confesses that to create a semblance of legality the buccaneers had forged an old privateering commission "for with this we were resolved to seek our Fortunes" (*J3* 63). Even though he confesses to a crime, Dick is also the one to formulate the liberator apologetics with greatest conviction. "In recompence [*sic.*] of our Service, [the Emperor] would certainly lead us unto those places where most Gold and Silver was to be had, these being unjustly detained from him, and where it was but fighting for it, and having more then we should be able to carry away" (*J3* 66). The ambiguity created by awkward phrasing is no accident. Land is conflated with precious metals, all 'unjustly detained' from the Golden Emperor, their rightful owner. To recover his possessions, the Emperor allegedly promises Sharp's men "great heaps of Gold, would we but fight courageously under his Conduct." Thus, Dick resolves the issue of the pirates' entitlement to plunder, presenting it as modest wages for helping overthrow the brutal rule of "the covetous *Spaniard*" (*J3* 67). Once the alliance is formed, Dick claims that the Amerindian chief takes full charge of the buccaneering outfit: "The first Enterprise which the said Emperor propounded unto us, was to take the Town of *Santa Maria*." They march on "in company of the Emperor *Andreas* (who always went before us, and encouraged our Men wherever they fought)" (*J3* 67).

In the same place, Cox writes:

After a kind invitation from the Indians, and Treaty with the Emperour in Person, he gladly listened to our Propositions and accepted us into his Service, resolving with us to attempt the recovery of some of those Places, the Spaniards had taken, and kept from him. (*J1* 3)

Like Dick, and the French buccaneer de Lussan, Cox imagines himself and his fellow adventurers as coincidental, though not sworn, defenders of oppressed Amerindians. To maintain this convenient façade, his comrades pretend to yield to the chief's authority (*J1* b3). Running through Cox's narrative is the apology that buccaneers did not merely indulge their greed but also sought to avenge natives brutally exploited by Spaniards in the silver and gold mines.

Ringrose and Sharp are too proud to admit even false obedience to an Amerindian chief. The former refers to him as 'our *Indian* Captain' whose function was only 'to Pilot or guide us' (*J2* 8). Sharp is careful to point out that he was in charge of all the Christians, while the Indian Emperor commanded only his own men (*J4* Aa3). Both choose alternative methods to justify their depredations. Sharp prefers the pose of a hardened explorer struggling to reach the South Sea across enemy territory. Ringrose indulges the liberator myth in a less debasing manner, through the buccaneers' alleged freeing of the Indian King's daughter from Spanish bondage (see 4. 6.). At Coquimbo, he imagines that, "if the Spaniards had not sent all the Negro's belonging unto this City farther up into the Country, out of our reach and communication, they would all undoubtedly have revolted unto us" (*J4* 106).

Anon's contribution to the liberator theme is by far the most modest. Upon entering a native village near Darien he observes that "Both men and women tooke much delight to heare our Drum beate and colers fly" (*J5* 95). Even as he confirms alliance with that tribe, he points out that other natives lived in "continuall Peace with the Spaniard" and had to be avoided (*J5*

94). Anon never mentions revenging natives as a motive, being much more “resolved to cruise these Seas, for wealth” than to improve his karma of a liberator (*J5* 101). Once more, he proves to be less ideologically biased than even William Dick, who eventually exposes the buccaneers’ hypocritical service to an Indian Emperor.

The other four sources paint a consistent picture of Spanish cruelty and oppression, which made all natives welcome buccaneers and “sheweth... what inclinations they had for us *English*, rather than the *Spaniards*, their ancient Masters” (*J3* 71). Liberation is brought not only to Amerindian, but also to African slaves. In Cox, a freed black man recaptured by the Spanish reportedly refused quarter and killed four or five men with one of his legs shot off (*J1* F4). The incident supports at least two axes of mythmaking. On the one hand, buccaneers are celebrated as resistance-inspiring liberators. On the other hand, their image as superhuman warriors is implicitly re-inscribed through the heroics of someone who travelled with them and received the same extreme tempering.

The liberator myth, present most ostensibly in Cox, Dick, and Ringrose, was co-opted into a larger ideological discourse aimed at legitimating English and French challenges to Spain’s colonies. The Black Legend, as the Spanish called it, portrayed them as “licentious, Machiavellian, greedy, and bloodthirsty.” By the early eighteenth century, Kathryn Rummel writes, “most of Europe had applied this stereotype.”¹³⁷ Although less vehement than Protestant condemnation of Catholic Spain as ungodly, the buccaneers’ liberator fable greased the tracks of existing prejudices, serving the same concrete political and economic agendas.

That said, the truth about buccaneers’ interaction with natives and slaves, as far as it could be determined from compromised sources, was not diametrically opposite to the portrait of

¹³⁷ See Rummel, Kathryn. “Defoe and the Black Legend: The Spanish Stereotype in *A New Voyage round the World*.” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 52:2 (1998), 14.

glorified revolutionaries. Buccaneers did occasionally free slaves and ally with Amerindians but only when they thought it practical to their designs. More often than not, they fought natives, Spaniards, and Spanish slaves alike (*J5* 102), taking Africans “to do our drudgery” (*J3* 76). Exquemelin reports that Caribbean buccaneers maintained friendly relationships with native tribes such as the Mosquito of today’s Nicaragua. Captain Johnson tells of alliances between Madagascar pirates and some island groups in the Pacific.

Whether natives and slaves received better treatment from pirates is impossible to quantify since circumstances and attitudes varied greatly. As we will see in the anti-hero section, the accounts also relate many buccaneer atrocities—towards Amerindians, Creoles, Spanish, and their African slaves. Yet, the instances where liberation and good treatment is documented have been often emphasized. There is a persistent desire to imagine the colonial pirate as a radical, progressive element frequently allying himself with those under the heel of European imperialism.

4. 6. “YET A MORE PLEASING GUEST TO HER”: BUCCANEERS AS ROMANTIC DAREDEVILS

That English buccaneers conquered more than Spanish settlements and ravaged more than Spanish ships is insinuated in four of the five accounts. Upon their visit with the friendly Darien chief, Anon writes that “the Kings Daughters fantsied much to be in our Company” and imagines that they would readily run away with him and his companions (*J5* 95). Cox provides the following physical description of the Darien natives: “These Inhabitants are very handsome people though Tawny, but clean limbed and well featured, and are very obliging and affable, as those of our Men who afterwards marcht back again, over Land, experienced” (*J1* B3). The bisexual undertones are difficult to miss.

More turned off by the natives’ ‘tawinness,’ or perhaps more troubled by what audience at home would think of pirates cavorting with Indians, is Basil Ringrose, who sees it fit to

whitewash at least some of them. “They are generally well featured women,” he writes, “among whom I saw several fairer than the fairest of Europe, with Hair like unto the finest flax. Of these it is reported, they can see far better in the dark, than in the light” (J2 3). The last comment is obviously Ringrose’s attempt to explain the native women’s charms by their being in league with the Devil, a point which Anon makes explicitly (J5 85). A few pages later, he writes that “these *Indian* women of the Province of *Darien*, are generally very free, airy, and brisk; yet withal very modest, and cautious in their Husbands preference, of whose jealousie they stand in fear” (J2 7). Perhaps Ringrose was among those who, in Anon’s words, “by signes would ask” native women “if they should live with them and thay be their wives” (J5 95). In that case, he would have had an occasion to experience the men’s jealousy first-hand. Although he has quoted Ringrose before, Sharp elects to revise his notion of native women’s modesty. He writes: “The Inhabitants for the most part are very handsom, especially the Female Sex, who are also exceeding loving and free to the Embraces of Strangers” (J4 Aa2).

Published by Hacke some 15 years after the events described, the embellished version of Sharp’s journal presents by far the most romanticized depiction of buccaneers, and of himself as their chivalrous captain. Artificial romance reaches its absolute peak when he and several of his men stray from the main force to take a new brigantine near Chapillo. Knowing that none of the other witnesses was present there, the retired pirate unmoors his fancies. He would have readers believe that, finding nobody around, he and his men helped themselves to the new vessel. Then, he discovered a “very young and handsome” woman hiding with her two children in the forest adjacent to a nearby house. He brought the woman back inside the house, again helped himself to some of her wine, then presented his services to her. For this, or maybe for killing the husband, stealing the ship, and scaring the family off into the woods, his generous hostess thanks him “in her *Lingua*.” “Soon after,” Sharp boasts, “I was yet a more pleasing guest to her, when she

understood what Country-man I was” (*J4 A5*). Spiced with untold amounts of violence, sexual innuendo conspires with national pride to construct the faux-romantic scene of a dashing English buccaneer capturing the heart of an exotic señorita. Rather than rely on the kindness of rumor, which converted the elderly Muslim lady dishonored by Avery’s men into a Mogul princess, Sharp prefers to do the job himself.

Readers trained by the above incident to read drinking in the presence of a captured female as a euphemism for licentiousness, if not rape, are later rewarded for their perceptiveness. The capture of Lady Donna Joanna Constanta, “the beautifullest creature my eyes had seen in the South Seas,” coincides with the capture of large quantities of wine and brandy (*J4 Cc3*). Once again, Sharp veers away from the topic, leaving readers to speculate about the romantic, or predatory, nature of this encounter. The interchange between a lady of high breeding and a self-made captain constitutes at least part of the transgression. Significantly, none of the other witnesses mention this beautiful prize.

Ringrose also relates a romantic moment uncorroborated by any other source. At the taking of Santa Maria, he reports with great satisfaction:

Here we found and redeemed the eldest Daughter of the *King of Darien*, of whom we made mention above. She had, as it should seem, been forced away from her Fathers house by one of the Garison, (which Rape had hugely incensed him against the *Spaniards*) and was with Child by him. (*J4 C2*)

That any other witness of such a dramatic rescue, and especially the flamboyant Sharp, would forget to relate it is highly improbable. It is also worth noting here that the only mentioning of rape in Ringrose ascribes the transgression to the Spanish. Similarly, the only explicit mentioning of massacre in Anon and Sharp, ascribes brutality to native Americans who are

thirsty for revenge (*J5* 98). When occasion affords, the trespasses of others are a convenient distraction from the buccaneers' own wrongdoings.

The order of publication and remoteness from the events described generally corresponds to an increase in romanticizing. The references to sexual encounter and transgression—some suggesting miscegenation, others a violation of social boundaries, all suggesting rape—would have been identifiable to readers familiar with Exquemelin's much more honest and visceral depictions. Yet, they reflect what Girard has identified as an unavoidable shift toward the excision of violence.

4. 7. A 'PANEGYRICK' FOR 'THE WORST OF MEN': BUCCANEERS AS ANTI-HEROES

While heroic self-construction was by far the stronger representational pattern, the accounts by Sharp and his men showed some signs of awareness of the transgressive pleasures they had to offer. The three anonymous sources (Cox, William Dick and Anon) allured the public with the occasional unabashed confession of premeditated roguery. The first two expected not only to be forgiven and enjoyed but even lauded for their honest embracing of deviousness and greed. The strangeness that William Crooke advertised in his introduction to Ringrose had to do with a systematic presentation in buccaneering accounts of transgression as a source of reading pleasure. Even Anon was aware that many at home shared the morbid curiosity of the two Spanish gentlemen "which came out for ther Pleasure to see us, wee being term'd amoung them a strainge sort of Peopple" (*J5* 106).

The publishers of these texts seem to have realized that the anti-hero of Exquemelin's narrative was instrumental to its success. In their attempt to reproduce "the general Applause wherewith the *History of the Bucaniers* hath been received," printers like Ayres, Cooke, and Hacke, advertised transgression even as they attempted to glorify Sharp and Morgan (*J2* A2). At first, Ayres tried to distance English buccaneers from French and Dutch pirates who "make Prize

of all they Meet” (*J1 A4*). Yet, his introduction includes so much of the opposing argument, dramatically amplified and reiterated, as to outweigh his own lean defense. A quantitative evaluation would lead us to conclude that Ayres was consciously fuelling the controversy of publishing what some would see as the confessions of vile criminals.

In a perfect example of Tolstoy’s irresistible white bear, Exquemelin is said to have “maliciously stigmatized [Morgan’s buccaneers] all the while, as valiant Thieves and Murderers. So that there is no Man that reads them, who does not conceive a horror against the barbarous Actors of those Cruelties” (*J1 A6*). Immediately after being told (not) to shrink in horror, the reader is instructed to take pride in Morgan’s displays of English valor. Further down, Ayres writes with great theatricality that Exquemelin had “foisted in ... those dismal Stories of murdering in Cold Blood, Torturing, Ravishing, Starving, and other such Barbarities... to lard his History with delightful variety” (*J1 a2*). For the same purpose, no doubt, Ayres elects to advertise these acts no less than five times in the course of his preface. Thus, Morgan comes across as the quintessential anti-hero in whose footsteps follow other buccaneers like Sharp. The raider of the Spanish Main takes definite shape as a valiant murderer whose singular crimes become available for literary enjoyment (‘delightful variety’) after a formal denial.

As we have already noted, Crooke also employed graphic disclaimers to make sure that readers don’t miss out on the piratical essence of Ringrose’s account. He also linked the figure of Sharp with that of Morgan, stating that in publishing both Exquemelin and Ringrose, his intention was not to divulge “a *Satyr*” on English buccaneers as “the worst of men” but rather to offer “the best *Panegyrick*” (*J2 2; a2*). Still, “all the faults and cruelties” found within these accounts are not denied but rather attributed to the buccaneers as a whole (*J2 a2*). Likewise in Hacke, Sharp is allowed to feign individual innocence while the chapter headings advertise settlements torched and ships plundered by his unruly men.

Prepared by Ayres' thinly veiled promises of pirates "satiating their thirst after Blood" (*Jl a2*), readers of Cox's account encountered a clever counter-rhetoric. Rather than rebuff the anti-hero portrayal altogether, Cox attempted to reconstruct the bloodthirsty pirate as a lovable rogue. To this effect, buccaneers are presented as merry boys hungry for gold and in love with shiny pictures of the king of Spain. Cox's repeated attempts to trivialize crime link his supposedly factual narrative with the picaresque tradition. Peppared with tongue-and-cheek humor, populated by not one, but three hundred lovable rogues who set out to improve their condition through knavery and wit, Cox's manuscript draws from a proto-novelistic formula established by such works as *Life of Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and Mateo Aleman's *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599-1604). It is no accident that in the early modern period 'picaroon' was one of the words for pirate.

Gerhart Hoffmeister has argued that *novella picaresca* played an important role in introducing "the paradigm of a new type of prose fiction, more realistic than previous courtly and pastoral novels."¹³⁸ The British middle class in its rapid rise would eventually adopt and re-inscribe, for obvious reasons, the formula of a poor but 'crafty' individual who climbs the social ladder by ingenious and often immoral means. In Cox's manuscript, we recognize one channel through which this process of cross-fertilization took place. Uncannily, the plunder of gold pieces by Cox and his companions is mirrored by a literary plundering of the Spanish picaresque tradition. Its re-contextualization from a medieval critique of a corrupt value system to a modern critique of wealth distribution passes necessarily through the early modern explosion of extreme individualism found in buccaneering accounts. The Briticizing of the picaresque would

¹³⁸ See Gerhart Hoffmeister. "Picaresque novel." *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 2 Feb. 2004. The Literary Dictionary Company. 11 January 2007. <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=862>>

eventually yield such important works as Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), affirming the novel as the preeminent literary expression of middle-class values.

Daniel Gonzalez has argued that "Defoe's criminal heroines... serve as embodiments of a new morality being infused in English culture... a morality based on the values of trade and consumerism."¹³⁹ The same long-term shift from feudal to capitalist modes of production and wealth circulation that 'manufactured' prizes for the buccaneers and Golden Age pirates would eventually define Moll Flanders' criminal path. The 'new' codes of early capitalist individualism would define her quest for repentance that she may or may not feel. While Gonzalez is correct to identify in Defoe's criminal heroines an implicit unraveling of a new morality, our present analysis of English buccaneer accounts should prove that *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* were not "among the earliest extended narratives to represent criminals as 'opportunists in an age of economic individualism'" (Gonzalez 176).

Despite their heavy-handed approach, buccaneer narratives like Cox and Sharp's in many ways paved the way for the construction of British novel protagonists as likeable transgressors. Even though they practiced denial and justification much more intensely than they did remorse, these grim tales nevertheless captivated eager audiences and established the potential of a criminal anti-hero to call into question old values through extreme performances of colonial plunder and consumptive excess. Authors and publishers of the 1680's failed to market buccaneers as heroes in the wake of atrocities that formed the very center of readers' interest. But the lesson did not go to waste. By the early 1720's, Defoe knew better than to practice denial and evasion. He devised a much better strategy to urge readers on without having to pen any transgressions out. In the introduction to *Moll Flanders*, he assures us that "there is not an ill

¹³⁹ See Gonzalez, Daniel. *The Culture of Crime: Representations of the Criminal in Eighteenth-Century England*. Dissertation. Louisiana State University, 2000. 179.

thing mentioned but it is condemned, even in the relation” (Defoe, *Flanders* vii). His one-to-one ratio between acts of transgression and repentance was the winning move because it planted the seeds of irresolvable moral ambiguity that has been hexing readers and critics ever since. This quantitative balance between voyeurism and didacticism was echoed several years later in the *General History of the Pyrates*, whose introduction claimed to have struck a happy medium between enjoyment of ‘extravagance’ and condemnation of ‘mischief’ (Johnson 3-8).

More study is necessary to detail the ways in which the early colonial pirate figure served as a conduit for the construction of likeable and redeemable, moderately and intriguing transgressive, novel protagonists like Moll Flanders. Our findings so far indicate that earlier manifestations of the anti-hero proved much less redeemable in their unrepentant disclosure of atrocities, aiding the selection of the pirate (specifically) as a literary scapegoat. Lacking Cox’s shrewdness and comfortable in anonymity, Dick would forget to sugarcoat transgression. He reported Sharp’s use of a human shield (“just as Sir Henry Morgan did the Nuns and Friars at Puerto Volo”) and expressed his surprise that the Spanish fired at them nonetheless (*J3* 77). At la Serena, frustrated by the Spaniards’ unwillingness to pay up, the buccaneers are said to have “set Fire to the Town, staying as long as we could, till it was all in a Flame, locked up the doors of the Churches, and marched out.” By his own admission, the churches were filled with poor townfolk (*J3* 76). Unlike the careless William Dick, Ringrose omits to share this incriminating detail. But even the grand explorer finally admits that they “fired, as nigh as we could, every house in the whole Town, to the intent it might be totally reduced into ashes” (*J4*, 109). Sharp echoes Ringrose almost verbatim but implies that the burning of la Serena was a justified revenge for the Spanish governor’s cowardice and stinginess (*J4* 43).

Apologies notwithstanding, such clear acts of barbarity coupled with representations of suicidal courage, initiated a process through which the buccaneer and the colonial pirate figure as

a whole would be imagined as a self-purging effigy of aberrant behavior. Some of the Girardian dynamic of primary and secondary transference of the sacred is already visible. The former manifested itself in the transgressive voyeurism encouraged by publishers like Ayres and Crooke who helped single out buccaneer performances as extreme (and extremely successful) acts of colonial plunder. The latter transference, usually taking place after the scapegoat's demise, is visible in the celebration of buccaneers as national scions and also in their own attempts to posit their deeds as foundational expressions of heroic capitalist individualism. Yet, because the main actors in buccaneering accounts did not perish as a result of their anti-heroic overreaching, the formula for perpetual enjoyment of 'delightful variety' remained incomplete. Already by 1699, Thomas Newborough refused to apologize for buccaneers' acts and admitted he was "Suspicious [sic.] of their Sincerity."¹⁴⁰

Of the five buccaneer autobiographers, the one whose representational strategies enjoyed the most lasting success was the one who wisely chose to cloud violence in romantic and euphemistic terms. In Sharp's account, references to transgressions such as kidnapping, rape and plunder are often accompanied by distraction and displacement. Kidnapping becomes a scientific discourse on comets with a Spanish gentleman (*J4 A6*). The capture of Lady Donna Joanna Constanta, "the beautifullest creature my eyes had seen in the South Seas," prompts a reflection on the usefulness of wine and brandy (*J4 Cc3*). Earlier, the lesser sin of alcohol abuse is invoked to detract attention from Sharp's supposedly romantic conquest of a Creole hostess (*J4 A5*). 'Hunger of gold' becomes literal hunger. Rape, murder, and plundered gold explode out of a remarkable Freudian slip in Chapter Two of Sharp's account—he writes that the reason they raided Punta Mala was "to supply ourselves with Flesh" (*J4 Bb2*). Romanticized by Sharp and

¹⁴⁰ Exquemeling, Jo., Ringrose, Basil. *The History of the Bucaniers of America*. London: Printed for Tho. Newborough, 1699. A3.

underscored by Hacke, transgression is the central theme of the account. In this tug of war between writer and editor, between tasteful fabrication and unabashed sensationalism, the pirate figure begins to fulfill some of its potential as a literary nexus for the voyeuristic enjoyment of socially unacceptable behaviors.

