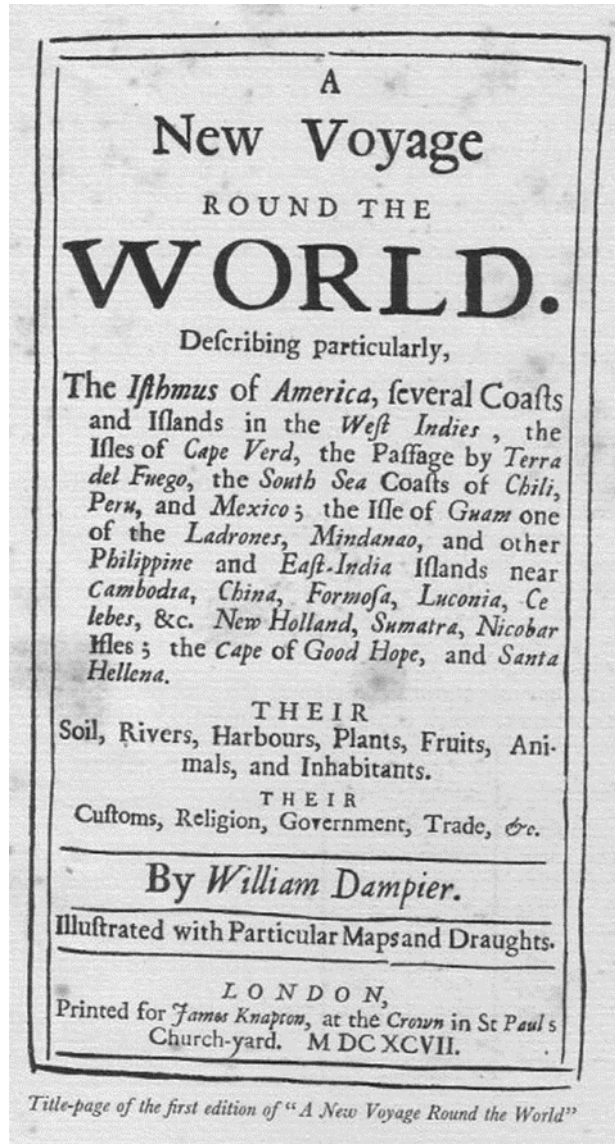


## Early Modern Nationalism

### *The Influence of William Dampier's Travel Journals*



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## Introduction

The dominant view within the nationalistic, historical discourse has been formulated by Benedict Anderson, who was professor emeritus international studies at Cornell University. In his book *Imagined Communities* from 1983, he explores the origins of nationalism back to the early nineteenth century. Anderson states that after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, nationalistic tendencies by nation states led to the creation of large, imaginative communities. With this Anderson refers to the national communities arising in this period as being created on a supposed shared, national identity between inhabitants of a state, forming cohesion in identity as a population without the members knowing one another on a personal basis.<sup>1</sup>

However, other voices plead that states showed nationalistic tendencies much earlier than argued by Anderson. Philosopher Manuel DeLanda, author of *A new philosophy of society*, places the emergence of nationalism in the seventeenth century, more precisely in 1648 at the Treaty of West Phalia.<sup>2</sup> From this moment on, states internationally committed themselves to the concept of state sovereignty advanced by Jean Bodin in 1576 in his work *Les six livres de la République*.<sup>3</sup> At this point state-territories and their boundaries became more defined. The peace treaty put sovereignty into practice by the use of legal definitions limiting states in Europe to their determined size and consolidating them.

DeLanda's thesis is best supported by the deliberate attempts of rising colonial powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, such as England, France and the Netherlands, to discredit Spain in order to promote and effectuate their own colonial empires. Spain held by far the most overseas territories, monopolized global trade and controlled the world's silver trade. By antagonizing Spain, countries could at the same time define themselves as a nation and a people through the process of 'othering'.<sup>4</sup> By creating an opposition between nations, aspiring imperialistic powers tried to constrain the might and power of Spain but they also created their own identity as an opposite to what should define Spain as a nation and the Spaniards as a people. This process of self-

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983), 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Manuel DeLanda, *A new philosophy of society* (London, 2006), 94-119.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Brodin, *Les six livres de la République*, (Paris, 1576).