Sharp's strategies for self-representation prefigure certain patterns in the literary mythmaking of pirates. Juvenilia novelists in particular have made use of his choice of euphemisms (especially the references to alcohol abuse) in order to forge less scandalous popular representations of pirates. In Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, the captain confesses: "If I don't have a drain o' rum, Jim, I'll have the horrors." Eventually, rum is established as a shortcut for transgressive piratical past: '...there was a sound in their voices which suggested rum.'¹⁴¹

While Sharp's euphemistic treatment prefigures the pirates of juvenilia, Anon's depiction of Captain Sawkins is much starker, anticipating both Snelgrave's Davis and the demonic rogues he is said to have kept in check. Unconcerned with his own trespasses, Anon is among the most careless reporters of buccaneer transgressions. Upon heroicizing the courageous but rash Captain Sawkins, he is the only one to relate the captain's cold-blooded murder of a mulatto woman minutes before his own death. The incident with the Governor of Panama which Anon retells in commemoration of Captain Sawkins' demise does nothing to further his memory. Instead, it proves once again that the only motivation buccaneers had for waging war on Spanish soldiers and colonials alike was gold. It seems that the courageous captain Sawkins had refused a challenge issued by the Spanish unless his adversaries each carried with them one hundred thousand pieces of eight (J5, 102).

Anon seems oblivious to undercutting Sawkins' image of an epic hero and instead presenting him as an extreme amoral fortune-hunter. Such ambivalent portrayals caused

¹⁴¹ See Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918. 22; 161.

Newborough to express amazement “that men should run such extream hazards and hardships for money” and to wonder if their morals were tolerable.¹⁴² The answer to his quandary is encoded in Sawkins’ death on the altar of a ‘sacred hunger,’ licensed by a Golden emperor, eulogized by one of his men. The answer is yes, provided that the anti-hero dies in the act, thereby creating the possibility for retroactive glorification.

Albeit a crude example of self-sacrificial anti-hero, Anon’s Sawkins can be seen as one of the three main prototypes for Snelgrave’s Davis.¹⁴³ His scapegoat potential remained untapped by Anon because the author was not engaged in a mimetic rivalry that may have caused him to be jealous of Sawkins’ leadership status. As an insider and follower, Anon had more to gain from eulogizing his leader’s murderous avarice as heroic valor. Nevertheless, the buccaneer captain’s peculiar brand of courage (greed) and heroism (murder) marked him as a suitable candidate for subsequent selection by middle class subjects like Snelgrave who would perceive the lower-class fortune-hunter as a threat to their own, less overtly violent, colonial ambitions.

Recalling Joseph Roach’s notion of violence as the performance of excess and waste, we can say that the peculiar and indelible transgressions in English buccaneer accounts demanded creative interpretation by contemporaries like Ayres, Crooke, and Newborough. This interpretation failed largely because the transgressors were alive and well, which forced some publishers to tap into a national ideology insufficiently developed to serve their purposes. The failure to interpret the English buccaneer as a national scion necessitated more sophisticated forms of mythmaking. Recalling Andrew Lytle’s ‘apposites which make a whole,’ we can argue that it was the ambivalence of English buccaneers’ ‘successes’ in the West Indies and the Spanish Main that ensured the longevity and demanded the complexity of the mythmaking

¹⁴² Newborough ed., Introduction *A3-A4*.

¹⁴³ The other two being Exquemelin’s Captain Morgan and Johnson’s Roberts, which we will explore at length in chapter 7.

process. Eventually, the colonial pirate figure would ‘resolve’ its apposite portrayal through the motif of self-destruction and self-sacrifice, which we observed at work in Captain Snelgrave’s account.

But before we revisit the Golden Age pirate in the light of buccaneering accounts, it would help to examine one more important source from the buccaneering period which can further our understanding of the relationship between mythical, epic, and national hero as well as complicate our analysis of the ways in which fractured self-heroicizing contributed to the anti-heroic construction of pirates as literary scapegoats. Because the source is French, it will also serve to disperse some of the Anglocentrism that has traditionally hampered studies of colonial piracy. Because the author of this account extended his mythmaking efforts far beyond any of Sharp’s men and because his self-representation anticipated romanticized portrayals of colonial pirates it would serve to engage in a close analysis of his method. Despite its relative sophistication, the account received little mention when it was first published and has received no critical attention since, which provides further justification for the need to examine it at length.

CHAPTER 5

RAVENEAU DE LUSSAN: BUCCANEER APOLOGIST AND MYTHICAL HERO

But who is he that can penetrate into the Secrets of Nature, and give a Reason for some sort of Inclinations she works in the Minds of Mortals? As for my self, I must confess I am not able to give an Account of the Depth of my Desires.

—Raveneau De Lussan¹⁴⁴

Figure to yourself a company of tigers endowed with some portion of human reason, and you will then have a true idea of these buccaneers.

—Voltaire¹⁴⁵

It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestations.

—Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*¹⁴⁶

5. 1. NOTES ABOUT THE SOURCE

In 1684, a young Frenchman possessed with “a rambling sort of Humour,” sailed out of the Caribbean colony Petit Goave under the command of veteran filibuster Laurens de Graff. Four years later, he resurfaced at St. Domingo with a journal that received the highest praise from the French Governor of Tortuga and quickly found its way to publishers in Paris. Although the manuscript of *Journal du voyage fait a lamer du Sud avec les flibustiers de l’Amerique* (Paris,

¹⁴⁴ See: de Lussan, Raveneau, Siur. *A Journal of a Voyage made into the South Sea by the Bucaniers or Freebooters of America*. London: Printed for Tho. Newborough, 1698. 1. Subsequent quotations from this edition are denoted by “de Lussan.”

¹⁴⁵ See: Voltaire. *The Works of Voltaire: A Contemporary Version*. Vol. 19, Part II. New York: E.H. DuMont, 1901. 252. All subsequent quotations come from this edition.

¹⁴⁶ Campbell 3.

1689) seems to have been written during and soon after the events it related, it is remarkably accomplished as a mythical narrative of a hero's journey. Its epic and romantic overtones prefigure much of the envisionings of buccaneers and pirates in popular literature and culture in the centuries to follow.¹⁴⁷

Yet, for all his cultural clairvoyance, de Lussan has been all but forgotten. After three French editions within two decades and an English translation in 1698, his work seems to have vanished from print until a modern English translation in 1930 by Margaret Wilbur, which failed to rescue the text from oblivion while recognizing its importance.¹⁴⁸ Contemporary pirate ethnographers and critics like Rediker, Linebaugh, and Turley seem to have inherited the selective Anglocentric focus of earlier historians like Masefield and Gosse. None of these authors mention de Lussan. Another French chronicler of buccaneer escapades, the Huguenot surgeon Alexander Olivier Exquemelin, still reaps the fruits of the scandal he stirred around British buccaneer Henry Morgan. By contrast, de Lussan's account, focused largely on his immodest self, did not make much noise on the Isles. Although it did hurl the occasional insult at English buccaneers, depicting them as sacrilegious and especially cruel, it seems to have caused no swelling of patriotic indignation of the kind that the publishers Ayres and Crooke feigned in the wake of Exquemelin's book.

The apparent lack of controversy surrounding de Lussan's account is precisely why it must not be overlooked. In a way, the greatest scandal is that it created none, a fact suggesting that his self-aggrandizement and romanticizing of filibusters in general were accepted at face value, or at least tolerated for the sake of diversion. The first English translation of *Voyage made*

¹⁴⁷ For a historical tracing of the late part of de Lussan's journey, see Gerhard, Peter. "The Tres Marias Pirates." *The Pacific Historical Review*. 27:3 (1958), 239-44.

¹⁴⁸ de Lussan, Raveneau. *A Voyage into the South Seas*. Trans. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur. Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1930. Subsequent quotations from this edition are denoted by "Wilbur trans." to distinguish them from references to the first English translation published by Newborough.

into the South Sea (1698) appeared around the same time as Bartholomew Sharp's romanticized rendition of his 1684 campaign. By then, English readers seem to have grown accustomed to the literary peculiarities of buccaneer accounts. These were ambivalent tales of extreme deprivation and depravity, heroism and villainy, romance and rape. To enjoy the adventures of Cox, Sharp, Ringrose, and de Lussan, one had to suspend one's judgment on the moral character of their narrators.

As far as ambivalence goes, de Lussan's fable was a perfect fit for the micro-genre. His plentiful fabrications contributed to a developing popular myth of buccaneers as superhuman heroes, glorified fortune-seekers, and irresistible romancers. At the same time, the French buccaneer, like his British counterparts, failed to excise transgression, unintentionally furthering the anti-heroic construction of sea rovers and their subsequent selection as literary scapegoats. In the foregoing chapter we observed that the five accounts of Sharp's campaign both repressed and revisited images of violence. Printers, and sometimes even authors themselves, were aware that transgression constituted a crucial part of the fascination that such accounts held for contemporary audiences. Unlike Sharp's account, de Lussan's flawed fantasy needed no reverse censorship of the kind introduced by Hacke. As we about to see, horror on the pages of *Voyage made into the South Sea* needs no resuscitation.

The cohabitation of representational extremes—one embellished, the other unsuccessfully repressed—results in a fascinating narrative often bordering lunacy. Unlike Exquemelin, who is aware of moral issues and distances himself from his companions, de Lussan speaks from the heart of delusion and self-righteousness. Regardless of how flawed his fantasy was, however, and how ludicrous his rationalizations, he seems to have persuaded at least two of his readers to accept him the way he perceived himself—as a mythical adventurer/hero whose deeds were sanctioned by God's grace. The first of these two readers was Governor Mons. De

Cuffy of Tortuga and the French part of St. Domingo. He was perhaps the first reader of de Lussan's manuscript, having received from the author himself upon his return in the summer of 1684. A letter to the young buccaneer's father, published by way of preface to the English translation, has the thrilled de Cuffy expressing the following sentiments:

I may say without Vanity, that he has made the greatest and finest Voyage in our Age, and that he has seen Countries, which a great many People in the World content themselves to view in Maps, without desiring any other sight of them, tho' they had all the Riches thereof bestowed upon them for their pains. Besides the Pleasure you will have to see your Son again, you will have also that of hearing him Discourse, pertinently enough, of his Voyages and Adventures. (de Lussan 3)

A lot is revealing about this passage. The enthralled governor seems to equate the act of colonial exploration with the act of plundering. Riches are 'bestowed' upon the most courageous of men as a reward for their bravery. The buccaneer is a prime example of such men—an aggressive explorer of remote regions, who desires 'fight of them' and violently extracts his toll. The source of 'all the Riches thereof' is, of course, as unclear as the exact means through which they are bestowed.

In one sweeping sentence, de Cuffy captures the spirit of early colonial expansion, assigning to a pirate the status of its most august representative. Nor is de Lussan not only a fine embodiment of the new age of 'exploration' and 'discovery'. His first reader has already internalized a conception of the author as a mythical hero. In keeping with the formula of heroic myth, de Lussan is contrasted to the 'great many People in the World'—he is selected to accomplish what others only dream about doing, conquering horizons that, for regular people, don't exist outside of the imagination. His voyage is hailed as 'the greatest and finest... in our age' for reasons both new and old. The choice of phrasing suggests a continuity between this and

all heroic voyages before it, like those of Ulysses or Jason and the Argonauts. De Cuffy's final address to de Lussan's father invokes mythopoeia—the oral or written production of myth for the sake of its cultural reproduction. Riches aside, the real Golden Fleece the mythical hero has brought back is the 'Discourse... of his Voyages and Adventures.'

The other professed believer in de Lussan's heroic exceptionalism is his twentieth century translator Marguerite Wilbur. In a brief and remarkably biased introduction to the new translation of *Voyage into the South Seas*, she describes the account as 'delightful' in its 'whimsical' portrayal of "not only the joys but also the ever-present perils, miseries, and tragedies of piracy" (Wilbur Trans. Introduction, 21). Like de Cuffy centuries earlier, Wilbur forgets to mention that the colonials and Amerindians of the Spanish Main desired no fight with the likes of de Lussan. He is credited for being among the first to 'open up' the Caribbean and South America to French exploration, but his motives for doing so, and the reality of his depredations, are left unaddressed. The spoils of buccaneers' raids are figured as 'joys' earned through 'perils, miseries, and tragedies.' Later in the same paragraph, Wilbur's defense of de Lussan reaches positively ludicrous heights. She vehemently condemns Spanish authorities' incompetence, due to which filibusters were frequently forced to cut the heads of prisoners they had been holding for ransom, "sending these by way of mute protest"(Wilbur Trans. Introduction, 21-2). Perhaps such scenes of horror, blamed on the blackened Spanish, contribute in some part to the 'whimsical joys' de Lussan's account brought to Wilbur as a reader.

The translator's apparent bias was exposed by James Alexander Robertson in a 1931 review. He writes: "Throughout, Mrs. Wilbur insists on the 'gay' manner in which Ravenau de Lussan and his companions went about their grim work of piracy... There was nothing 'gay' about it; for the pirates were part of an economic system as bad for its time as is that of the racketeers of the present age." Robertson goes on to expose Wilbur's belief in the black legend

of Spanish degeneracy but judges the work itself as worthy of “a place beside Exquemeling and Dampier.”¹⁴⁹

While soberly critical of Wilbur’s translation, Robertson recognized that “Books by or about pirates, privateers, and filibusters have a perennial interest, and their reading public never appears to be satiated.” We could do worse than to begin our inquiry by asking exactly what in the text of *Voyage made into the South Sea* caused Mons. De Cuffy to speak of ‘Pleasure.’ What caused a twentieth century translator to nod along with the absurd nationalistic, religious, and romantic apologies with which the narrative is riddled? Was it sheer naïveté or are these two readers entangled in a more complex, more primary, web of delusion and self-delusion? Why do they choose to participate in the author’s fantasy? I would like to suggest that ‘pleasure’ and ‘delight’ in romanticized transgression are made possible by de Lussan’s tapping into mythical structures. The universal themes of heroic myth, played out in recognizable scenes between the hero, his aides, and his adversaries, compel readers like de Cuffy and Wilbur to suspend their moral compass. Only mythical structure is capable of containing representational extremes without any moral necessity to reconcile them. ‘Trifling’ matters such as gold and blood lust can be suspended because they are subsidiary to the primal enjoyment of watching a hero overcome dark forces.

An understanding of this dynamic of suspended morality is crucial because much of it is reproduced in contemporary representations and interpretations of colonial pirates. A close look at de Lussan’s text and the responses of two of its readers may shed light on the cultural and ethical operation of myth. It will also address such broader literary concerns as the relationship between the moral subject and the reading subject.

¹⁴⁹ See Robertson, James Alexander. Review. *A Voyage into the South Seas*. By de Lussan, Raveneau. Trans. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 11:3 (Aug., 1931), 369-71.

Before we leap into the fray, let us outline and justify the structure of this chapter. Mythmaking in *Voyage made into the South Sea* operates exclusively as the methodical transformation of a historical narrative into a mythical heroic journey. In studying this text, it would serve to depart from our customary approach of isolating tendencies and instead follow, after a brief theoretical interlude, the narrative progression of the text itself. This progression involves remarkable adherence to most of the stages in the ‘monomyth’ of a hero’s journey outlined by Joseph Campbell. These stages include:

- The Call to Adventure
- The Crossing of the First Threshold
- The Belly of the Whale
- The Road of Trials
- The Meeting with the Goddess
- Woman as the Temptress
- Atonement with the Father
- The Ultimate Boon
- The Magic Flight
- The Voyage as a Dream

We will begin our analysis with the final stage of the heroic monomyth because de Lussan’s account echoes it most identifiably, providing textual evidence that would license our approach and supply insight we can carry throughout. At times when the heroic journey intersects familiar aspects of colonial pirate mythmaking, we will momentarily suspend the plot and explore intertextual implications.

5. 2. THE VOYAGE AS A DREAM

Joseph Campbell's influential anthropological study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* contends that the myth of the hero's journey follows a similar progression across human civilizations and cultures. The journey is always a *psychomachia*, one that attempts to act out the mental rites of passage from childhood into proper adulthood. For Campbell, much of the intersection between myth as a communal cultural product and individual psychological development is manifest in dreams, and evinced in the findings of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. "Even when the legend is of an actual historical personage," Campbell writes, "the deeds of victory are rendered, not in lifelike, but in dreamlike figurations" (Campbell 29). In the final paragraph of his account, De Lussan confides that he "could not, for the space of Fifteen Days, take my return for any other than an Illusion, and it proceeded so far with me, that I shunned sleep, for fear when I awaked, I should find my self again in those Countries, out of which I was now safely delivered" (de Lussan 180). The hero's journey is indistinguishable from dream because that is what it *is* on a much deeper level. The facts of de Lussan's voyage become a canvass for 'dreamlike figurations' of his own anxieties and aspirations.

The canvass of actual experience, although transformed by mythical thought, is also an active component in the sense that it makes the dream possible and affects the direction and texture of each stroke. A westward passage to the South Sea figured in the imagination of many readers in Paris and London as the last rim of a world becoming increasingly round. It was a remote region that many in France and England had not seen even on maps because the Spanish empire fiercely guarded such information. In 1682, Basil Ringrose's *South Seas Waggoner*, a collection of important maps stolen from the Spanish by Sharp's men, had just begun to lift that veil as far as navigable routes were concerned. Still, de Lussan's authority on the bowels of the

Spanish Main through which he marched for three and a half years could not have been questioned by anyone.

In this sense, the author would have felt free to imagine ‘those Countries’ and his experiences there in ways relevant to his own mythicized ‘coming of age’ story. The ending of *Voyage made into the South Sea* brings this point home lest some readers still believe it is a narrative about geographical exploration. The hero’s quasi-physical journey into the Spanish Main is represented as a return from nightmare into sharp wakefulness, a state which in traditional mythology signifies a new awareness of the world, and of one’s self. That the hero fears sleep would transport him back again signals the unreality of the realm from which he was ‘delivered’ by his own sword and through divine intervention. It also signifies the precariousness of his new awareness—de Lussan has not so much conquered his own demons as has been alerted to their existence and their terrible proximity. To a careful reader, de Lussan’s mythical journey is that of an anti-hero who remains captive in a prison of his own making.

That said, de Lussan’s use of mythical structure is adept enough for willing readers such as de Cuffy and Wilbur to side with him. The revealing final paragraph provides a typical example of how he employs the formula of heroic myth to veil moral transgression. His use of charged phrases such as ‘safely delivered’ invokes the common motif of the hero’s flight from the other-worldly dreamscape of his mythical journey. He portrays himself as an innocent who, constrained by the forces of a hostile world, was forced to fight his way back home. The young filibuster conveniently forgets to remind us that he voluntarily undertook to plunder and pillage in the Spanish Main, and that most of the horror in his nightmares was of his own doing. His strategy pays off handsomely. Governor de Cuffy picks up on the mythical flight of the hero. In a letter given to the author and published at the head of both English translations, he vouches that the bearer, “having gone into the South Sea” to fight against “the *Spaniards*, his Majesty’s

Enemies..., fell into the Company of other *Freebooters*, from whence not being able to return, but by the force of their Arms.” Historical facts of a campaign organized by the veteran Dutch corsair Laurens de Graff, although revealed in the text itself, are eclipsed by the ‘delightful’ depiction of heroes struggling to fulfill the universal desire to return home. As per mythical prescription, the obstacles raised by the enemy on his path provide the main hero, de Lussan, with occasion to display “signal Proofs both of his Zeal and Courage” (2).

5. 3. THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

The ending of *Voyage made into the South Sea* marks only the beginning of de Lussan’s adherence to Campbell’s universal heroic formula. Evaded here, the question of the buccaneer hero’s base motivation receives more direct mythical injections in the very opening of de Lussan’s narrative. The action-loving young gentleman begins by invoking what Campbell calls the Call to Adventure, which elects the hero from the masses. As an “extravagant child,” he feels compelled “to go and seek his Fortune abroad, and to entertain a fixed Design of becoming a Man engaged in hazardous Adventures” (de Lussan 1). In the grandiloquent, timeless voice of myth, he hails his “most Passionate Disposition for Travel” and “Depth of Desire” as being among the impenetrable “Secrets of Nature.” Unlike Cox, the bold normalizer of greed, de Lussan’s hunger for danger and travel has no origin other than a natural inclination and no particular goal other than the rush of adrenalin. Suicidal bravado is one of the few qualities that de Lussan seems to have possessed indeed. We are invited to believe that it took precedence over such incidental motives as fortune and fame. This self-portrayal makes the French filibuster a tad more likeable than Anon or William Dick under Sharp, whose courage is in direct proportion to the expected payoff. His falling back on a primal motif such as the mysterious election of the hero from the masses proves to be an effective strategy, putting him beyond accusations of greed or self-glorification.

Time and again in de Lussan's account, the Call to Adventure is said to come from within, spurring him along the more dangerous of two diverging paths. At the first crossroads, it compels the hero to leave the safety of his hometown. In Wilbur's 1920 translation, Paris is identified as "naturally the center of the universe" (Wilbur trans. 31). Nevertheless, the young hero must turn his back on all the "Wonders of the World" contained within its walls and venture out into "darkness, the unknown, and danger" (de Lussan 1) (Campbell 77).

At this point in the narrative, the first English translator of 1698 also makes a revealing choice of words. Campbell's universal pattern suggests that most male heroes eventually find themselves pitted against the father figure. The struggles and triumphs along the male hero's path signify the experiences in the world that will prepare him to reach atonement with the father and take his place, symbolically. De Lussan writes: "Scarce was I Seven Years old, when, through some innate Notions, whereof I had not the Mastery, I began to steal out of my Father's House" (1). Intended or not, the pun is doubly significant in our analysis. On one hand, the young hero feels restless and disempowered within his father's sphere, which he must leave to gain confidence and to which he must return to attempt a symbolic coup. On the other hand, 'to steal out of my Father's House' also foreshadows de Lussan's turning pirate—his overthrowing of the father is enacted by stealing from other nations, and probably his own as well.

5. 4. CROSSING THE FIRST THRESHOLD

An army officer, who is said to share de Lussan's "Warlike Genius," becomes the first of several 'threshold guardians' marking, in Campbell's words, the first venture beyond "the limits of the hero's present sphere" (de Lussan 1) (Campbell 77-89). But the eager young man soon becomes frustrated with long-drawn sieges of European cities which fail to supply his belligerent

mind with “new Pleasures in the use of Arms.”¹⁵⁰ To find these pleasures, he must venture further out from the center, into the truly unknown. A second reference to his inclination for travel attributes it to God’s will, which dramatically “over-rules” his own misgivings and the protestations of his parents, in a typically mythical dynamic. His compulsion begins to also gain a semblance of an object. Like young prince Siddhartha, our hero professes a desire “to make himself acquainted with all those of his own *Species*” (de Lussan 2).

This desire to see “how the rest of the Earth stands” is constructed as befitting a man-child, whereas a woman may, in de Lussan’s view, be content to stay in one place. However, even as the hero boasts his extrovert maleness, thereby setting himself in opposition to the Father, a note of ambivalence sneaks into his sexual identity: “But as to Young men, such as I was,” he writes, “it may be said, as is usually done of Womenkind, That *what they will, God wills*” (de Lussan 2). The hero hints at being able to sense and respond to mysterious calls from Nature and the Divine, a kind of sensitivity normally thought to be part of the woman’s domain of instincts and impulses. The call is irresistible and, out of Diep, the young adventurer departs for the Caribbean.

5. 5. THE BELLY OF THE WHALE

In the heroic monomyth, the passage to the New World corresponds to the stage called ‘the Belly of the Whale,’ which Campbell describes as “a transit into a sphere of rebirth” (Campbell 90). Swallowed by a gigantic beast, the hero travels inward and begins to realize his own strengths. Bound for no particular destination other than adventure, de Lussan discovers that the ocean which, “to the Generality of Men, seems very frightful,” is his natural element. The eager hero perceives that “almost every little blast [of wind] brought us happily onward on our Way.” This manifestation of destiny is one of many in the text, signaling that the hero’s way is

predetermined and the only unclear outcome is whether he will overcome the final challenge. Flaunting his chosenness, de Lussan pleads to readers to not be amazed that what others would see as terrible hazards appears only as a ‘little blast’ to him. Devoured by the elements to be born again—this time to his own sea-roving vocation—the hero logically sees his arrival at St. Domingo as the true beginning of his life-adventure. “If any one has the Curiosity to follow me,” he writes, “he must begin from thence” (3).

Readers who have caught wind of de Lussan’s false modesty will soon detect false notes in the stated motives for his turning pirate. On St. Domingo, he quickly incurs debts he cannot repay. This prompts him to speculate wittily on the advantages of borrowing from the Spanish. This overture to turning pirate cleverly euphemizes plunder and pillage as personal loans from sworn enemies of France. John Cox, as we recall, uses very similar tongue-in-cheek humor to soften and charm morally rigid readers. Like him, de Lussan spins a picaresque tale of likeable rogues who are said to be inexplicably drawn to shiny objects with the image of the King of Spain. The difference is that de Lussan appeals to higher powers, Nature and God, to explain his predilection for voyages fraught with danger. Extending his apology to historical ‘facts’, de Lussan reminds readers of the hostilities between France and Spain, which arguably validated the depredations he was about to commit as military action. The historical truth was slightly different. Although Captain de Graff held an old commission from the Count of Toulouse, his status at the time he set out for the Spanish Main was that of a pirate. In June of 1684, a severely weakened Spain and a war-weary France had signed a truce at Regensburg. De Lussan sailed out of Petit Goave in November, not to help subdue an already cowed empire but to fight his way out of debt and into the pages of a timeless heroic myth.

Much of the success of de Lussan’s self-mythicizing as an epic hero hinges upon denial of his illegal status. A pirate by any other name—freebooter, buccaneer, filibuster—is much

more palatable. Accomplices to his own evasions, both English translators of his account tried to avoid the ‘p’ word. De Lussan’s first English translator used ‘freebooter’ throughout the text. Margaret Wilbur was more discerning, using ‘buccaneer’ to refer to English pirates and reserving ‘filibuster’ for their French comrades. She did use the ignominious label of ‘pirate’ whenever de Lussan accused others of practicing this trade.

Piracy is a term avoided with such care by the author and his translators that it becomes the unmistakable base chord of the narrative. As in the accounts by Sharp’s men, denial of the piratical in *Voyage made into the South Sea* appears perfunctory. Repressed for the sake of good taste, it is not so repressed as to turn away readers who have come to the text to whet their appetites for transgressive ‘strangeness.’ For instance, at the Dutch port of Santa Barba, the governor is said to have turned a cold shoulder to de Graff’s request for supplies because he had recently captured two Dutch ships. Even as he denies the charge and insists on the legality of their commission, de Lussan admits to having chased a Flemish boat earlier that same day (8-9).

Like Ringrose, who depicted Amerindian cruelty and Spanish lewdness, de Lussan often displaces piratical qualities onto cultural and ethnic others. Upon his very first encounter with Amerindians, he relates “a surprising instance... indicating what these men, whom I consider the oldest pirates in America, are capable of doing” (Wilbur trans. 49). Having found his element to be the sea, and his trade to be that of a pirate, de Lussan wastes no time before projecting his new identity onto natives of the New World. His rhetoric effectively re-imagines the western periphery of the world as a forge in which he will accomplish his transformation into a filibuster—the noble and romantic version of pirate. Appeals to origins and transformations mark this passage as mythical in Cohen’s definition. “The oldest pirates in America” and the modern filibuster de Lussan taken together map out a continuity which establishes piracy as confluent with the history of all civilization.

5. 6. THE ROAD OF TRIALS

After a nod to his imaginary predecessors, the hero enters the Road of Trials, a jolly romp that takes him across tar bogs, down frothing rivers, through the smoldering ashes of town churches and over the decapitated bodies of unransomed hostages. The journey will temper de Lussan into that special creature he and Wilbur call ‘a regular filibuster’—one who is unafraid to face odds of a hundred to one, whose murderous and suicidal devotion to gold daunts the Spaniards, and stuns readers of his account. Throughout the text, buccaneers’ feats, marked by excesses of violence and debauchery, are masked as the triumphs of contemporary epic heroes. Like the oblique references to piracy, much of the brutality unleashed by buccaneers in the narrative needs to be teased out of euphemisms and rescued from strategic distractions. Whenever de Lussan depicts heroic battle scenes, critical readers must recall the very first scene of violence related in his account—the monkey shoot:

I cannot without smiling call to mind what I have done to one of these Animals, which after I had made several shots at him with my Fusil, that carried off part of his Belly, insomuch that his Guts came out, held himself by one of his Paws, or hands (if you will) to the Branch of a Tree, while he put his Entrails with the other into that part of his Belly that still remained whole. (17)

This gruesome episode occurs after the description of a difficult journey “through a Country that presently discovered a terrible aspect to us” (16). Following the projection of piratical aspects onto the American landscape, de Lussan attempts to account for his own transformation into a mythical hero with a dark anti-heroic streak. This streak, traceable throughout the account, confirmed what many readers already knew about buccaneer exploits from the visceral descriptions in Exquemelin’s *The Buccaneers of America*.

Joseph Campbell observes that on the Road of Trials “the hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper... Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage” (18). Our hero has already discovered the supporting power during his Passage to St. Domingo, accepting each stroke of wind with eager anticipation. As for the amulets and secret agents, their role in the narrative is played by friendly Amerindians. Wronged by the Spanish, de Lussan’s claims, these natives “begged our Assistance to be revenged on them.” But although the friendly agents make the hero’s passage possible, he mistrusts them and their aid. The reason lies in his ongoing projection of piratical features. He writes of them: “But for all this, we did not think our selves so safe amongst these Men . . . because we were well assured they were such Wretches, as were at the Service always of those that gave them most” (19).

Seeing his own guilt in others, the ‘hero’ refuses to accept Amerindian aid as yet another manifestation of divine intervention. Part of this refusal is owing to the fact that the helpful natives showed “no sign of Religion, or of the Knowledge of God amongst them.” What is worse, in the mind of the French Catholic filibuster it is clear that “they have Communion with the Devil,” who has allegedly endowed some of them with the ability to tell the future. It would seem, however, that the demonizing of Amerindians stems not so much from religious difference as it does from the buccaneer’s rhetorical displacing of transgression.

It is crucial for de Lussan to be able to draw a contrast between ‘savages’ and buccaneers, especially when the similarities are overwhelming. His description of the natives’ “miserable Lives” echoes Exquemelin’s description of buccaneer lifestyle on the Island of Hispaniola only several decades earlier. De Lussan writes: “They lead a wandering and vagabond Life, and fix

their aboad [sic.] at no certain place. They generally erect their Ajoupas or Barracks upon a River-side, where they continue till they have spent what Sustenance they find thereabouts” (20).

A more direct construction of buccaneers as creolized colonials can be found in Pere Labat’s account of his Caribbean visit. In a memorable chapter, the priest takes local clergy and aristocrats of St. Thomas out on a picnic. They dress primitively and spend the day eating roasted pig with no utensils and drinking ceaselessly around a bonfire. Rather than perceive that they were acting out their idea of going savage, Labat insists they were following a popular local custom called *cochon boucanne*, which involved their dressing and behaving like ‘real’ buccaneers (52-3). In this custom, going primitive becomes an agreeable diversion for the local priesthood and aristocracy because it is mediated by the example of ‘buccaneer simplicity.’ In Labat’s description of the picnic, the buccaneer figures as a creature culturally charged with a degree of hybridity—he is imagined as a renegade from civilization who re-discovers nature’s simple delights.

For the Jacobine priest and his friends, the buccaneer figure inhabits an intercultural and perhaps interracial space. Like Natty Bumppo, Cooper’s famous pioneer, he embodies cultural contact on the white man’s terms. Whenever this contact takes on a disturbing form (miscegenation), he can be safely disposed of as a transgressor and cultural outsider to his own race.

The picnic episode in Labat’s narrative testifies to the great degree of fascination buccaneers and filibusters commanded near the turn of the eighteenth century. Elements of their lifestyle before the days of piracy are absurdly ritualized: the priest and his friends play with the idea of a special code which legislates table manners and the lack thereof. Later in his account, Labat shows further inclination to glean ritual from buccaneer performances. Before Captain Daniel and his crew set out for Guadeloupe, he writes that they had to “spend the last of their

money according to custom, for their law does not allow filibusters to take money to sea with them, so if they have any money in their pockets they spend it in a cabaret before they sail” (Labat 232).

Excessive debauchery is magnified with voyeuristic eagerness and imagined to be an absolute law that every member of the Brethren of the Coast must obey. Finding this perspective in a man of the cloth is not surprising for those familiar with Pere Labat’s peculiarities. As Donald Schier has observed, “Labat is notably tolerant of the pillage committed by the individual buccaneers,” emphasizing the gaiety with which they dressed in the clothes, hats, and wigs of their victims.¹⁵¹ In pardoning, observing, and emulating French buccaneers, Labat’s project was to isolate exotic features that he and his friends could emulate in playful rituals, thereby accessing a reservoir of actual transgression. In other words, he was a ravenous ‘reader’ and active ‘writer’ of buccaneer lore, with an imagination that functioned unperturbed by his actual experience.

But let us resume the mythical journey of de Lussan, who acted out the very transgressions that Labat re-enacted for the sake of diversion. Now under the command of Captain Grognet, our buccaneer continues his march towards the South Sea, aided by somewhat demonic natives whose reliability as guides is skillfully suspended. Eventually, he and his French companions reach the bay of *Boca del Chica* and join a tri-national assembly of eleven hundred fortune hunters—most of them English, some Dutch. Upon the appearance of buccaneers from other nations, the natives are released from the burden of externalized guilt. De Lussan’s English companions assume the necessary role of ethical scapegoats. In relating the pre-history of captains David, Townsley and Suam, de Lussan holds nothing back: “These

¹⁵¹ See Schier, Donald S. “The Missionary and the Buccaneers: An Episode from Father Labat’s *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de L’Amérique*.” *The French Review* 17:3 (1944), 141.

English became Pyrates under the conduct of a Captain of their own, and grew so notoriously wicked by a great many odious Actions, performed not only towards Strangers, but even those of their own Nation” (27).

As in the case of his Satan-worshipping Amerindian guides, our pious French filibuster does not care to explore the implications of his association with such men. Once again, anti-heroic aspects are allowed to permeate the hero’s mythical journey, indirectly compromising his own integrity. Yet, curiously enough, neither de Cuffy nor Wilbur concluded that ‘notoriously wicked’ could just as easily apply to de Lussan himself. The first English translator of *Voyage made into the South Seas* also seems to have taken his side, condemning his own compatriots as villainous pirates and reverting back to the use of ‘free-booter’ to describe the French filibusters under Grognet. Perhaps he merely wished to remain faithful to the original or perhaps he wished to reproduce the scandal caused by Exquemelin’s accusatory take on Henry Morgan. Regardless of the motive, it seems that readers and translators of de Lussan’s narrative display consistent tolerance for the weak rationalizations propping up his self-authored heroic epic.

On the long Road of Trials, the weary hero occasionally stumbles across oases of magical tranquility where he can rest and replenish his strength. In such oases, he typically encounters the Goddess and Temptress figures. After a ‘stiff fight’ and a victory against Spanish mercenaries from Southeast Europe who supposedly outnumbered the buccaneers three to one, de Lussan describes the pleasures they found on the islands in the bay of Panama:

“I say then, that all these Islands are so curious and delightful, that they are usually called the Gardens of *Panama*, and with very good reason, seeing all People of Note in that City, have each of them one of these Islands for themselves, and their Houses of Pleasure there also, with curious Orchards, watered with a great many Springs of running Waters, adorned and imbelished with a wonderfull Variety of Flowers and Arbours of Jessamine

up and down, and full almost of an infinite number of all sorts of the Fruits of the Country, among whom I have taken particular notice of four of them which are called *Sappota*, *Sappotilla*, *Avocata*, and *las Cayemites*.” (31)

Notice how a pleasantly vague and agreeably exaggerated description (“each of them one of these Islands,” “a great many Springs,” “a wonderfull Variety of Flowers”) ends with just enough specific detail to convince readers of its truthfulness. We zoom in from an endless paradisaical landscape to four exotic fruits that exemplify this vision of extraordinary plenty. There is much here to make audiences in crowded, dingy Paris curious and covetous, not the least of them being the notion that in the New World, each important person can own a garden island of sensuous delight.

The reprieve is, of course, temporary. Although fallen Man has found his way back into Eden, he is an impostor there, reaping maize and rice “which the *Spaniards*, I believe, did not sow with an intention that we should enjoy them.” As in any myth concerned with the hero’s progress, the oasis soon repulses him back onto the battlefield. “These same islands that afforded us so many delights,” de Lussan writes, “wrought also some sorrow in us, of which by and by” (32). Much is revealed by a close reading of this passage. The Spanish are recognized as proprietors of the Gardens and as sowers of the grains found therein. But regardless of their prior claim to these remote parts of the World and the improvements they made, they are also mere tenants. Earlier in the narrative, they are said to have brought these accomplishments about by cruel exploitation of native and African labor, thereby tarnishing their reputation among other European nations (de Lussan 17). These leeches of paradise have infested the landscape and render the hero unable to enjoy its delights forever. This spurs him on towards the Ultimate Boon, of which he has been offered a brief glimpse. The boon will come in the shape of gold,

gems, and other transportable valuables. These will enable the hero to bring back and reconstruct a piece of this regrettably infested land of plenty through which he had journeyed.

De Lussan's contribution to the black legend is just as significant as that of the English buccaneer chroniclers under Sharp, perhaps even more so because it is more effectively interwoven with his own heroic journey. The simplistic apology of buccaneers as liberators of the exploited is transfigured into a more profoundly mythical dynamic. The hero is called upon to oust the base Spaniard from Paradise and attempt to tame its immortal delights. Failing to liberate an entire continent from the plague of Spanish exploitation, he nevertheless succeeds in 'rescuing' some of these delights in the form of plunder. With these, he eventually retires and reproduces a 'proper' colonial paradise within the realms of the French colonial empire.

The sorrow de Lussan has foreshadowed in his description of the Gardens of delight eventually takes the form of a Spanish armada sent to defend Panama. It is said to have made the buccaneers' own fleet look 'pitiful' and it takes 'next to a Miracle' for our heroes to avoid destruction (38). The buccaneers regroup and take Pueblo Nuevo instead. There, English and French have a falling out, caused by the former's attempt to take a stouter ship from under a French crew, but also by religious differences. On this occasion, De Lussan complains that English buccaneers "made no Scruple when they got into a Church, to cut down the Arms of a Crucifix with their Sabres, or to shoot them down with their Fusils and Pistols, bruising and maiming the Images of the Saints with the same Weapons in Derision to the Adoration we *Frenchmen* paid unto them." These are images mostly missing from the five accounts of Sharp's campaigns, which even the most anti-Catholic of Englishmen would probably have found distasteful. Forgetting about actual massacres committed by English and French filibusters alike, de Lussan concludes that "it was chiefly from these horrid Disorders, that the *Spaniards* equally hated us all, as we came to understand by divers of their Letters that fell into our Hands" (*Ibid.*).

The passage on English ‘Disorders’ is part of a consistent line of defense in de Lussan’s narrative. The negative qualities of the anti-hero are typically isolated and ascribed to British buccaneers while the French filibuster is credited with all the commendable features, among which is proper Catholic piety. De Lussan would have us believe that all transgressions—rape, slaughter, the torching of towns, and the desecration of churches—were committed by his unruly British companions, who were addled by their Protestant demons. The French filibusters, we are told, behaved as exemplary gentlemen and pious Catholics, chanting *Te Deum* after the victory at Queaquilla in gratitude for God’s divine protection (de Lussan 123). Like Spenser’s Red Cross knight, the filibuster hero, the bravest and mightiest warrior of a regional tribe, finds succor in the especial grace of the deity.

Such heroicizing at the expense of a national and religious Other did not prevent a contemporary of Wilbur and reader of de Lussan to characterize buccaneer outfits as ‘assorted, cosmopolitan bands’ and express certainty that ‘no characters of fiction are more strange, picturesque, and rashly daring.’ While A. Curtis Wilgus certainly missed the mark with ‘cosmopolitan,’ he must be given credit for being the first person on record to interpret de Lussan’s filibusters as the quaint inhabitants of a fictional world.¹⁵²

Writing to a French audience, de Lussan does not need to belabor the point that it is not in the national and religious character of a Frenchman to be a bloodthirsty pirate. His defense mirrors Philip Ayres’ arguments for Henry Morgan’s innocence. The truth was a little more complicated. Although Catholic French buccaneers did not lag behind their English companions on any raid or massacre, they did envision themselves superior in their piety, which came to them exclusively after the fact. Pere Labat related a busy day on the Caribbean island of St.

¹⁵² See Wilgus, Curtis A. Review: Besson, Maurice. *The Scourge of the Indies, Buccaneers, Corsairs, and Filibusters*. In *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 11:3. (1931), 363.