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 113-185.

definition by antagonizing Spain has been shown by the analysis of translations of Spanish texts which were often bound with other state-promoting publications and pamphlets and spread throughout upcoming colonial powers England, France and the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup>

In order to strengthen the argument for the emergence of nationalism in England before the 1800s one should be able to identify nationalistic tendencies in the form of political imagery in other texts or publications as well, such as newspapers, diaries and journals. Ego documents describing interaction between different states should give proof of a sense of nationalism. This essay focuses on William Dampier's travel journals to illustrate that nationalistic thought was already seeping down through English society way before 1815. By analysing Dampier's journal, this thesis tries to indicate its political influence on the society of eighteenth-century England.

First, this paper covers a biography of William Dampier to gain insight in his life and political engagement to see whether any possible imaging on his part was deliberate. Secondly, the choice for the genre of travel writing will be explained as well as the choice for Dampier's work. In addition, the popularity of Dampier's journals will be discussed to display the reach of the publication. The essay will then look into earlier research on Dampier's journal and discuss its influence on and contributions to various (non-political) disciplines before finally politically analysing the journals to see whether they contain political messages that may or may not have influenced England's political discourse in the eighteenth century. The central research question of this paper is: the following:

*'What was the influence of William Dampier's travel journals on the cultural, scientific and in particular political discourse of eighteenth century England?'*

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<sup>5</sup> Luna Najera and Niels Faber, 'Early Modern Expressions of Nationhood in French and Dutch Translations of Bartolomé de Las Casas' *Brevísima relación*', *Traversea Transatlantic Journal* 4 (Texas, 2014), 34-41.

## 1. The life and work of William Dampier

*"The world is apt to judge of everything by the success; and whoever has ill fortune will hardly be allowed a good name"*<sup>6</sup>

- William Dampier

### Biography

Not much is known about the early life of William Dampier. From his baptism records we know he was born in East Coker, Somerset in 1651 or 1652.<sup>7</sup> He received an education at King's School, a boarding school situated in Bruton, close to Dampier's place of birth. Orphaned at the age of sixteen he embarked on several merchant ships to the west on trading missions. In 1673 he joined the Royal English Navy only to return to England a couple years later to recuperate from a tropical illness. He returned to the West-Indies as an entrepreneur but after several failed business projects he resigned to life at sea in 1678 to join Captain Bartholomew Sharp and his crew of so-called Buccaneers who were busy capturing ships and coastal towns in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.<sup>8</sup> Buccaneer is synonymous with pirate. From the island bases, unlicensed traders operated throughout the area. Some of them were clearly 'pirates', preying not only on Spanish vessels, as their commission dictated, but on shipping of all nations. They came to be known as 'buccaneers' from their outdoors life-style, grilling meat from wild cattle over a *boucan* or grill placed over an open fire.<sup>9</sup>

Sharp and Dampier's crew was predominantly English but the party also existed out of Scottish, Dutch, French and even Spanish and Indian sailors. It was a ragged band of experienced seafarers and fighters joined together in the common cause of opportunistically plundering as much wealth from the New World as possible in order to enrich themselves. Most pirates were in fact English *privateers*; meaning they were in possession of a commission from the King, or *Letter of the Marque*, which allowed them basically to plunder any foreign ships the Crown was not allied with. Usually the main target were Spanish possessions because of their dominant presence in the Americas.

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<sup>6</sup> William Dampier, *A voyage to New Holland* (London, 1703), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Clennel Wilkinson, *William Dampier; Explorer and buccanneer* (New York, 1929), 11-13

<sup>8</sup> Philip Edwards, *The story of the voyage: Sea-Narratives in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2014), 18-20.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain became a World Empire, 1492-1763* (New York, 2003), 427.

The practice of turning pirates into privateers was common in this era. Privateering was authorized by the state and thus legal, while piracy carried no state authorization and was disciplined.<sup>10</sup>

In short, Dampier's journey took him through the Caribbean, across the isthmus of modern day panama, through the South Pacific, around Australia and through South-East Asia back to England via Cape of Good Hope. He became a captain of his own ship for the first time in 1687. On his first trip around the world he suffered several shipwrecks and illnesses, dealt with mutiny, got marooned and barely managed to get back to his homeland alive. When he finally returned in 1691 he was broke but he had held on to his journals.<sup>11</sup>