Pierre in the spring of 1694 when he had to confess a crew of French filibusters who had seized two English prizes. “This may surprise people in Europe,” he wrote, “where filibusters are not credited with possessing much piety, but as a matter of fact they generally give a portion of their good fortunes to the churches” (Labat 36). When it came to sharing secrets of shady dealings, no-one was as obviously frank as the Jacobin priest. Evidently, he had no qualms about receiving a share in the plunder in exchange for dispensing pardons.

As piety and virtue are concepts comfortably apart, it is easy for de Lussan to profess his devoutness even while none of his actual deeds evince it. Much of his behavior, and that of his French companions, is informed by the notion that they are, regardless, among the elect. But the young filibuster’s self-mythicizing as a modern Catholic knight errant is troubled by the Spanish perspective on the *ladrones*, of which he became increasingly aware. For their atrocities, English and French buccaneers were intensely demonized. We learn from de Lussan that villages raided by pirates on more than one occasion were pronounced by Spanish priests to be under a special curse and abandoned. Bodies of settlers killed by buccaneers were left unburied. These revealing details expose the gulf between buccaneer self-construction and external interpretation. Such polarities fascinated readers like Wilbur. She commented on the extremes in filibuster perceptions as if these extremes alone have earned them a special place in history and in literature (Wilbur trans. 21-2).

Other channels through which the Spanish perspective comes across in the narrative include official letters, some of which de Lussan translated for readers, as well as direct exchange with Spanish colonial women. One such encounter is rendered in greater detail:

...a Young Gentlewoman that waited upon the Governess of the Place happening to fall into my Hands, as I was carrying her away to the Place where the rest of the Prisoners were kept, and to that end made her walk before me, she turned back, and with Tears in

her Eyes told me in her own Language, *Senior pur l'amor de dios no mi como*; that is,
Pray, Sir, for the Love of God do not eat me. (125)

Much to his dismay, our self-professed hero discovers that his image among the pretty young ladies of Queaquilla is closer to that of the man-eating ogre. His hostage is among those convinced that he and his fellow raiders “had not human shape, but that we resembled Monkeys” (125). Few mythologies lack a humanoid ogre figure stealing through the woods and eating those members of the community who are perceived to be most innocent and defenseless. The monster is often anthropoid (while certainly not human) because it was often based on warriors from hostile neighboring tribes miscegenation with whom was normally forbidden. The monster is not merely a belligerent foreigner—it may represent famine, draught, or disease, as Jennifer Neville has argued is the case with Beowulf’s Grendel.¹⁵³ Or, it may guard the perimeter of what the tribe thinks is a safe zone outside of which only the hero may venture without fear. It is easy to see why scattered Spanish colonial communities, surrounded by ‘wilderness’ on every side, subject to unexpected attacks from both Amerindians and buccaneers, would revive the monster myth. Buccaneers’ symbolic ostracism from the rest of the human race flows logically into the later concept of the colonial pirate as a *Hostis Humani Generis*, an enemy of mankind who may take a human shape but lacks the moral substance that defines a true human being.

The Spanish woman’s branding of de Lussan as an ogre throws our hero’s mind in disarray. How is it possible for the chivalrous dragon-slayer to be confused with the monster he has set out to slay? The answer, for our narrator, lies in many Spaniards’ regrettable inability to discern a godless English pirate from a noble French filibuster. In the case of the young gentlewoman from Queaquilla, de Lussan sees another explanation as well: “The *Fathers* hated

¹⁵³ See, e. g., Neville, Jennifer. *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry*. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England: V27. Cambridge, U.K., New York: Cambridge UP, 1999. 168-70.

us to that degree, that they perswaded the Women, who had never seen any Freebooters, that we were altogether unlike them, and we were not even of human Form, and that we would both eat them and their Children” (125).

The Fathers’ demonizing is re-interpreted as yet another challenge for the hero whose romantic aptitude is about to be tested. De Lussan reports that he is only one of many buccaneers who supposedly managed to convert the horror of a local woman to “so violent a Passion, as proceeded sometimes even to a degree of Folly” (*Ibid.*). His first encounter with a Spanish colonial woman is said to be an example of such romantic conversion.

But the real seduction takes place not in the mind of some real or imaginary Spanish gentlewoman—it’s in the mind of a sympathetic reader of his account, such as Marguerite Wilbur. Though absurd, de Lussan’s nationalist apology was wholeheartedly embraced by his latest translator who wrote in her introduction that “what distinguished the French buccaneers from the English whose hideous acts of carnage contributed largely to the terror the very name of “pirate” inspired on the Spanish Man, was their courtesy to women.” She went on to blame much of the violence wrought by buccaneers on the incompetence of Spanish authorities who allegedly forced the starved buccaneers to take desperate measures (22). What moved Wilbur to misinterpret such unmistakably horrific scenes as the decapitation of hostages made to cast dice for their very lives? The answer lies in the strategic framing of the decapitation scene between the two faux-romantic episodes in the narrative. Drawing power from the deep structure of heroic myth upon which the whole narrative pivots precariously, de Lussan has managed (in at least one case) to substitute the image of a man-devouring ogre with that of an irresistibly charming conqueror.

5. 7. MEETING THE GODDESS / WOMAN AS THE TEMPTRESS

Masking the transgressions of rape the way piety masks murder and plunder, faux romance in de Lussan also operates on mythical principles. At the point in the hero's journey that Joseph Campbell calls 'Meeting the Goddess,' de Lussan relates his romantic conquest of a young Spanish widow. Like Wilbur, she is charmed into disregarding the fresh blood on the hands of a dashing young rogue. Her deceased husband is said to have been the local treasurer, a detail lending the scene of courtship between a pirate and a rich colonial senorita the aura of poetic justice.

In keeping with the hero myth formula, the woman stands for the world that the hero must master. As in the Gardens of Panama, he trespasses into the grounds of a paradise until recently held hostage by a blackened Spaniard, attempting to rescue the distressed damsel who now stands for all of the garden's delights. But in order to accomplish this rescue, the hero must first reach atonement with the father figure whose position he inherits symbolically in this encounter with the Goddess / Mother / World figure. Thus, the young widow is said to have promised the filibuster "her husband's office in addition to her own extensive holdings" (Wilbur trans. 217). A generous offer, except that the hero remembers he is an imposter and not a true son of the Spanish treasurer. He is a pirate whose 'profession' is to prey on wealth rather than manage it for the social good as a treasurer should. He bids his weeping mistress adieu and beats a hasty retreat back to the greater comforts of battle.

By the standards of myth outlined in Campbell's psychoanalytical framework, the failure of the hero to master the Goddess and inherit his father's abode spells, symbolically speaking, retardation in his psychological development. The hero is under the threat of remaining a child, one forever arrested in misguided and endless exertions of his heroic abilities. If his failure is as monumental as that of the Greek Phaeton, who fails to master the chariot of Phoebus and

endangers all of cosmic order, he may become subject to tragic annihilation. However, de Lussan manages to carve a way out for his hero without violating the rules of the mythical journey. The Spanish widow, who only moments ago entered as a Goddess figure, is quickly reinterpreted as a shape-shifter. Though not of her own design, the resolution she offers is ‘perfidious’ and threatens to entrap the hero within the dreamscape of myth. Reflecting on the young gentlewoman’s generous offer, De Lussan writes: “I revived with my self, how little Trust was to be given to the Promises and Faith of so perfidious, as well as vindictive a Nation as the *Spaniards*, and more especially towards Men in our Circumstances, by whom they have been so ill used” (130).

The hero’s inability to reach atonement with the Father based on his past trespasses is recast as the Father’s ‘vindictive’ unwillingness to forgive a prodigal Son. At the same time, his failure to master the Goddess is transformed into victory over the Temptress—another classical scene. The thwarted resolution propels the narrative of trials further, until atonement with the ‘true’ father (France) and mastery over his domain is reached on the hero’s own terms. In this light, de Cuffy’s letter to de Lussan’s biological father becomes part of the hero’s second atonement. Luckily for him, his own nation will not bear the same grudges as Spain and, rather than hang him for his heroics, will allow the buccaneer to retire as a recently ‘disempoverished’ aristocrat.

5. 8. FROM HEROIC MONOMYTH TO CONCRETE AGENDA

The encounter with the Spanish Goddess / Temptress is a vivid example of the way in which national identity fills the mythical mold. The symbolic mother and father figures, belonging to a foreign nation vilified by the Black Legend, must be rejected rather than embraced. Because de Lussan is writing a heroic myth, a story of good versus evil, he needs to resort to national stereotypes much more often than the English buccaneer writers. The Spaniard

as an arch enemy cannot be occasionally courageous, as in William Dick and John Cox. Conversely, the French filibuster cannot be anything less than a perfect hero. The representational urgency decreed by the Manichean nature of myth results in particularly distorted scenes such as the naval battle near the Island of Plata. Having rejected the perfidious advances of the Spanish widow, De Lussan returns to the ‘profession’ of a filibuster, which seems to require blind faith in French superiority. He writes:

We had, during these several Engagements, brought up upon our Decks, the Governor of *Queaquilla*, and the other chief Officers that were our Prisoners, that they might be Witnesses of the Vigour with which our Men fought, and the Cowardize of their own People, who durst not enter our Ships, tho’ they came Board and Board with us twice.
(136)

As in the case of the ‘exposed’ Temptress, the pirate’s imagination transforms a scene in which he and his comrades use Spanish officers as a human shield into an example of what ‘regular filibusters’ are capable of. Like Bartholomew Sharp, de Lussan expresses nothing but disdain for the defenders of Spain’s American colonies. He claims that, near Realeguo, thirty Frenchmen could not be defeated by six hundred Spaniards lead by the especially audacious Captain *don Albaro*, whom they manage to vanquish with what seems like great ease (141). Even the worthiest of Spaniards falls short of being a true match for heroic French filibusters.

To be sure, there is an underlying historical veracity to buccaneers’ and other pirates’ claims of extraordinary courage. The claim is first extended by Exquemelin, who unwillingly credits buccaneers under Morgan for instantly legendary feats performed in their raids of Maracaibo. It is echoed by Captain Johnson in his description of Davis’ taking of Castle Gambia. In many cases, however, pirates’ courage and audacity were inspired by easy victories over enemies who lacked any motivation to fight back. De Lussan’s belief in the heroic nature of his

companions' exploits is based on a number of cases where numerous defenders of Spanish mines and settlements seem to step back and let the filibusters pass. Slaves and hastily recruited peons lay ineffectual traps on their path, avoiding direct confrontation despite their superior numbers. Staring down hundreds of demoralized opponents naturally got to the head of Bartholomew Sharp who, like de Lussan, believed in the superhuman fighting abilities of buccaneers.

Much of this dynamic was retained in pirates of the Golden Age, who frequently faced crews reluctant to lose their lives by defending someone else's cargo. By the turn of the eighteenth century, it had become a cultural commonplace that those who strove to fill their own pockets through high seas robbery easily surpassed the zeal of those who defended other people's wealth. This point is conveyed in Governor Nicholson's note about Roberts' audacious raids as well as in the Council of Trade and Plantations' list of measures for the suppression of East Indies piracy, which struggled to provide financial incentives for resisting sailors and pirate hunters. Accounts such as these, pitting a greedy and desperate pirate against dozens of feebly resisting sailors, inadvertently boosted the pirate's image of a heroic/demonic desperado. The pirate's utter selfishness is taken by some as evidence for his damnation, as instanced by the article on Roberts in the *Boston News-Letter*. At the same time, reading accounts of buccaneering and piracy from Exquemelin to Johnson, one could not help but perceive that it is selfish motives that enable the pirate to perform extraordinary deeds. The courage that incited involuntary admiration in Governor Nicholson, had the same effect on readers of de Lussan, Sharp, and Captain Johnson. In the context of emerging popular discourse on capitalist self-interest, the pirate's performances, true and exaggerated, called into question the negative sanctioning of extreme individualism.

In de Lussan, 'the Vigour with which our Men fought' is attributed to national superiority, reinforcing the filibusters' portrayal as courageous patriots who took France's

quarrel with Spain to its most remote colonies. Cox's 'sacred Hunger for Gold' is never explicitly extended as an argument to justify their deeds because it will undermine the author's heroic dream. His rhetorical strategy, similar to that of Bartholomew Sharp, is to display feats of courage against a treacherous foe and let French readers take delight when the heroes succeed in 'borrowing' gold from its undeserving owners. We are reminded here of Cox's jocular remark that English buccaneers would naturally put ill-gotten Spanish gold to better use. The appeal to national imperial interest is expected to strike a chord with English and French audiences, compelling them to forgive their compatriots' piracies against Spain for the same reason royal pardons were frequently proclaimed—for the cause of enlarging national wealth.

In order for the argument to work, de Lussan, like the English buccaneers under Sharp, needs to purge from his account instances in which filibusters turned against French, Dutch, and English ships. That such incidents happened quite frequently in the 1680's we know from Pere Labat's journal (153). Yet, in *Voyage into the South Seas*, French filibusters are said to have limited their depredations to Spanish ships and settlements. It is from a few slips of the tongue (such as the mentioning of a Flemish boat chased near Santa Barba) that readers must conclude there is more to the tale than what is being told by the hero himself.

We have already observed that de Lussan's veiling of the piratical and displacing it onto others results in a steady sub-current of entirely unintentional anti-heroic portrayal. Obscured by the hero's mythical journey, scenes like the beheading of prisoners at Queaquilla and the use of Spaniards as human shield near Plata nevertheless have the power to disturb readers. We should not assume that de Cuffy and Wilbur, for all their talk of pleasure and delight in a hero's triumphant life-adventure, have missed entirely the grotesque elements of de Lussan's account. Instead, it is more likely that they were willing to confuse their moral compass just long enough for the mythical journey to unfold and be enjoyed. Like other buccaneers before him, De Lussan

knows he has a great story to tell. In telling it, he faces the challenge to package transgression in a tale that avoids direct self-incrimination and lets readers' sleeping moralities lie. Apologies along the lines of national superiority, religious preeminence, and romantic chivalry, are embedded in a mythical structure that distracts readers from their absurdity. The pleasure of which Governor de Cuffy speaks in his letter to de Lussan's father could well be that of transgression suppressed and incorporated within a 'forgiving' mythical structure. Within this structure, truths of buccaneers' selfish and murderous exploits coexist with truths of their extraordinary courage and prowess. In fact, the two truths are inseparable and of equal appeal, forming the core of a perpetually controversial, endlessly fascinating, anti-hero.

It was another reader of de Lussan, one whose intelligence, wit, and economy of expression have earned him immortal fame, that captured the buccaneer as anti-hero most vividly. Voltaire's *Short Studies in English and American Subjects* contains a brief account of buccaneer activities based on sources like Exquemelin and de Lussan. Voltaire identified the buccaneers of America as "a new people formed by hazard out of English, Bretons, and Normans" and suggests that they had "nearly the same origin and association as the ancient Romans." It was to their "desperate boldness," he argued, that France owed its share of American wealth. Voltaire then invited readers to imagine buccaneers as a cross between human beings and animals, "a company of tigers endowed with some portion of human reason" (252). This depiction echoes the way Spanish women of Queaquilla perceived de Lussan and his companions and anticipates subsequent renditions of colonial pirates as animalized (and sexualized) foils of humanity.

Overall, Voltaire's moral compass is less fooled than de Cuffy's and Wilbur's. The Brethren of the Coast are said to be lawless and godless, knowing "no other law but that of equally distributing the share of the spoils; no other religion but that of nature; and even from

that, they frequently deviated in an abominable manner” (254). At the same time, however, it is most likely of de Lussan’s journey back to the Caribbean that Voltaire exclaimed: “The retreat of the ten thousand Greeks will be always more famous in history, but certainly is not to be compared with this” (258). Of Xenophon’s mercenaries’ legendary march back to Greece in 401 BC, related in his *Anabasis*, historian Robin Waterfield writes: “In terms of gripping adventure, human interest, strong characters, drama and pathos, the story is a survival epic... of hard travel across some of the roughest terrain in the world, under frightful conditions of almost constant life-threatening danger from hostile forces, treachery, unraveling loyalties and extreme weather.”¹⁵⁴ It is this epic journey that de Lussan’s adventures are said to have surpassed. Voltaire extracts the same amount of crystallized sensation from the filibuster’s heroic self-mythicizing as he does from the anti-heroic aspects unintentionally disclosed in the account. The fact that buccaneers are imagined as abominations of nature, only partially human, does not overrule the necessity to recognize their march across the Spanish Main as being among the greatest feats of human courage and endurance. Evidently, de Lussan’s *Voyage into the South Seas*, as a deeply flawed imitation of a hero’s mythical journey, nevertheless had enough power to overwhelm even the most cynical of minds.

¹⁵⁴ See: Waterfield, Robin. *Xenophon’s Retreat: Greece, Persia, and the End of the Golden Age*. Cambridge: Harvard UP. xi.

CHAPTER 6

CONTINUITIES: THE ANTI-HEROIC PIRATE FIGURE FROM EXQUEMELIN TO JOHNSON

6. 1. INTRODUCTION

The arc of early colonial pirate lore in British literature is in many ways inscribed by two major works: the first English translation of Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (1684) and Captain Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pyrates* (1724). Each of these works was (for all we know) the magnum opus of an obscure author. Each generated great interest and spawned numerous imitators. The first one established and the other affirmed the anti-heroic portrayal of colonial pirates. These two texts together with their imitations provided rich soil for the imagination of contemporary writers like Defoe, John Gay, and playwright Charles Johnson. In their debt are also future generations of novelists like Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, the American William Gilmore Simms, and the Italian Emilio Salgari, to name only a few. The challenge Exquemelin and Captain Johnson issued to the creative minds of the future was to try and redeem the bloodthirsty and noble, atavistic and progressive characters they had pieced together from witness accounts and tall tavern tales alike.

The object of this redemption, put in the broadest terms and most economic terms, was to harness the pirate figure as a more effective literary effigy (or scapegoat) in a variety of mimetic rivalries that all facilitated the social formation of young male adolescents. Romanticizing the pirate figure was in its essence a process of reimagining historical acts as self-staged sacrifice and then transforming this sacrifice into a passage to male adulthood. In a study of John the Baptist, Girard reveals the relevant mechanisms of this process:

Submerged in mimeticism the subject loses awareness of self and purpose. Instead of rivaling the model he is transformed into a harmless marionette; all opposition is

abolished and the contradiction of desire dissolves. But where now is the obstacle that was barring the way and pinning him down? The monster must be lurking somewhere; for the experience to be complete the monster must be found and destroyed... Mimeticism, at this point, absorbs all the dimensions that might compete with it at a less intense level—sexuality, ambition, psychology, sociology, and ritual itself. (*Scapegoat* 144)

Adolescence is a time of intense mimeticism because the male subject seeks ‘awareness of self and purpose’ that he may not have had (or missed not having) until called upon to join the adult realm. In swashbuckler juvenilia, the pirate figure’s potential to act as the magnified sacrificial monster is fully utilized for the purpose of conducting a young man into the moral, legal, heterosexual, monochromatic world of adult male responsibility. But because this sacrifice is taken to be successful, the pirate figure receives retroactive credit for having performed well, which overlays his transgressive acts with the aura of adventures and which licenses him to embody freedom together with anarchy. This positive charge, we have argued, is a retroactive projection of what Girard calls ‘the second transference of the sacred.’

We have shown a specific version of transference to operate in the historical and literary construction of anti-heroic pirates and we will now proceed to identify the advent of this process in the two major works explored in the following chapter. If pirates had remained the blaspheming, anarchic demons found in Mather and in the background to Snelgrave’s Captain Davis then their sacrifice would have had no cultural or psychological significance. However, as early as Exquemelin’s introduction to buccaneering, the colonial pirate figure showed much greater promise as a quasi-hero whose claims to heroism could be given partial credence for the sake of staging a culturally beneficial performance of self-immolation.

As we hope to have established by now, there exist major differences between the historical figures that occasioned these two accounts—buccaneers and Golden Age pirates. The differences between their respective representations in Exquemelin and Johnson are no less significant. The dialectic mode of analysis in this chapter will attempt to capture a process through which the colonial pirate figure within the timeframe delineated by these two texts begins to shed the old identities of Christian and epic hero in favor of a more openly subversive and uniquely colonial set of representations—extreme businessman, aggressive social climber, autonomous law- and state-maker, sexual deviant, and finally a brutal enemy of mankind. Buccaneers’ unsuccessful bid for the national pantheon became subsumed in the Golden Age pirate’s complicated relationship to the colonial state—he was imagined as a reactionary and a founder figure. This ambivalence, most clearly visible in Johnson’s Captain Misson, is yet another manifestation of the two opposing transferences of the sacred, this time in the service of ‘resolving’ a mimetic rivalry for the ideal colonial ‘governor.’

Similarities between Exquemelin’s portrayal of buccaneers and Johnson’s portrayals of Golden Age pirates are just as important as the differences. Within the diachronic framework of mythical thought, regardless of major differences between them, Exquemelin’s buccaneers and Johnson’s Golden Age pirates can be seen as part of the same representational curve. Their textual and actual lives were defined by extremes, and so was the general attitude towards them. Demonized and glorified in the same breath, figures like Henry Morgan in Exquemelin and Bartholomew Roberts in Johnson were keyed to impress and scandalize all at once. While the anti-heroic portrayal of Roberts (and its cultural implications) is clearly recognized by critics such as Hans Turley (92-3), the legacy of Exquemelin’s famous buccaneering opus and the subsequent accounts of Caribbean raiders it inspired has not been explored thus far. In the preceding two chapters, we attempted to amend this gap. Now, armed with the foresight that

would enable us to recognize certain mythical representations of buccaneers as self-selected scapegoats, we can examine the popular source that inspired Sharp and his men, and perhaps de Lussan as well. We will analyze not only the ways in which Exquemelin's representations informed self-representations of other buccaneers, but also the ways in which these were echoed and transformed in the *General History*. We will trace certain central elements, such as the construction of pirates as self-destructive demons, to the archival sources from 1684 to 1734 that we examined in Chapter 3. This summative exploration is intended as the culmination of our study of mythical elements in witness accounts of colonial piracy.

6. 2. NOTES ABOUT THE SOURCES

A grasp of the complex publication histories behind these two texts is essential to our understanding of the variegated, often conflicting, mythical impulses found within them. Both immensely popular and subject to multiple editions, *The Buccaneers of America* and the *General History of the Pyrates* reflect the handiwork of a group of individuals even more so than other contemporary texts. Less is known about the identities of their professed authors than about those who translated, edited, amended, dramatized, and otherwise enriched the original manuscript.

6. 2. 1. WHO WERE A. O. EXQUEMELIN?

Alexander Olivier Exquemelin's *De Amerikaanische Zeerovers* was the first text to capture extensively the soon-to-become-famous exploits of the Brethren of the Coast, a fraternity of mostly English and French raiders that formed in the middle of the seventeenth century around the Caribbean islands of Hispaniola and Tortuga.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ The first English edition of 1684 by William Crooke did not use the 1678 Dutch original *De Americaensche zee-roovers* but rather the 1681 Spanish translation by Don de Buena-Maison. For an excellent overview in English of the work's complex publication history see: Haring, C. H. *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century*. London: Methuen & Co., 1910. 278-82. English-speaking scholars have heretofore ignored two important sources in French. The first is an article by a Dutch historian: Vrijman, M. "L'identité d'Exquemelin." *Bulletin de la section de*

The book's most memorable anti-hero is without a doubt the audacious Englishman Henry Morgan, perhaps the most successful buccaneer captain in history. Exquemelin depicts him as an ingenious and courageous leader, but also as a ruthless torturer, rapist, and destroyer of Panama. By 1684, Morgan had used his lion's share of spoils from the sack of Panama to clear his name and secure the post of Lt. Governor of Jamaica. His attorneys swooped down on both English printers of Exquemelin, taking them to court for libel. According to Gosse, Morgan was less concerned with denying his villainy than with refuting the insinuation that he was of low birth. He won the case and was paid a modest sum, but the long-term damage to his name proved irreversible. As a figure of fact and fancy, Morgan would remain the way Exquemelin's first English edition painted him—a brutal and resourceful raider of the Spanish Main who rose from rags to riches, and from crime to administrative power, in one swift and disturbing arc.

The first English translation of 1684 was published by William Crooke and, in the words of Philip Gosse, “appears to have met with instantaneous success” (154). Within three months, a ‘sequel’ appeared, augmented by the accounts of Sharp and Ringrose—the two later appeared as a separate volume. A new translation by Thomas Malthus, appearing later the same year, claimed to correct many errors by relying on the Dutch text. A 1695 edition of the book by William Whitwood combined Exquemelin's account with the accounts of Ringrose as a second volume. A 1699 edition by Thomas Newborough reprinted the 1695 edition, adding translations of two French accounts: De Lussan and Montauban, a privateer operating against the English off the

géographie du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques (1933), 43-57. The other is: Camus, Michel-Christian. “Une note critique à propos d’Exquemelin.” *Revue française d’histoire d’Outre-mer* (March 1990), 79-90. Vrijman and Camus have argued that the Dutch text used by Malthus was modified significantly by the Amsterdam publisher Jan ten Hoorn. It is still unclear whether the first French edition of 1686 was closer to a lost original manuscript (arguably in French) than to the Dutch edition. For an up-to-date overview of print history, see: Ouellet, Réal. “Lahontan et Exquemelin : deux exemples de dérive textuelle (xvii^e-xviii^e siècles).” *Tangence*. 74 (Winter 2004), 45-57.

coast of Guinea. Newborough claims to have “couched up all that ever has been writ in any language upon the subject of *Bucaniering*” (A2).

In a recent article, Anna Neill notes that “by the beginning of the eighteenth century, enough privateer and buccaneer journals and memoirs had been published to mark them as a distinct genre.”¹⁵⁶ Neill focuses on texts whose authors, in relating their voyages, oscillate between the identities of pirate and colonial explorer. These include Basil Ringrose, William Dampier, Woodes Rodgers, and Lionel Wafer. To this list must be added the names of Bartholomew Sharp and his companions John Cox and W. D., although their accounts fall notably short of redeeming their authors as legitimate explorers or national heroes. Unlike the French surgeon’s unkind treatment of Morgan, likely made worse by the Spanish translator, the only reputation these autobiographical accounts by Englishmen could damage was that of their own authors.

Tempted by enormous interest in their exploits, few buccaneers and publishers could resist attempting the balancing act between national hero and a devil incarnate. The two poles of this portrayal, brilliantly outlined by Exquemelin, had been polemicized vigorously by the time Philip Ayres published his collection of accounts, only months after Crooke’s first edition of *Buccaneers of America*. As we observed in an earlier chapter, both Ayres and Crooke went to great lengths to refute accusations of devilry and to nominate buccaneer authors as national scions who defended the rising empire’s colonial interests in the Americas. Yet, they also dangled the bait of scandalous crime revealed in the pages to follow, as did Bartholomew Sharp’s publisher William Hacke. But it is in the preface of Exquemelin’s last seventeenth

¹⁵⁶ See Neill, Anna. “Buccaneer Ethnography: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33.2 (2000), 166.

century edition that we find perhaps the most delightfully understated formulation of London printers' attempt to have their cake and eat it too. Newborough writes:

...and indeed the wonderous Actions and daring Adventures therein related, are such as could not but transport the most stupid minds into an Admiration of them, tho many times they were not attended with that Justness and Regularity that became *Christians*, or even men of any Tolerable Morals. (A2)

Despite a vehement defense in the introduction and subtle alterations throughout the account, Exquemelin's first English translator (for William Crooke) had done little to erase the bloody pirate in the celebrated patriot Henry Morgan. For one, he retained Don de Buena-Maison's use of the term 'pirate' to refer to sea-roving buccaneers. But more importantly, he retained all atrocities related by Exquemelin, only occasionally pinning them on regular buccaneers rather than their leader.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps it was impossible to filter out all immoral acts without destroying the narrative thread or perhaps it was not in the publishers' best interests to do so. Newborough's recipe, forged at a time of resurgence in interest about buccaneering tales, significantly abandoned the nomination for national heroes but retained the conflicted portrayal. His introduction issues a call for admiration of those same actions and adventures whose moral transgressions could not be tolerated. Evidently, Newborough was struggling to reproduce a winning formula of ambiguity whose exact workings he did not quite understand.

In a recent literary historical study of the great American outlaw, Frank Richard Prassel contends that "As Morgan enjoyed his position and notoriety, the image of the buccaneer was abruptly frozen in the public mind; the view has remained unchanged for three hundred years." Prassel attributes this 'freezing' (by which he means a lasting stigma) to the work of "a

¹⁵⁷ See Esquemeling, John. *Bucaniers of America: Or, a true Account*. London: Printed for William Crooke, 1684. Subsequent quotations from this edition are denoted by *E1*.

remarkable and controversial book ... [which] became a key link in the complex outlaw image and itself an integral part of popular history.”¹⁵⁸ While he is certainly correct to identify Exquemelin’s volume as the chief undoer of Morgan’s reputation, Prassel’s choice of words points to a problem in the differentiation of literary figure and historical person. While Morgan’s notoriety in real life may have been a ‘frozen’ fact, the ‘complex outlaw image’ of which his portrayal became part was far from fixed in any certain terms. It was most certainly not Exquemelin’s book alone, with its graphic depictions of rapine and murder, that made the buccaneer “a stock figure in our romantic mythology.”¹⁵⁹ Yet, it may have planted the seeds for such transformation from villain-hero to a romantic anti-hero. Within our analytical framework, we will try to recognize in the *Buccaneers of America* a process of ‘selection’ which was continued by Sharp’s men and which accomplished, regardless of intentions, a branding of the buccaneer (and the colonial pirate in general) as a disruptive presence and thus an attractive landing site for mimetic violence.

Our search for mythical elements in the *Buccaneers of America* involves a close reading and comparison between three editions. One is the essential first English translation of 1684 from the Spanish, published by William Crooke (*E1*). The Malthus translation of 1684 from the Dutch (*E2*), despite its claims for greater accuracy, in fact belies an even stronger nationalist and sensationalist agenda. When read against the most recent 1969 translation of the Dutch original by Alexis Brown (*E3*), both 1684 editions of the book unsurprisingly reveal a great number of distortions, many of which concern the controversial figure of Henry Morgan whose reputation both English translators attempted to spare.

¹⁵⁸ See Prassel, Frank Richard. *The Great American Outlaw: A Legacy of Fact and Fiction*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1993. 26-7.

¹⁵⁹ See Jack Beeching’s introduction to: Exquemelin, A. O. *The Buccaneers of America*. Trans. Alexis Brown. New York: Dover, 2000.

EI's translator provides an introduction rife with rhetorical somersaults—all aimed at convincing readers that what follows is a reliable witness's report on the deeds of a new kind of English hero. He goes so far as to rename the author to John Esquemeling and compare him with "The Father of Historians, *Philip de Comines*" (*EI* A4). Right before the first chapter of buccaneer exploits, the translator has Exquemelin vow the following:

There I shall endeavour to relate without the least note of passion or partiality, yea, with that candor which is peculiar both to my mind and stile. Withal certifying my Reader, I shall give him no stories taken from others, upon trust or hearsay ; but only those enterprises , unto which I was my self an eye witness. (*EI* 78)

Not found in the Dutch text, this passage is clearly an extension of the English publisher's claim to veracity and not the handiwork of the French surgeon. Elsewhere, Exquemelin is extremely unassuming and doesn't claim to have participated in any events other than Morgan's campaigns.

The translator of *EI* ends his introduction by claiming to have fixed a number of inaccuracies found in the Spanish translation from the Dutch (B). This single statement is enough to convince us that *EI* is a product of at least four representational agendas: those of the author, Dutch publisher, Spanish translator, and finally the liberal translator and everyone else involved in the production of the first English edition. A similar breakdown of *E2* would seem at first to leave Don de Buena-Maison's bias out of the picture, since the Malthus edition is based on the Dutch text. However, since it is virtually certain that the translator for Malthus consulted *E1*, we need to retain all already implicated parties and add him to the mix. This palimpsest of competing voices seems to predestine the birth of a conflicted anti-hero in Morgan even if he wasn't one in real life or depicted as one in Exquemelin's first manuscript.

6. 2. 2. CAPTAIN CHARLES JOHNSON: A 'FAITHFUL HISTORIAN'

It is no accident that the works of Exquemelin and Johnson feature as prominently in the imaginations of creative writers as they do in the bibliographies of serious historians. Although the former was advertised by its first English translator as a “Piece both of Natural and Humane history,” and the latter claimed to tell stories that “have one Thing to recommend them, which is Truth,” both writers ventured well beyond the limits of dry fact in their desire to entertain the fast-growing and under-nourished Western European readerships of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (*EI A2*) (Johnson 6). Including Johnson’s *General History* in a study focused on witness accounts is problematic, yet necessary. While evidence suggests that Exquemelin participated in at least some of the campaigns he related, the group of individuals behind the literary pseudonym Captain Charles Johnson¹⁶⁰ operated as an indiscriminate popular historian whose sources ranged from trial documents, colonial reports, and personal letters by witnesses to sensational newspaper reports, drunk tavern talk, and wild rumor.¹⁶¹ Yet, in our examination of newspaper articles and transcribed court depositions, we seem to have already expanded our definition of “witness” to include those who claimed to report the words of witnesses. In earlier chapters, we have gleaned significant insight from comparing these first two stages in mythmaking and fictionalization. In that sense, Johnson’s project would fit our criteria just as well as the first half of Exquemelin’s book, which relied on other sources to relate the origins of buccaneering.

Additional rationale for including the *General History* is the fact that it captures in its wide net extremely diverse and often incompatible mythmaking agendas. Most of the

¹⁶⁰ The choice of pseudonym is likely a product of adding authority in naval matters to the name of playwright Charles Johnson, known for his 1821 play “The Successful Pyrate.”

¹⁶¹ Historian Peter Earle discusses Exquemelin’s credibility as an eye-witness in *The Sack of Panama*. New York: The Viking Press, 1981. 265-6. Captain Charles Johnson specifies some of his sources and defends his own credibility on 6-8 of his introduction (Ed. Manuel Schonhorn).

representational tendencies we've examined so far are echoed and often amplified on its pages. If we think of Nixon and Mather's demonic portrayal as one vector, and Crooke and Ayres' glorification of the buccaneer as another, the *General History* would be the first major text where these two extreme impulses converge repeatedly, almost ad nauseam, untroubled by their co-existence. Though we cannot hope to do justice to the work's complexities by contributing to discussions of its place within the genre of popular criminal biography, or its role in the rise of the English novel, we must take time to recognize the central figurations and refigurations of the colonial pirate mythos found within even its earliest, most unfiltered editions.¹⁶²

Both the *General History* and *The Buccaneers of America* are suspended discursively between fact and fiction, the exact location being the subject to continuous critical debate. Although the present discussion will naturally emphasize the mythical departures, historians rightfully point out that both texts also abound with verifiable facts. Exquemelin and Johnson secured their status of partially reliable historians only towards the end of the twentieth century. The vast influence of their works on eighteenth and nineteenth century pirate fiction may help explain why literary historians in the early twentieth century went to great lengths to show that the names of their obscure authors were actually pseudonyms for well-known writers of tall tales. In 1930, Dutch historian G.J. Hoogewerff sensationally 'proved' that Exquemelin was an acronym for Hendrik Smeeks, another Dutch surgeon and author of the 1706 utopia novel *The Mighty Kingdom of Kinke Kesmes* set on an imaginary island near *Terra Australis*.¹⁶³ Hoogewerff's claim was questioned only two years later by L.C. Vrijman and subsequently

¹⁶² Ángela Pérez Mejía argues in a recent article that mythicized representations of pirates culminated in the seventh edition of Johnson's *General History* (1842), which combined the theretofore separate histories of pirates and highwaymen, making the characters more universal. Though that is indeed the case, our focus on early mythmaking of specifically pirate figures requires us to look no further than the first editions. For further tracing of the pirate figure's entry into the literary mainstream, see Pérez Mejía, Ángela. "Entre Canibales y Caballeros: la representación de los bucaneros en Inglaterra, 1684-1742." *Revista Universidad de Antioquia*. 270 (2002), 24-34.

¹⁶³ See Hoogewerff, G. J. "Hendrik Smeeks, geschiedschrijver der boekaniers," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 45 (1930), 225-36.

disproved by H. de la Fontaine Verwey, who brought to light evidence that Exquemelin could not have been Smeeks.¹⁶⁴

An uncanny mirroring of this debate took place among English-speaking critics of the time. In 1939, John Robert Moore argued that Captain Charles Johnson is a pseudonym for none other than Daniel Defoe.¹⁶⁵ His argument, based on circumstantial and subjective evidence such as Defoe's keen interest in piracy and perceived similarities in style, was questioned by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, whose book *The Canonisation of Daniel Defoe* (1988) cautioned scholars against the tendency to ascribe disputed texts to a few great names in the absence of solid proof.

Arguments against Defoe's authorship include the fact that Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the most famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers etc.* appeared in 1734, three years after Defoe's death. Nevertheless, important scholars such as Maximillian Novak remain convinced (and it is indeed possible) that Defoe is to blame for the undisputable literary qualities of the first volume of *General History of the Pyrates*.¹⁶⁶ Although the book's original publisher Nathaniel Mist may have done most of the leg work, Defoe is known to have worked for him until 1724, the year that the first volume was published. Defoe spied against Mist for Walpole's government because he was a known Jacobite sympathizer.

The second volume of the *General History*, beginning with the important chapter on Misson, appeared four years later, after Defoe and Mist had become open political enemies. It

¹⁶⁴ See Verwey, H. "The ship's surgeon Exquemelin and his book on the buccaneers," *Quaerendo* IV (1974), 109-31. An overview of this debate can be found in P. J. Buijnsters ed., Smeeks, Hendrik. *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koninkryk Krinke Kesmes*. Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren, 2004.

¹⁶⁵ See Moore, John Robert. *Defoe in the Pillory and Other Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1939.

¹⁶⁶ Private conversation, Sept. 16, 2007.

would seem that whatever hand Defoe may have had in the manuscript would have been limited to parts of the first volume, unless he managed to repair his relationship with the publisher.

Regardless of the many questions surrounding the identity of Captain Charles Johnson, a wider reading public remains convinced by default in Defoe's authorship. A 1999 reprint of the reputable 1972 Dover edition by Manuel Schonhorn bears only Defoe's name on the cover, as do most of the late twentieth century editions of the work. Many libraries whose holdings are limited to newer editions catalog the title only under the name of its famous, though alleged, author.

While literary scholars have sought to reclaim Exquemelin and Johnson as writers of fiction, historians have emphasized the number of verifiable facts in their works. For a steady stream of writers of popular pirate histories in the 19th and twentieth century, the two books constituted the first, and often last, sources. C. H. Haring in 1910 commented on the monopoly of Exquemelin's perspective on buccaneers and attempted to alert historians to the existence of multiple other sources on Caribbean piracy that needed to be explored. His call was heeded by Peter Earle, who made extensive use of Spanish and British Colonial archives in his history of Morgan's exploits (*Panama* 263-6). Nevertheless, David Cordingly observes in a recent book that Exquemelin's opus "has provided the basis for all serious histories of the buccaneers and, in spite of some inaccuracies, remains the standard work on the subject" (40).

Likewise, Joel Baer in his first-rate exploration of Johnson's *General History* (which he attributes to Defoe) and its cultural and intellectual milieu defends the work as a historical source, despite its motley and occasionally fabulous nature.¹⁶⁷ In *Villains of All Nations*, Rediker makes extensive use of Johnson, from whom he salvages some of the most memorable images of

¹⁶⁷ Baer, Joel. "Piracy Examined: A Study of Daniel Defoe's *General History of the Pyrates* and its Milieu." Dissertation. Princeton University, 1970.

defiant pirates. Among these is Thomas Morris, a common sailor executed in the Bahamas, whose last words allegedly expressed his deep regret that he couldn't be a greater plague to the islands (11) (Johnson 43). Not to spoil the dramatic effect, Rediker forgets to warn readers that dry fact and theatricality commingle on the pages of the *General History* in complex ways. A pirate's last words were, as Rediker himself remarks earlier in his study, a favorite subject for creative distortion by contemporary preachers, pamphleteers, and journalists.

It is understandable why writers of literary history and ethnography give the quagmire of credibility a wide berth when such rich sources as Exquemelin and Johnson are concerned. Indeed, Baer is correct in observing that fantastic and utopian moments like the chapter on Captain Misson do not necessarily discredit other chapters in such a motley work as the *General History*. Taken too far, doubt could strip these texts of any historicity they do indeed possess, leaving future historians of colonial piracy in even greater dearth.

On the other hand, more critical caution and acknowledgement of complexity is necessary in dealing with issues of authorship and reliability. Were it not for the much desired implication of Defoe as a master craftsman, Joel Baer could have heeded his own remarks on the miscellany that is the *General History* and perhaps concluded comfortably that what we have is a collection of often unfiltered and unverifiable rumors from multiple sources. It seems a much more unforced argument to say that this collection is held loosely together by a pseudonym rather than to imagine patterns and infer some overarching intelligence. If the work's strong folkloric streak was properly recognized and the single-author claim was abandoned, Schonhorn would not have needed to invoke in his introduction to the 1972 edition ghostly historians who supposedly affirm the authenticity of Volume II. Instead, he could have stated that, with the notable exception of Captain Misson, the East Indies pirates sketched within that volume

correspond to historical characters. Such carefully phrased statements are necessary when one speaks of the compendium's historicity.

Exquemelin's book, on the other hand, was more obviously altered by translators and augmented, in subsequent editions, by the accounts of other buccaneers like Ringrose, William Dick, and Raveneau de Lussan.¹⁶⁸ While Morgan's raids are related from the perspective of an eye-witness, his exploits comprise only a third of the book. An equal third is devoted to observations on wildlife, plants, locales, and economies in the Caribbean. The last third is a collection, much like Johnson's, of contemporary colonial lore about buccaneer origins, featuring brief accounts of infamous rovers who infested the Caribbean prior to Exquemelin's arrival on Tortuga. As befits a colonial chronicler, the author(s) of *The Buccaneers of America* did not limit himself to one subject, or one goal. He wishes to inform as well as entertain audiences with tales of the exotic, lucrative, perilous, and generally extreme, West Indies. In this medley, the buccaneer is showcased as the quaintest figure for anyone wishing to visit the region safely, on the pages of a book. In ensuring an enthralling experience, Exquemelin shies away from no technique of dramatic representation. That his portrayal of buccaneers has historical value is beyond dispute—he witnessed parts of campaigns for which there exist no other sources. But it is equally indisputable that what he, his business-minded publishers, and his biased translators, ended up introducing to various European readerships, was not the unadulterated truth but a complex and conflicted *representation* of a new kind of pirate figure.

Hans Turley's main goal in *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash* is to identify the ways in which participants and witnesses of piratical acts inflected their accounts, thereby facilitating certain kinds of fictional representation. Taking Turley's analysis a step further, I would like to

¹⁶⁸ These authors met on the pages of Esquemeling, Jo. Basil Ringrose. *The History of the Bucaniers of America; from the First Original down to this Time; Written in Several Languages; and now Collected into one Volume.* London: printed for Tho. Newborough, 1699. Subsequent quotations from Exquemelin use the two earlier editions by Crooke and Malthus.

investigate the pirate figure in Exquemelin and Johnson, showing the ways in which these two texts dip into a reservoir of mythical thought. Both sources would benefit from such re-examination. Peter Earle's most recent book indicates that Exquemelin is now accepted as a mostly reliable chronicler of buccaneering raids, though not devoid of dramatic sense (*Panama* 265-6). This chapter intends to load the fictional side of the scales until a new balance of fact and fiction is reached in our understanding of *The Buccaneers of America*.

The footprints of myth on the pages of Johnson's *General History* have been spotted even by those who wish to affirm its historicity. Joel Baer cannot ignore the artificiality and grandiloquence of pirate speeches in the book. He writes, "As might be expected, Defoe does not follow his sources with the objectivity of a modern historian; he emphasizes the flamboyant and outlandish in pirate behavior, he offers moral reflections, and he makes his pirates speak with more vigor and salt than the official reports allowed them" (6).

Even while praising (Defoe's) *History* as "an accumulation of generally certified facts of an earlier age," Manuel Schonhorn admits that it is "something more." He goes on to argue, against his previous point, that the book has become "a classic of sea literature" because of "its narrative vigor, its emotional balance, and its creative reconstruction of dim events elevated at times to a dramatic universality" (Johnson, Introduction xi). Although both Baer and Schonhorn desire to affirm the book's overall accuracy, they acknowledge the frequent universalizing gestures that make Johnson's book more general and less of a history. Both speak of "vigor," highlighting the piratical anti-hero's potential to stir the rebellious and scandalize the faint-hearted.

Recalling John T. Marcus' notion of a common ethos underlying a seemingly disparate mystique, we can revise Baer's comment that "the most important unifying element [in the *General History*] is the pattern of experiences and attitudes shared by seamen who became

pirates” (7). In fact, the experiences and attitudes of pirates portrayed by Johnson varied from reluctant mutiny out of starvation (Lowther and Massey) to spiteful embracing of villainy (Blackbeard). The unifying element was rather the pirate ethos to which all characters in the book were said to subscribe. Of course, its presentation in the General History was necessarily compromised by Johnson’s middle-class identity, as Robert Dryden has shown. Yet, in its sheer scope and inclusivity, the book manages to offer glimpses of an entity greater than its authors’ agenda and larger than the disparate private myths crowded under the umbrella of pirate lore. In its most generalized form, the pirate mythos contained an appeal to one’s self and one’s companions at sea as the only source of ethical boundaries.

Because myth is nothing if not the product of imaginative collaboration, the goals of this particular study convert problematic issues of multiple authorship and unreliability into an advantage. To say that Exquemelin and Johnson, when apprehended as authors, were not singular identities inhabiting an individual historical body but rather an amalgam of rumor, wishful thinking, error, intentional mistranslation, and layers of bias, amounts merely to saying that the texts we now have before us are further ahead in the production line of the colonial pirate myth than we’ve been comfortable admitting.

6. 2. 3. EMINENTLY READABLE

Appearing at a time of unparalleled imperial growth and individual enterprise, *The Buccaneers of America* captivated the reading public in more ways than one. Its merits, the introduction explained, included not only the first glimpse into the curious culture and memorable feats of Caribbean buccaneers. The work was equally recommended for its unique observations on West Indies plants, animal life, geography, and trade networks. On the side margins of the first edition runs an index signaling items of interest for those who wish to explore economic opportunities in these remote regions.

But geographical extremities were not the only places visited in the book. A cursory glance at William Crooke's publication catalog for 1684 reveals an irony. The first English translation of Exquemelin's book appears after an anonymous *Discourse about conscience* written "in opposition to both extreams of popery and fanaticism." Unsurprisingly, this call for moderation did not get a reprint, unlike the powder-keg title advertising (as if oblivious to the controversy) "the unparallel'd exploits of Sir Henry Morgan, our English Jamaican hero who sack'd Puerto Velo, burnt Panama," etc.

Like most other publishers of his time, Crooke seems to have printed anything that came his way, though maintaining a respectable ratio of sermons and almanacs to French comedies and romances. His big name was Thomas Hobbes in his more religious writings, but his favorite seems to have been Lancelot Addison, a royal chaplain who wrote two minor works on West Barbary. It's not clear whether this connection to piracy made Crooke commission the translation of *Buccaneers of America* from the Spanish. Judging from his overall preference for texts that offer religious instruction, he may have expected the journal of a colonial voyager who took a strong Christian mind to the West Indies. If the introduction is any indication, he must have bitten off more than he could chew. What Christian indignation could be found in the book was directed primarily at Henry Morgan, now holding high office and determined to keep his name clear. A hastily mounted defense in the introduction to the book did nothing to offset the atrocities committed within and even less to convince readers that Morgan was in fact a national hero. Yet, the book was printed and quickly reprinted, winning its publisher a hefty purse and, in comparison, a negligible fine for libel. It seems that Crooke was undaunted by the scandal for the very next year he published Basil Ringrose's account of Sharp's campaign. Clearly, a growing audience for buccaneering tales placed heavy strain on Crooke's image as a publisher of primarily religious texts.

Only months after its first publication, *The Buccaneers of America* existed in three prints and two separate editions. It had singlehandedly created a genre and generated an audience eager to read more tales of ignoble villainy and extraordinary heroism. It would not be too much to suggest that *The Buccaneers of America* was the first text to ‘discover’ the eighteenth century English fascination with the immoral and highly readable workings of the criminal mind. John Applebee’s narratives of Newgate criminals, supposedly published for moral instruction of the multitudes, exploited audiences identified by a much earlier outburst of well-received buccaneer memoirs, an outburst that began with a French surgeon’s tale.

Exquemelin himself seemed to have been aware of the eminent readability of his subject. Initially, he presented a balanced view of buccaneers as busying themselves with things other than sea-roving: “The different callings or professions, they follow, are generally, but three: Either to hunt, or plant, or else to rove on the Sea in quality of Pirats” (*E1* 59). But like his English publishers and translators, the French surgeon knew which of these three would be of most interest. Having digressed several times, he concluded the fifth chapter with an apology: “I shall not trouble the patience of my Reader, any longer with relations of this kind, as belonging unto another subject different from what I have proposed to my self in this history. Whereupon I shall take my beginning, from hence, to describe the famous actions and exploits, of the greatest Pirates, of my time” (78). The wordiness of *E1* at this point drove the point home that, despite multiple digressions, pirates were the true subject of the book. In fewer words, the Alexis Brown translation (*E3*) confirms that it was Exquemelin who realized he needed to speed up the appearance of the book’s central heroes (66). The Malthus edition (*E2*) had a radical fix for this pacing issue—most of the author’s early digressions were confined to appendices and the book opened with the buccaneers on Hispaniola (36).

E1's translator also made the crucial choice to use the word 'pirate' interchangeably with 'buccaneer.' *E2* conforms to this choice, which is further proof that the Malthus translator consulted the Crooke edition. Alexis Brown opts for 'freebooter,' which is closer in spirit to the original *zeerover* but that happens only in the twentieth century. For contemporary readers of Exquemelin in English, the book's subject was clearly a new kind of pirate, also known as 'buccaneer,' whom they would have had to compare to the more familiar Western European coastal raiders, Mediterranean corsairs, and the Arab pirates of the Barbary Coast.

By the publication of the *General History*, pirate stories were considered just as readable though there were already signs of decline in interest. The Golden Age of piracy had come and gone. After the Treaty of Utrecht, many of the privateers pitted against Spain had turned against the now considerable English merchant fleet and had made a name for themselves in popular ballads and pamphlets. But what had been until recently a subject close to the hearts (and pockets) of middle-class audiences in England, was beginning to fade from memory in the early 1720's. As F. W. Chandler points out, the *General History* was part of a new trend to collect the most successful of popular criminal biographies in one place. These more pricey volumes bet on tested material and could be sold to the middle and servant classes.

In 1724 pirates were no longer of immediate public concern. Horrific scenes of high-seas robbery and murder had become commonplace to the point of being banal. In a manner unbefitting a faithful historian, Captain Johnson needed to gloss over many boring parts, "the pannick Terrors [pirates] struck into his Majesty's Subjects, being tedious and unnecessary to relate" (234). In the already long chapter on Roberts, rather than dish out a series of repetitive captures, Captain Johnson interjected a dramatic description of the flags that Roberts used to infiltrate a French slave-trading fleet off Whydah in Africa. The pirate flag that Roberts normally used to intimidate prizes into surrendering is said to have intimated "a Defiance of Death itself,"

a rhetorical choice clearly identifying pirates as self-sacrificial agents of doom. The author then jumped forward in time in order to get to an event "so singularly cruel and barbarous..., as must not be passed over without special Remark" (235). The violence that buccaneering accounts sought to suppress was sometimes showcased by Captain Johnson to revive the fading interest in pirate adventures. However, as we will see, his agenda led to representations of violence that were in fact much more romanticized than even the most muted of Exquemelin's depictions. The dampening of specific acts into a characterization thereof ("singularly cruel") is in keeping with Girard's notion that mythmaking always moves toward suppression and creative reinvention of overly "successful" historical acts of violence (*Scapegoat* 94).

6. 3. A NEW SPECIES OF BIRD, PIRATE, AND MAN

One of the 'preferential signs of victimage' that early representations of buccaneers already projected on the colonial pirate figure had to do with the 'nature' of their kind. *The Buccaneers of America* presented them as simultaneously more than, less than, and other than human. It wouldn't have taken long for readers of Exquemelin to realize that they were faced with an anti-hero of a much higher order and complexity than the jolly picaresque thief or the demonic Mediterranean pirate. It is no accident that the book's portrayal of buccaneers as creatures of the extreme was 'rescued' and transformed by consequent sources into nothing less than the discovery of a new species. The passages on the Caribbean genesis and constitution of the Brethren, the striking anecdotes of their peculiarities and excesses—these proved a perpetual fountain of quotable material for many who, like Voltaire, imagined them as tigers or otherwise related to the animal world. Similarly, Captain Johnson's vivid descriptions of debauchery and indiscriminate cruelty would later construct the Golden Age pirate as much more than a likeable daredevil. He issues nothing less than "a Declaration of War against the whole World" and is

thereby classified as a *Hostis humanis generis*—not a common criminal but a different species altogether (168).

Exquemelin's first take on the genesis and lifestyle of early buccaneers, their "manner of Living, Customs, and Ordinary Employments," appeared shortly after the story of the Spanish 'disappearing' the native population of what was to become the island of Hispaniola. This act opened the rugged landscape to a great proliferation of wild mastiffs, hogs, and cows. The latter population attracted Frenchmen from Tortuga, who encroached upon the Spanish colony to hunt and 'boucan' cows for their skins. Between the cows, hogs, and their hunters, all species foreign to those parts, Exquemelin inserted a brief digression on local birds and the ways in which the climate had shaped them differently (*EI* 59-62). Buccaneers then emerge in the narrative logically, as a fascinating new species unique to the West Indies.

Underscoring this presentation in his introduction, the first English translator set buccaneers apart from other pirates and placed their origin firmly in the Caribbean. He observed that the Spanish garrisons feared

every sail they discover'd at Sea, to be *Pirats* of one Nation or another. But much more especially, since that *Curasao*, *Tortuga*, and *Jamaica* have been inhabited by *English*, *French*, and *Dutch*, and bred up that Race of Hunts-men, than which, no other ever was more desperate, nor more mortal Enemies to the Spaniards, called *Bucaniers*. (*EI* a)

The introduction to the subsequent Malthus edition applied even more generous amounts of mythical thought to the subject of buccaneer genesis, using Exquemelin's reference to local birds as a springboard:

The *Harpiaë* of old were Fabled to have been a Ravenous kind of Fowl, inhabiting a certain Island, who plundered all that came near the places of their abode; but we do not read that they rang'd far abroad in search of their Prey. But here are a worse kind of

Cattel, who would spare no Travel, refuse no hazards, yea, rake Hell itself, before they would like Fools, run a bootless Errand... (E2 a3)

The image of hell-raking harpies was echoed in the ‘furies from hell’ to which the *Boston News-Letter* compared Roberts’ men and to which Captain Charles Johnson famously likened Blackbeard himself: “Imagination cannot form an Idea of a Fury, from Hell, to look more frightful” (84-5).

But what is even more interesting here than the link to Johnson’s Blackbeard is the multiple hybridity of the imagery. The Harpies, as depicted by Rhodius in *Argonautica* (as well as by Ovid and Virgil) punished King Phineas who was exiled to an island by Zeus. The Harpies were initially associated with the whirlwinds, as well as with the passage of souls to the underworld.¹⁶⁹ Early Greek sources tend to portray them as extremely mobile servants of Zeus. Judging from his references to an abode, the author conflated and confuses harpies and sirens. Medieval European sources commonly depicted both as bird-women.¹⁷⁰ The resulting creature is both a cruel torturer and a lascivious allurer of sailors. As if that conflation were not enough, the translator for Malthus morphs ‘Fowl’ into ‘Cattel,’ or perhaps contrasts the two, in order to underscore the ‘bootless Errand’ of inland marches that set buccaneers apart from earlier searovers.

The first English translators of Exquemelin are not the only parties that read his story of buccaneer origins as a colonial treatise on a new species derived from the fowls and cattle on Hispaniola. Regarding the failed Spanish retaliation against the hunters from Tortuga, early twentieth century historian Philip Gosse comments: “That jealous race determined to rid itself of

¹⁶⁹ See Apollonius of Rhodes. *The Voyage of Argo (Argonautica)*. Trans. Emile Victor Rieu. London: Penguin Books, 1959. 78-9. Also: Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Trans. C. Day-Lewis. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1986. 209-ff.

¹⁷⁰ See van Maerlant, Jacob. “Buchmalerei aus einer mittelalterlichen Handschrift.” *Der Naturen Bloeme*. Flandern, 1350. Selections: http://www.kb.nl/vh-cgi/vhoverview.pl?Iconkeywords=25FF*&iconView=IMAGELIST#

these hitherto harmless “boucaniers” but in dislodging them, a feat accomplished without much difficulty, converted butchers of cattle into butchers of men” (144).

While Gosse is certainly guilty of dramatic oversimplification, Exquemelin did give us grounds to believe that this new species of cow butcher possessed a streak of brutality uncommon even by the day’s standards. Although most buccaneers were, at this point in time, poaching peacefully on Spanish Hispaniola and supplying food to French planters, they are said to have abused their servants even worse than Caribbean planters. Exquemelin wrote: “The said *Bucaniers* are hugely cruel, and tyrannical towards their Servants. Insomuch, that commonly these had rather be Gally-slaves in the *Streights*, or saw *Brasilwood*, in the *Rasp-houses* of *Holland*, than serve such barbarous masters” (E1 61).

Focusing on the piratical aspects of early buccaneers, the translator for Malthus depicted them as “young Sparks” and “Jovial Blades” who “gave themselves over to Drinking, Carousing and Whoring, Indowments, in their account, of a Soul truly Generous” (E2 a4). This representation built upon the already existing figure of the picaresque rogue who could be a proper hero were it not for his inverted moral compass.

The moral inversion theme will be preserved and enhanced in later representations of colonial piracy, eventually enlisting another argument for declaring the pirate a separate species. Johnson’s *History* abounds in morally inverted foils to the noble mythical hero. Edward Teach (alias Blackbeard), perhaps the most villainous of anti-heroes found within the book, is introduced thus:

In the Common wealth of Pyrates, he who goes the greatest Length of Wickedness, is looked upon with a kind of Envy amongst them, as a Person of a more extraordinary Gallantry, and is thereby entitled to be distinguished by some Post, and if such a one has but Courage, he must certainly be a great Man. The Hero of whom we are writing, was

thoroughly accomplished this Way, and some of his Frolicks of Wickedness, were so extravagant, as if he aimed at making his Men believe he was a Devil incarnate... (Johnson 85)

What better literary personification of Blackstone's *Hostis humanis generis*, quoted earlier in Johnson, than this quintessential anti-hero who excels in wickedness because of the inverted morality imagined to exist in the pirate commonwealth.

In Johnson's *History*, the myth of the Golden Age pirate as a separate species was centered around an imaginary declaration of war against all mankind. This declaration served to obscure the fact that pirates were much more practical about their targets, in short, that they were mostly the bane of middle-class merchants, not of humanity as a whole. As a middle-class writer, Johnson struggled to convince his 'general' audience in the immediacy of the problem. War against mankind is declared in recreated speeches by over half a dozen famous captains, quickly becoming a formula (319). The closest thing to an actual declaration we have is Avery's letter to the East India Company, which insinuated in bold language that merchant ships of his own nation would not be spared.

A better reason to imagine the colonial pirate as a different species lay in witness reports of extraordinary cruelty. That said, the overall trend over the period under study was to abandon the blood-curdling realism of buccaneer accounts in favor of more aestheticized violence. Few of the violent scenes in the *General History* can match the intensity of Exquemelin's descriptions of buccaneer bloodlust. The extreme barbarity of buccaneers from l'Olonnais to Morgan was a motif that built throughout the book, culminating in the graphic scenes of executions, tortures, and rape during Morgan's sack of Panama. In rapid succession, the execution of weeping priests was followed by the rape of Spanish women and the quartering of a disabled man. Even in the

toned-down language of the new translation, these scenes do not fail to horrify.¹⁷¹ The extreme, almost irrational violence depicted by Exquemelin, is what prompts the Malthus translator, Gosse, and multiple other sources to speak of buccaneers as a race of butchers worse than beasts or harpies who heed no voice other than the sacred call of greed.

In Johnson's *General History* scenes of violence (though less graphic and often trivialized) served to confirm the verdict that the Golden Age pirate was no mere criminal but a different species hostile to all of humanity. For instance, Roberts and his men are said to have burnt the *Porcupine*, an English ship transporting eighty African slaves (235-6). Intended as proof of an inhuman streak, the harrowing scene also exemplifies what Simon During calls 'a disencumbering from ideology' through which the untamable literary figure subverts the agenda of the author.¹⁷² Johnson lingers on the brutality of this scene, struggling to make sense of it. Only a few pages earlier, the pirates that were to become Roberts' men had been criticized as criminally wasteful for throwing overboard (East India) company goods from the seized ship *King Solomon* (231). Clearly, the pattern suggests that these pirates treated slaves and commodities alike when they proved to be encumbrances. In their amoral excess, the pirates expose the fact that slaves and commodities were treated alike even before they seized and 'wasted' them. In its emphasis on 'catastrophic expenditure,' the patterns of waste established in Johnson's *History* demanded cultural interpretation of piracy as a violent ritual performance. The significance and centrality of such extreme expenditure to cultures of the colonial period has been unraveled eloquently by Joseph Roach (40-2).

By Levi-Strauss' definition, myth in its most easily recognizable form offers a pseudo-explanation for a phenomenon that cannot be explained by the tools presently at a culture's

¹⁷¹ Compare *E3* 200-1 to *E1* 62-3.

¹⁷² See During, Simon. "Literature – Nationalism's other?" *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. 142-4.

disposal (*Structural Anthropology* 229). This function of myth made it a suitable tool for a nascent imperial ideology that became increasingly preoccupied with the normalizing of dominance. It is not that Johnson or his contemporaries lacked the tools to recognize Golden Age pirates as regular human beings. Rather, their branding as another species served a number of essential ideological purposes. In the case of the burnt slave ship, it severed the connection between the violence pirates wrought and the violence woven into the daily operation of colonial economies. For this dissociation to be accomplished, the Golden Age pirate must be presented as essentially different from the slave trader or the merchant.

The same challenge of dissociation that faced East India Company officials after Avery's raid was met in the *General History* through a strategic placement in the text of meditations on the essential difference between pirates and Christians. One such meditation, sporting the unmistakable air of insertion, occurs earlier in the Roberts chapter to prepare us for the ideological problem posed by the burnt slave ship. "The *Calabar* Negroes" are said to have recognized Roberts' men as pirates and refused to trade peacefully, "[a]n Indication that these Poor Creatures, in the narrow Circumstances they were in, and without the Light of the Gospel, or the Advantage of an Education, have, notwithstanding, such a moral innate Honesty, as would upbraid and shame the most knowing Christian" (230).

The ideological underpinnings of this statement are familiar to the point of being trite. Policed here is the most essential colonial boundary—the one between the Christian colonial subject and the native in need of both spiritual and economic rescue. The noble savage is invoked, tritely, as a litmus test for true Christians (which the pirates are not). As proof of extreme and irreparable dissociation from the tenets of Christianity, the *General History* abounds in numerous references to mock repentance displayed by convicted pirates—even on the gallows, they are only wolves in sheep's clothing. Not only are pirates exposed as "other than"

proper Christians—readers who may have forgotten to condemn them on the way to the next adventure are also reprimanded. The same voice that had announced in the introduction to the *General History* its chief purpose to be the instruction of commoners in the mortal perils of turning pirate is finally making good on that promise (3).

The act of turning pirate, often revisited in the *General History*, was staged in ways which furthered the agenda of constructing essential differences between the enemy of mankind and a regular human being. The strategies for such construction were not always direct or apparent. At the end of Mary Read's story, Captain Johnson reconstructed a conversation allegedly reported by her captain and lover John Rackam. In it, the famous woman pirate embraced the hardships of the freebooter's lifestyle, saying that it attracted only the most fearless and desperate of spirits, those who often "have no Money to obtain Justice" (159). Read's apology seems to be positively sanctioned at first by the same author who will later be critical even of Roberts' motivation.

The seeming contradiction can be resolved by a close reading. Mary Read's imaginary speech, glorifying piracy as a lifestyle reserved for the truly brave and desperate, emphasized the singular fearlessness and lack of morality one must possess in order to be a successful high-seas robber. Paradoxically, by keeping the romantic streak in Mary Read and Anne Bonney's stories and portraying them as fabulous lionesses of the cutlass, Captain Johnson did not stray from his didactic purpose—the implication is that only exceptionally brave and morally warped individuals were cut out for such a lifestyle while weaklings like Avery, Stede Bonnet, and the dear reader would surely find their swift nemesis. Thus, both tendencies of glorifying and demonizing in the *General History* worked together towards the goal of branding the pirate figure as a separate species and, in due course, a sacrificial landing site for contemporary transgressive desires.

6. 4. "AT LIBERTY, THOUGH... NAKED, AND DESTITUTE": A RADICAL AND AN ALTERNATIVE STATESMAN

The first two chapters of *Buccaneers of America* relate the story of Exquemelin's coming to Tortuga as an indentured servant in the service of the French West India Company. Having been abused by a cruel master for two years, Exquemelin was resold to a kind one and was finally able to regain his freedom. The first English translation of 1784 has him intimate the following at the end of Chapter Two:

Being now at liberty, though like unto *Adam*, when he was first Created by the hands of his maker, that is naked, and destitute, of all human necessaries, nor knowing how to get my living, I determined to enter into the wicked Order of the Pirates, or Robbers at Sea. Into this Society, I was received, with common consent both of the Superior, and Vulgar sort... (*E1* 22)

Brown's translation also contains the reference to Adam, but instead of "the wicked Order of the Pirates, or Robbers at Sea" has him "join the privateers, or buccaneers," a much more neutral word choice (*E3* 34). Since Brown is far more faithful to the Dutch text, it would seem that this important introduction in *E1* is a residue from Don de Buena-Maison's translation. William Crooke and his translator, struggling in the preface to present Morgan and his men as exemplars of British valor, may have overlooked this instance of vilification, either unintentionally or with the secret goal of exploiting the controversy.

Exquemelin presents his initiation into the buccaneer order most dramatically, through a biblical analogy between himself and Adam. Clearly, he rationalizes his turning buccaneer as seizing the only means of subsistence available to him at the time. But there is much more here: buried in that seemingly humble reference to being stripped of all basic necessities is also a white Christian male colonial subject's appeal to divine entitlement. Adam was enfranchised by his

maker to preside over all the creatures and fruits of Creation. Exemplified by the plentitudes of the Caribbean which Exquemelin will take great care to catalog, this bountiful Creation promised to his great forefather had so far proven out of his reach. As a former indented servant stripped down by the grind of the early plantation economy, Exquemelin could think of only one way to enforce what he feels is his divine right to a share in colonial wealth.

With only recklessness as starting capital, buccaneering (in the sense of piracy) offered Exquemelin an opportunity to re-enter the nascent plantation economies of Tortuga and Hispaniola. Piracy is implicitly posited as the sole means of leveling the economic playing field for indented servants and other poor colonials who, next to their successful peers, feel “naked, and destitute, of all human necessaries.” It’s important to note that, at that time, the Frenchman was a commoner who had yet to acquire surgical skills and literary aspirations. Like the anonymous buccaneer under Sharp, he doesn’t dwell too much on his motives for turning pirate and seems to feel little remorse.

In Johnson’s *General History*, the perspective of the disenfranchised colonial taking the distribution of wealth into his own hands was voiced repeatedly although the middle-class author usually refuses to endorse it. Captain Lowther is one of the pirates in Volume One whose career began as the head of a justified mutiny. He helped the starved and underpaid crew of the *Gambia-Castle* overthrow the avaricious merchants and factors of James’s Island in Africa. At that time, Lowther was the second mate of Captain Massey. The two soon “resolved upon Measures to curb the Power that controul’d them, and to provide for themselves after another Manner.” Lowther told the mutinous crew that “they had a good Ship under them, a Parcel of brave Fellows in her, that it was not their Business to starve, or be made Slaves; and therefore, if they were all of his Mind, they should seek their Fortunes upon the Seas, as other Adventurers had done before them” (Johnson 305-7).

As in Exquemelin, turning pirate in the story of Captain Lowther is synonymous to finding a new kind of freedom, not just basic sustenance. This idea, broached in a score of imaginary speeches from famous pirates constructed by Johnson to heighten the drama of turning pirate, reaches its culmination in the near-fable of Captain Misson. At the inception of the utopian pirate state of Libertalia, Johnson relates the ‘dangerous’ arguments of Seigneur Caraccioli: “the vast Difference betwixt Man and Man, the one wallowing in Luxury, and the other in the most pinching Necessity, was owing only to Avarice and Ambition on the one Hand, and a pusillanimous Subjection on the other” (390). We are reminded here of Cox’s jokes about relieving the Spanish from the gold they had stolen from the Indians, which aimed to create a chain of Hobbesian domination that would justify acts of pillage and plunder. In 1650, Hobbes had argued in his *Leviathan* that “*Honourable* is whatsoever possession, action, or quality, is an argument and signe of Power. And therefore To be Honoured, loved, or feared of many, is Honourable; as arguments of Power.”¹⁷³ The radical element in this statement is of course its insight into the political construction of values, which vision Caraccioli takes to a dangerous extreme.

Misson’s Libertalia, a precursor of playwright Charles Johnson’s Madagascar kingdom, already operated as a modern means to strip institutional powers of their divine claims. But it must be noted that the pirate figure Misson both subverts and embodies this cynical vision of monarchic statehood. He and his men escape from the human web of domination and wealth circulation only to restage it in allegorical terms. Libertalia is quickly torn up by internal and external pressures, suggesting that Captain Johnson, unlike his namesake, seeks to discredit rather than utilize its subversive qualities. Yet, in the unmaking of the pirate utopia, voices of

¹⁷³ See Hobbes, Thomas. A. R. Waller ed. *Leviathan, Or, The Matter, Forme & Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civill*. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1904. 58.

political and economic dissent are permitted to speak directly to the reader. We are conditioned to recognize that the critique of political power and wealth distribution is warranted by the certain doom of Libertalia as a colony composed of both demonized and glorified scapegoats. The anti-hero in this most fanciful chapter in the *General History* is formed by the proto-Jekyll-and-Hide character of Misson / Caraccioli.¹⁷⁴ Condemned for his anarchic views, the pirate is nevertheless offered the chance to shine briefly as a self-made sovereign vying for true egalitarianism.

6. 5. SELF-SACRIFICIAL DESPERADO

Deprivation and desperation in Exquemelin are credited as the driving force behind many great piratical feats. The first act of piracy described in *Buccaneers of America* re-enacts the dramatic contrast between Adam's nakedness and his entitlement to all of Creation. The story of Pierre le Grand's surprising capture of a Spanish galleon establishes the most typical arc for pirate figures in popular accounts and histories: the anti-hero's extreme destitution is inverted into fabulous fortune by virtue of great courage, but also of great avarice:

And although they judged the Vessel to be far above their forces, yet the covetousness of such a pray, and the extremity of fortune, they were reduced unto, made them adventure upon such an enterprize. Being now come so near that they could not escape without danger of being all killed, the Pyrates joyntly made an oath unto their Captain Pierre le Grand, to behave themselves courageously in this attempt, without the least fear or fainting. (*EI* 81)

The language of the first English translation was remarkably evocative, linking the image of an avaricious desperado with that of the colonial investor. A play on the word "fortune" was

¹⁷⁴ The externalized, morally opposed, alter ego is a technique revisited in Defoe's *Captain Singleton* (1720) in the character of Quaker William. See Defoe, Daniel. *The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1903. 370

followed by newly charged words such as “adventure” and “enterprise.” These will have become inseparable companions of the colonial pirate figure by the time of Captain Charles Johnson. Although the author of the *General History* often used such language ironically,¹⁷⁵ just as often he used it playfully, to lend an air of legitimacy to the daring exploits of more ‘noble’ Golden Age pirates like Roberts.¹⁷⁶

Extraordinary feats of valor and military prowess, celebrated as patriotic acts in the introduction to the *Buccaneers of America (E1)*, were often explained by Exquemelin as products of desperation. Facing Panama’s superior defenses, Morgan’s men

At last reflected upon the Straits they had brought themselves into, and that now they ought, of necessity, either to fight resolutely, or die, for no Quarter could be expected from an Enemy, against whom they had committed so many Cruelties on all occasions. Hereupon they encouraged one another, and resolved either to conquer, or spend the very last drop of Blood in their Bodies. (*E1 Ggg*)

Although mostly critical of their motives and methods, Exquemelin also presented the buccaneers’ camaraderie and preparedness to die for each other, if not for a questionable cause.

The despair of the first buccaneer pirate, Pierre le Grand, had been punctuated earlier in the book by an anecdote. He reportedly ordered his surgeon to bore a hole into the boat they were using to stalk a Spanish galleon. Driven by despair, the twenty-eight starved pirates swarmed the decks of the big ship and captured it “with almost all facility imaginable” (*E3 80*). The source of this anecdote is said to be “the journal of a reliable person” (*E3 67*). Later, during

¹⁷⁵ In one instance, Davis’ men, previously described as conducting themselves “like Heroes” during the daring infiltration of Fortress Gambia, are said to have “minded their Business, that is, they fell to plundering...” (Johnson 173).

¹⁷⁶ For example, Roberts, having cunningly taken the flagship of a 42-sail Portuguese fleet, is said to have “saluted [the Captain] after a friendly Manner, telling him, that they were Gentlemen of Fortune, but that their Business with him, was only to be informed which was the richest Ship in that Fleet...” (Johnson 204).

Morgan's campaigns against Porto Bello and Panama, genuinely starved buccaneers would march swiftly through rugged terrain, shoot with deadly precision, and overcome unfathomable odds (*E3* 187-9).

Though the French surgeon was highly critical of his subjects, his text was the first to introduce to European audiences the buccaneer as an extraordinary combatant who is "infinitely dexterous at shooting with Guns" (*E1* Ggg). Fabulous assaults became characteristic of the buccaneer genre—desperation-driven triumphs over the Spanish were repeatedly hyperbolized by De Lussan, Sharp and his men. In Johnson, by contrast, starvation and thirst often came as divine punishment for those who, like the crew of Captain Roberts, "give themselves up to all the Pleasures that Luxury and Wantonness could bestow." Hastily leaving their lair on the significantly named Devil's Island (off the coast of Africa) to chase after a Portuguese prize, they were providentially thwarted by "contrary Winds and Currents" and so "like *Tantalus*, they almost famished in Sight of the fresh Streams and Lakes" (Johnson 205-6).

The polarities encompassed by buccaneer figures in de Lussan, Labat, and Exquemelin, include piety as well as desecration, transgression as well as confession, resulting in an image arrested somewhere between a pestilence and a scourge. Johnson's pirates, by contrast, seem much more callous and pragmatic, resorting to prayer only on the gallows or during storms, otherwise worshipping gold alone. Critical of mock repentance, Johnson clearly favored unrepentant and defiant pirate figures like Thomas Morris and Mary Read, both of whom were prepared to die the way they lived and expired with memorable quotes on their lips. These representations are in keeping with the notion that the scapegoat must embody chaos and defiance for his or her sacrifice to restore tranquility. The figure of the unrepentant pirate would have a long life in fiction. When Defoe's Avery in *The King of Pyrates* introduces his men as

“good, honest, Christian pirates,” he does so “jestingly.”¹⁷⁷ Like John Quelch and Thomas Morris, Defoe’s Avery poked fun at the trite discourse on his damnation, embracing it with humor, if not glee. He is an agent of chaos but because he is firmly set on a path to self-annihilation, a critique of the colonial Christian subject becomes permissible, even necessary.

As befits products of a middle-class author, Johnson’s desperado pirates tend to derive most of their courage from greed and recklessness, not from lack of honest employment. His middle-class scorn is visible even at times when his material suggests motives other than effeminate whim, greed, or bloodlust. On one occasion Roberts’ men, volunteering to lead a charge against a merchant ship, are described thus: “[T]he stanch and firm men offer themselves because, by such Readiness, they recommend their Courage, and have an Allowance also of a Shift of Cloaths, from Head to Foot, out of the Prize” (Johnson 231). The diction bears clear notes of irony, poking fun at the high value common sailors placed on a full set of clothes and turning an act of courage into an act of lower-class vanity. The claim that some sailors turn pirate to seek vengeance against cruel officers is subject to similar trivialization. Captain England’s men are said to have sunk entire ships and cargoes “out of Wantonness, or because they were displeas’d at the Master’s Behavior” (134).

Johnson is much more inclined than Exquemelin to believe that most pirates set out “to satisfy their Avarice only” (334). In the chapter on Lowther, he blames the Royal African Company for creating the harsh conditions in which the second mate’s mutiny blossomed. Yet, he also remarks that the crew was “ripe for any Mischief in the World,” soon resolving to “attack the French Settlements, and bring aboard the Devil and all of Plunder” (*The King of Pirates* 305-9).

¹⁷⁷ See Defoe, Daniel. “The King of Pirates.” *The Works of Daniel Defoe*, Vol. 16. New York: George D. Sproul, 1904. 65.

At other times in the *General History*, it is as if a different author interjected constructed speeches in which pirates like Mary Read come very close to voicing a coherent social critique. Was turning pirate an act of warranted economic and political subversion or a deliberate plunge into base depravity and debauchery? This fundamental question, posed by the buccaneering accounts of the late seventeenth century, had become by the time of the *General History* not a paradox to be resolved but a mode of continuous narration and perpetual ritualistic sacrifice. The prime example of this kind of anti-heroic portrayal (and the culmination of our analysis) was Captain Johnson's Bartholomew Roberts. This hero of scarlet and gold, of depravity and shining wisdom, was based on the same historical figure that would later function as the shadow of evil rising from the ashes of Snelgrave's Captain Davis.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7. 1. A FINAL CASE STUDY: EXQUEMELIN'S MORGAN VS. JOHNSON'S ROBERTS

Of all the colorful personages in the first part of the *General History*, Hans Turley proposes Captain Roberts as the one “intended to represent all the pirates.” Indeed, Johnson himself explains the greater length of the chapter on him thus: “When we found the Circumstances in Robert’s Life, and other Pyrates, either as to pyricatical Articles, or any Thing else, to be the same, we thought it best to give them but once, and chose Roberts’s Life for that Purpose, he having made more Noise in the World, than some others“ (6). Hans Turley argues that in Roberts “Johnson finds the pirate whom he can most usefully represent as both criminal and hero” (92). In the context of our study, the choice of words in both passages is poignant.

Recalling the mimetic rivalry between Snelgrave and Davis, we may suspect that Johnson chose Roberts not for being a typical pirate but for being an excessively successful one. The ‘noisy’ performances of aggressive upward mobility we witnessed in his own correspondence with state officials, as well as the staggering number of ships he captured, would logically attract the attention of a middle-class writer like Johnson and aid his selection as a literary scapegoat. Thus, in the Roberts of the *General History*, we can expect to find an anti-hero who takes on aberrant characteristics (‘preferential signs of victimage’), selects himself for obliteration, and exhibits retroactively some of the benign powers that his (certain) sacrifice has earned him. We recall that this is our revised model of Girardian scapegoating, which accounts for the heightened ambivalence in witness representations of early colonial pirates.

In Chapter 3, we observed this dynamic at work in Snelgrave’s representation of Davis. Hans Turley proposes Defoe’s Avery in *The King of Pirates* as the earliest ‘fictional’ character in

which Johnson's Roberts was echoed. But what if the fabled captain of the Royal Fortune as imagined by Johnson was himself the echo of an earlier, less developed, anti-heroic scapegoat? Our final case study will attempt to trace the pattern of literary scapegoating from the literary representations of Henry Morgan to Johnson's treatment of Roberts.

7. 2. SELECTION

Most of our analysis has so far focused on the ways in which colonial pirates were selected as landing sites for transgressive qualities. Mather's inveterate sinners blasphemed their way out of the flock of common sailors. Snelgrave's hardened rogues tore the King's letter of pardon to pieces. Bartholomew Roberts in his own correspondence with state officials presented himself as a new kind of aristocrat—courageous, insolent, and highly successful. John Quelch bowed theatrically to his executors and accused them of being hypocritical murderers of their own greed. We saw how the fractured glorification of buccaneers as national scions and extreme entrepreneurs misfired and resulted in the construction of a new, cruel species of man.

While branded as outsider and transgressor on multiple accounts, the colonial pirate nevertheless carried the potential to express the central ethos of the colonial era. As Robert Dryden has argued, middle-class writers utilized this potential by projecting their own economic and social ambitions on a piratical foil (18-25). We saw that this process is not limited to fiction writers but also permeates accounts by witnesses like Captain William Snelgrave. Our comparative analysis of a Golden Age pirate figure and the most famous figure of the buccaneering period will enable us to recognize the beginnings of middle-class co-option. In terms of our mythical framework, this co-option constitutes a further selection of a more effective anti-heroic scapegoat out of the multitude. This individuation allowed for a literary sacrifice of much greater intensity.

Most primary sources on piracy indicate an egalitarian structure. However, in both Exquemelin and Johnson, the pirate code appears as tied to a particular captain who is extraordinary even by the standards of sea-rovers. Upon joining the ranks of Morgan's buccaneers, Exquemelin signed articles similar to the ones said to have been penned by Roberts and his lieutenants (*E3* 172-3). These regulated the distribution of spoils, the settling of scores by duel, and included generous compensation for lost limbs. The notable revisions Roberts introduced to the code were attempts to limit drinking, debauchery, and gambling (Johnson 211-2). That these revisions were arbitrarily ascribed to Roberts we can tell from Snelgrave's contradicting depiction of Davis as the virtuous pirate captain.

In both Exquemelin and Johnson, the further selection of a 'somewhat good' pirate involved the fabrication of a contrast between captain and crew. While the Malthus and Brown editions often condemn Henry Morgan together with his motley army, the Crooke translation struggled to insert a moral wedge between the two. Characterized as a "wicked Order," the buccaneer commonwealth was quickly divided by the first English translator of Exquemelin into a 'vulgar' and 'superior' sort. This reference is entirely absent from later editions.¹⁷⁸ To spare Morgan's reputation, the Crooke edition had to revive the tried discourse of essential class difference inherited from the Middle Ages and projected it upon the "wicked Order of Pirates." The gesture, coupled with the introduction's defense on the basis of aristocratic qualities, reminded English readers of the natural ascendance of aristocracy, a rule so universal that it should be valid even among sea robbers. Although he is not specifically identified as 'superior,' Morgan is the chief beneficiary of this insertion. The casual reference to a 'vulgar' and 'superior' sort reminds us of Spenser's reflection on the difference in 'stock' that Crooke's translator had brought up in the introduction regarding Morgan's noble origins.

¹⁷⁸ Compare *E1* (Crooke) 22 and *E3* (Brown) 34.

In brave poursuitt of honorable deed,
There is I know not what great difference
Betweene the vulgar and the noble seed,
Which unto things of valorous pretence
Seemes to be borne by native influence¹⁷⁹

Proof of E1's sleight of hand in matters pertaining to Morgan's morality is also visible in the opening of Part III. Brown's translation (*E3*) has the author muse on God's decision to permit "the unrighteousness of the buccaneers to flourish, for the chastisement of the Spaniards" (167). Morgan's wickedness, in the eyes of an exiled French Huguenot whose loyalties lay neither with England nor with Spain, was God's mysterious way of countering the wickedness of the Spanish nation. The buccaneer leader's amoral compass in this passage is fully aligned with that of his underlings. *E3* has Morgan perceive rather shrewdly that "his men had squandered the Maracaibo booty" and were once more ripe for persuasion, ready to sail on a new piratical campaign (*Ibid.*).

In *E1*, the presentation is fundamentally altered. Morgan's good luck is attributed to divine endorsement, culminating in a great triumph—the torching of Panama. Obliterating controversy, the first English translator has Exquemelin trumpet that "nothing more deserving Memory, may occur to be read by future Ages" (*Aaa*). Immediately following is another distortion: Morgan is said to have been compelled by his debauched "Officers and Souldiers" to launch a new campaign, much against his will. The ingenious leader obeyed not out of greed but because he wished to reclaim his men from the clutches of idleness and vice, forming once more a regular army out of degenerate scum (*E1 Aa2*).

¹⁷⁹ See Spenser, Edmund. "The Faerie Queene." *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*. Ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. Vols. 3-6. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P., 1947. 43.

To persuade the audience that Morgan was an exceptional leader of the rank of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, the first English translator was prepared to tone down another myth – the black legend of Spanish degeneracy. Claiming that “whosoever derogateth from the Valour of the *Spaniards* in the *West-Indies*, diminisheth in like manner the Courage of the *Bucaniers*, his own Country-men,” Crooke’s translator went to great lengths to debunk the misconception of feeble and cowardly Spanish garrisons. The world he painted was very similar to that of Bartholomew Sharp’s account—valiant caballeros nobly defeated by an English gentleman of superior stock (*EI* a2).

Radically rewriting the text to follow, Exquemelin’s first translator was nevertheless unable to filter out the brutal nature of Morgan’s buccaneers even in his own introduction. A celebration of the Spanish governor of Charge’s refusal to beg for quarter also involved the concession that the buccaneers had burned down the town and slain everyone around him (*EI* a). By invoking such atrocities and failing to redeem those who committed them, the introduction to the Crooke edition amplified the anti-heroic qualities of buccaneers and of their foremost leader. Similarly, Johnson had to contend with the report of a burnt slave ship when composing his ambivalent portrayal of Roberts.

The desired effect of *EI*’s liberties with the Dutch edition was a portrayal of Morgan as an aloof figure reminiscent of Defoe’s Captain Singleton and Byron’s Corsair. A naturally noble and clearly talented leader, he was often (regrettably) unable to curb the riff-raff under his command. This pattern is preserved in Johnson’s Roberts, who is said to have brought the law, and even music, into the life of a sinful and debauched crew. He is characterized “worshipful” while his “Combination” was condemned as “abominable.” Like the Morgan of Crooke’s edition and Snelgrave’s Davis, the Roberts of the *General History* attempts to curb the base instincts of his men, “for nothing is so deplorable as Power in mean and ignorant Hands” (212-3; 216).

Democratically elected out of their midst for his “Knowledge and Boldness,” Roberts is also a moral degree above his crew, insisting that he carry out all punishments in order to take power “out of the Hands of a much more rash and mad Sett of Fellows than himself” (214).

Humble origin was a feature that the characters of Roberts and Morgan (in Exquemelin’s rendition) shared. Introduced as the son of a Welsh yeoman, Morgan was depicted as an impoverished member of the “middling sort” who found fame and fortune in the West Indies. Readers of Exquemelin would have seen him rise from an indentured servant to the post of a Lt. Governor—a feat which many would have liked to duplicate. Yet, the introductions to the first two editions of *The Buccaneers of America* significantly avoided capitalizing on the “rags to riches” story that would have appealed to the lower classes. Instead, they opted for the formula of high birth reclaimed, which was more likely to appeal to middle-class readers who could afford to purchase the book.

In the 1720’s, the process of middle-class appropriation was well underfoot and there seemed to be less need to explain Roberts’ more noble impulses through high birth. He was sufficiently set apart from his men on the grounds of education, devotion, moral sense, and by virtue of his qualities as an effective captain of a colonial ship. All of these qualities marked him as an aspiring middle-class professional. Of his origins, we learn only that he was “a tall black [*i.e.* dark complexioned] Man... born at *Newey-bagh*, nigh *Haverford West*” (244). The external characteristics of height and complexion receive cursory treatment compared to Roberts’ many qualities—his physical body acts as a ‘contrasty’ canvass upon which the anti-hero’s ambivalent qualities will eventually manifest themselves in the shape of extravagant clothes and accessories.

From the high horse of an actual middle-class professional, Captain Johnson at once projected and mocked the pirate captain’s burning desire for class ascendance and power. Concerning the former second mate’s initial reluctance to turn pirate, he remarked that “what he

did not like as a private Man he could reconcile to his Conscience as a Commander.” Immediately after, we are treated to a scene in which pirates “distinguish’d [themselves] by the Title of Lords,” parodying the mimetic rivalry of upward mobility that preoccupied their middle-class readers (194). In this and other performances, Roberts is said to have emerged as “the Life and Soul of the Gang,” a characterization that prepares readers for his special immolation. This completes the construction of Roberts as a piratical foil of a middle-class professional—an effective tool for textual rehearsal and purging of the transgressive desires accompanying a mimetic rivalry for class ascendance.

7. 3. CERTAINTY OF DEATH

The next step in the formation of the anti-heroic pirate captain involves a reinscription of the self-destruction motif on the ‘superior’ plain of tragedy. Snelgrave’s Davis, we recall, echoed his crew’s damnation with the sensibility of a modern individual: “I am for allowing every body to go to the Devil in their own way” (242). This is the missing link in Morgan’s portrayal and perhaps the reason why his mythmaking never enjoyed lasting success. While *The Buccaneers of America* and other similar narratives abound with examples of self-destructive behavior on and off the battlefield, these strange sacrifices had not been processed sufficiently by the culture into a digestible or even comprehensible ritual. In 1699, Thomas Newborough expressed his astonishment “that men should run such extream [sic.] hazards and hardships for money, and make so little use of it when got.” In 1728, looking back at a long legacy of performative excess and waste, Johnson was able to have. Roberts and his men simply reach for “a merry Life, and a short one” (244).

Though historically the perils of Golden Age piracy seem to have paled in comparison to even the most trivial buccaneering raid, it took several decades for self-destructiveness to be recognized as a pivoting point in representations of piratical performances. In preparation for

Roberts' great exit, Johnson writes: "how rarely [pirates] escape the Punishment due to their Crimes." His own crew is said to have entertained the idea of going 'all merrily to Hell together,' a phrase significantly recycled by William Snelgrave (Johnson 217). Like Mary Read before him, Johnson's Roberts "would not have the Punishment less than Death" (159). To decline sacrifice, to even question the voluntary nature of his march, would jeopardize his effectiveness as a tragic anti-hero and literary scapegoat. The "Defiance of Death it self" said to have been "intimated" by Roberts' flag is in fact the affirmation of a pact, not between the pirate and the Grim Reaper but rather between Johnson and his readers, for whose moral instruction he claims to have penned this most striking figure (168). Roberts' sacrifice is a 'collective murder' in the sense that readers are invited to become accessories and glean individual tranquility through the shared immolation of a disruptive piratical effigy.

As in Snelgrave's narrative, common pirates form a contrasting background to Roberts' significant sacrifice. A sailor named Sutton is said to have exclaimed "*Give me Hell, it's a merrier Place: I'll give Roberts a Salute of 13 guns at Entrance*" (246). The common pirate Kennedy, struck by "*impending Law*" is said to have been executed like a "sad dog" (210). These scenes are far from accidental: Sutton's words affirm self-selection and guarantee the certainty of damnation. Kennedy's 'inconsequential' execution assures readers that legal order will be restored as part of the greater restoration of communal tranquility.

The fact that several pirate figures must prepare the ground for an effective symbolic sacrifice indicates that even in this most intense textual setting, the mythmaking of the Golden Age pirate was a fragmented process. Part of this fragmentation, according to Deborah Lynn

Porter, is due to the written tradition itself, which brought with it “an inability to read the whole text at once without recontextualizing.”¹⁸⁰

Framed by these significant departures, Roberts is afforded perhaps the most fabulous exit in the *General History*. Like a true tragic hero, he has prescience that his men will bring him down: “he saw the greatest Part of his Men were drunk, passively courageous, unfit for Service.” Like Morgan before him, and Byron’s corsair long after, he stands out from his ignoble surroundings:

Roberts himself made a gallant Figure, at the Time of the Engagement, being dressed in a rich crimson Damask Wastcoat and Breeches, a red Feather in his Hat, a Gold Chain round his Neck, with a Diamond Cross hanging to it, a Sword in his Hand, and two Pair of Pistols hanging at the End of a Silk Sling, slung over his Shoulders (according to the Fashion of the Pyrates;) and is said to have given his Orders with Boldness, and Spirit; (243)

Johnson chooses not to reveal the exact manner of Roberts’ death, perhaps to arrest him in this perpetual pose of gallant self-destruction. According to Girard, “the conditions favorable to [symbolic] thought coincide with the death of the surrogate victim. Men’s minds turn back to the miracle in order to perpetuate or renew it” (*Violence and the Sacred* 235). Since this is a literary demise, these favorable conditions can be extended indefinitely through the simple technique of suspension.

Most contemporary readers have probably seen Roberts’ lavish crimson-and-gold attire on rum labels carrying the name of Captain Morgan. It is a curious fate for the macabre buccaneer leader to be enlisted in what Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson call “lighthearted”

¹⁸⁰ See Porter, Deborah Lynn. *From Deluge to Discourse: Myth, History, and the Generation of Chinese Fiction*. New York: Albany State University of New York Press, 1996. 146.

marketing of “outlaw brands” but it is perhaps a fitting one since he, unlike Roberts, survived to reap the benefits from his exploits.¹⁸¹

For all its lightheartedness, the popular splicing of these two pirate figures points to a deeper connection between them. While Morgan’s portrayal lacked the necessary element of self-sacrifice, it was nevertheless integrated into an iconic colonial pirate figure because it set the parameters of a highly controversial and highly readable modern anti-hero that subsequent representations struggled to reinterpret in a culturally acceptable fashion. The solution was not to hail the pirate figure as a national scion, extreme entrepreneur, or hypermasculine folk hero, but instead to rehearse these and other, much more transgressive, cultural scenarios ‘after the fact’ of the pirate’s certain death.

7. 4. SECOND TRANSFERENCE OF THE SACRED

If we had not been familiar with Girard’s suggestion that after the sacrifice an effective scapegoat may be “revealed as a founding ancestor or a divinity,” we would be hard pressed to explain how early twentieth century historian Luke Owen Pike would conclude from having read the Roberts story that:

He was among pirates what Richard Coeur de Lion was among crusaders—a valiant slayer of men himself, and a stern enforcer of discipline among his crew. Like Richard, he carried with him a set of rules for the government of the men who served under him ; and his rules were curiously like the rules of Richard, though, if all of them have been preserved, they were certainly more merciful.¹⁸²

While Johnson himself was more sparing in praise, he did allow Roberts and his men to embody in their transgressive performances benign powers of near-mythical magnitude. Even

¹⁸¹ See Mark, Margaret. Pearson, Carol. *The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2001. 131.

¹⁸² See Pike, Luke Owen. *A History of Crime in England*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1876. 267.

while poking fun at one of the self-titled pirate lords who made a motion, “it’s said, over a Bowl,” he applauded the democratic principles of the floating commonwealth that was about to elect Roberts as their leader. He pointed out “[t]hat it was not of any great Signification who was dignify’d with Title; for really and in Truth, all good Governments had (like theirs) the supream Power lodged with the Community, who might doubtless depute and revoke” (194). Later in the same chapter, Johnson would go so far as to say that justice on the decks of the *Royal Fortune* was unburdened by “bribing of Witnesses,” “unintelligible canting Terms,” and “numberless Officers, the Ministers of Rapine and Extortion” (222).

The culmination of this imagined political idyll, and perhaps additional inspiration behind Pike’s reading of Roberts as a brilliant head of state, occurred later in Johnson—in the chapter on Captain Misson. His lieutenant Caraccioli, the mastermind behind the utopian pirate state Libertalia, imagined a leader who “allowed nothing but Merit to distinguish between Man and Man; and instead of being a Burthen to the People by his luxurious Life, he was by his Care for, and Protection of them, a real Father” (Johnson 392-3). Misson fails to live up to these high expectations but it is significant that a pirate commonwealth provides the background for a political critique of modern statehood. It is also significant that the author himself labels this critique as “too dangerous to translate,” while nevertheless proceeding to ‘translate’ it. Allowed to shine momentarily as a potential founding father and “Sovereign of the Southern Seas,” Misson is disposed of swiftly, but not before he manages to convert peacefully fourteen French Huguenots with the powerful promise of political, religious, and individual freedom (391; 400).

Although the historical context did not allow the pirates of the Golden Age to pass as national heroes, the urge to romanticize and heroicize pirate was very much part of Captain Johnson’s portrayal. Speaking from ‘beyond the grave,’ Roberts and Misson were only some of the fabled characters that Johnson allowed to emanate benign powers in the shape of civil order,

economic justice, and ideal egalitarianism. Posing as the most courageous of colonial risk-takers, parodying corrupt courts, calling themselves Lords, perilously liberating the passions from the reins of Christian morality, Johnson's defiant pirate figures also operated as a cultural repository for subversive ideas in a much more radical way than John Gay's highwaymen and beggars. The new species of colonial pirate first depicted by Exquemelin as a sworn enemy to the rich and degenerate Spaniard had become an enemy—and a foil—to any contemporary reader who wished to become accessory to the collective literary sacrifice of an imagined, overly successful and excessively disruptive, textual effigy.

On the pages of the *General History* much more so than on the world's oceans, the colonial pirate earned his title of a *Hostis humanis generis*. Drawing from a multiplicity of witness reports with variously charged mythical spin, Johnson's compendium arrived at a colorful anti-hero whose excesses provided colonial writers and readers with ample opportunity to transgress unpunished and restore their tranquility through a carefully staged textual purgation.

7. 5. IN SUMMARY

Our textual journey began with a relatively simple question: Were colonial pirates indeed mythologized? In Chapter 3, we answered positively, having established in the preceding chapter on methodology limitations having to do with the early modern defragmentation of cultural homogeneity, and consequently of myth. We went on to identify elements of mythmaking even in witness reports and historical accounts such as court depositions and personal narratives. Our analysis of letters by Henry Avery and Bartholomew Roberts, as well as of depositions surrounding Captain Bellamy, led to the surprising realization that many pirates themselves were implicated in the construction of an iconic colonial pirate figure. Their imaginings were not exclusively along the lines of self-aggrandizement—sailors on trial tended to adopt the official

perception of a devil incarnate in order to convince the judge that they had been pressed. This literal scapegoating of a fellow seaman formed only part of the variegated performances delivered by historical pirates and interpreted in witness reports.

In the second part of Chapter 3, we focused on John Quelch's memorable final bow which afforded us with opportunities to examine the social layering of ambivalent pirate portrayal. While demonized and scapegoated by New England clergy and aristocracy, Quelch and his mates were perceived as beneficial folk heroes by some colonial commoners who wept under the gallows. Encouraged by the crowd's response, the condemned pirate's final words exposed the hypocrisies of a ruling class which reaped the benefits of unchecked colonial plunder while disposing of its unseemly agents. We traced this unspoken policy to Commons proposals for the pardoning of Madagascar pirates. We also identified a legal rhetoric aimed at branding the colonial pirate not only as an especially hardened criminal but as another species.

The extreme selection of the Golden Age pirate as a *Hostis humanis generis* was only one of several tendencies whose roots we traced back to earlier texts from the buccaneering period. While buccaneers were imagined by others as furies, bloodthirsty beasts of burden, or ferocious tigers, they imagined themselves as mercenaries in the service of a Golden Emperor, liberators of Amerindians, and mythical heroes on a journey through hell. But even the craftiest chroniclers could not conceal the fact that this hell was of their own making, posing a moral quandary for publishers and readers in London and Paris. We suggested that the resolution of this quandary was found not in the nomination of buccaneers as national heroes, but rather in the gradual refinement of a formula through which the transgressive acts of a piratical colonial subject could be enjoyed safely by predominantly middle-class readerships. This formula was the textual scapegoating and imagined self-sacrifice through which this extreme colonial anti-hero earned

the right to embody positive qualities such as courage and prowess, and embody such beneficial abstractions as justice, equality, and freedom.

Having nominated William Snelgrave's 1734 depiction of Davis as a culmination in the literary scapegoating of historical pirate figures, we attempted a reverse engineering of this construction. In Chapter 3, our goal was to locate instances of selection and imaginary self-damnation in archival sources. We also attempted to determine (as much as possible) the historical conditions and processes which generated opportunities for the selection of pirates as unusually controversial and culturally relevant colonial actors. In Chapter 4, we identified precursors of the glorified and romanticized pirate figure in the accounts by Sharp's men. We also identified an emphasis on self-destruction which would later be amplified in order to complete the scapegoating formula. In Chapter 5, we let de Lussan's readers testify further to the power of myth as a vessel for individual and political agendas.

In both chapters on buccaneers, we paid particular attention to slippages of extreme violence which compelled the authors and their publishers to resort to desperate rhetorical strategies. Their failures resulted in the heightened ambivalence of the buccaneer figure and demanded its subsequent reinterpretation in the Golden Age pirate. This continuity was examined further in Chapter 6, which juxtaposed the two major texts of each period: A. O. Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* and Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pirates*. We saw a continuation in the othering (or selection) of the sea rover, and perceived increased emphasis on self-damnation. We also saw developments in romanticizing—the heroic Golden Age pirate was contrasted to the dark buccaneer and the pirate captain was further selected as an especially tragic anti-heroic figure. In Chapter 7, we argued that Exquemelin's Captain Morgan was the unsuccessful textual prototype for Johnson's Captain Roberts in that his infamy highlighted the need for complete self-immolation before glorification can occur safely.

Following Robert Dryden's argument, we presented Johnson's Roberts and Snelgrave's Davis as examples of middle-class re-appropriation for the specific consumption of readers who could imagine colonial pirates as extremely successful and transgressive social climbers. However, we have tried to suggest that the literary scapegoating of the anti-hero can serve a number of other ideological goals. For instance, In 3. 5. 1. and 4. 6. we argued that the romanticized transgressiveness of a hero-villain afforded opportunities for juvenilia writers to stage anti-heroic self-sacrifice as a coming of age ritual. In Chapter 6, we pointed out that certainty of death enabled piratical figures to stage and voice social and political discontentment that sometimes originated from commoners. Granted, the celebration of Johnson's Roberts and Misson as alternative statesmen may have been exclusively a projection by middle-class intellectuals. But the mockery of a court trial by Anstis and his men, like Quelch's accusation, the unapologetic confession of the anonymous buccaneer under Sharp, and the affront to Mathew issued by Bartholomew Sharp are all examples of truly subversive performances in the service of lower-class empowerment. In all of these instances, 'a defiance of death itself' enables and empowers colonial pirates to revise the very social order they are imagined to have undermined in their excesses, an order they have been selected to restore through literary immolation.

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