A close friend of Dampier, James Knapton, was a well-known publisher in London. Until 1697 he had focused on printing and publishing fiction, in particular ancient classics and famous playwrights like Homer and Shakespeare.<sup>12</sup> He had read the incredible story of Dampier's journey and was fascinated by it. Earlier publications like this were quite popular, starting with the translation in 1684 of the original Dutch work *Buccaneers of America* from 1678 and the account of Dampier's travel companion Bartholomew Sharpe in *Voyages* in 1684.<sup>13</sup> <sup>14</sup> Dampier's journal was Knapton's first venture into travel journals and he would not publish anything else until the end of his life. Dampier had also brought back a slave covered in tattoos. He and Knapton exhibited this slave as Prince Jeoly, which helped Dampier add credibility to and gain publicity for his stories while his travel diary was in press besides providing him some income.<sup>15</sup> The reception of Dampier's first publication in 1697, *A new voyage around the world*, was sensational. The first edition went flying off the shelves and was followed by two editions that sold out in the same year. Since then it has been repeatedly republished through the centuries even until now, the latest edition stemming from as late as 2007.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the English government was cracking down hard on piracy. England was allied with Spain in the Nine Years' war against France and acts of piracy by fellow

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<sup>10</sup> Angus Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History* (Oxford, 2008), 131-136.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Beattie, *British privateering voyages of the early eighteenth century* (Woodbridge, 2015), 53-70.

<sup>12</sup> James Knapton, *Books printed for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard*, (Farmington Hills, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin, *Americaensche zee-roovers* (Amsterdam 1678).

<sup>14</sup> Philip Ayres, *The voyages and adventures of Captain Bartholomew Sharp* (Oxford, 1684).

<sup>15</sup> Geraldine Barnes, 'Curiosity, Wonder, and William Dampier's Painted Prince', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 6:1 (Philadelphia, 2006), 31-50.

<sup>16</sup> William Dampier, *Memoirs of a buccaneer, Dampier's new voyage round the world, 1697*, (Dover, 2007).

countrymen against allies were unwanted. Nonetheless, they were aware of the damage bands of pirates could do to the imperial aspirations of competitive nations.

Furthermore, several captains showed considerable skills the Royal Navy could use and Dampier in particular had impressed the English government with his accurate reports. The scientific value of his travel journals and his experience in sailing and battle encouraged the King to give Dampier a commission for another journey. While other buccaneers faced trials for crimes of piracy, Dampier gained command of the HMS *Roebuck* for an exploring expedition to New Holland (Australia). In 1699, the year in which Dampier's second book *Voyages and Descriptions* is published, he sails out on the *Roebuck*.<sup>17</sup>

Scientifically, the journey was a success. Dampier described and drew numerous new plant and animal species and brings back specimen. Financially, the expedition was less of a success. No loot was captured, the party got shipwrecked (again), leaving them marooned on an island of the coast of Australia for two months. On his return in England, Dampier was immediately arrested and court-martialled for cruelty. Despite his fanatic defense Dampier was found guilty and had to forfeit his pay for the expedition. On top of that he was relieved from command and dismissed from the navy. His story is known as 'England's first great privateering expedition into the South Sea' (there were three in total) and has been published as *A voyage to New Holland* in 1703.<sup>18</sup>

In 1701 the War of the Spanish Succession breaks out. The English state found itself once again wanting for capable captains and leaders. Privateering would again be the perfect weapon against Spanish Hegemony at sea. Dampier gained command of a ship again with orders to capture the famous 'Manilla Galleon', which was transporting huge quantities of silver across the Pacific Ocean. The expedition is a complete and utter failure. Another shipwreck and a year in a Dutch prison on accounts of piracy later, he returned in 1707, once again penniless and shipless.<sup>19</sup>

James Knapton had not stopped publishing Dampier's journals in Dampier's absence. Within a couple of years he published four more volumes of Dampier's voyages: *A Supplement of the Voyage Round the World*, *The Campeachy Voyages* and *A Discourse of*

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<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *The story of the voyage*, 25-26.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Beattie, *British privateering voyages of the early eighteenth century* (Woodbridge, 2015), 53.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, Philip, *The story of the voyage: Sea-Narratives in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2014), 40-43.



*Winds* al appear in 1705 followed by the report of his last expedition for the Royal Navy in *A Continuation of a Voyage to New Holland* in 1709.

Given their success, Knapton had also started publishing the journals of other seafarers, such as that of Lionel Wafer, Dampier's ship-surgeon. He had noticed the success of Dampier's journal, and he had written one himself that was also accompanied by drawings and maps. Another bestseller for Knapton was the result. James Knapton made the decision of a lifetime to venture into travel journals. He was able to focus entirely on printing journals, leaving his sons a very successful publishing house.<sup>20</sup>

Dampier undertook his last long journey, known as the 'England's second great privateering expedition', in 1709, which took him around the globe for the third time in his life. Not as captain but as a boatswain under Woodes Rogers, the expedition captured several prizes and returned with a hull full of silver.<sup>21</sup> Dampier, however, does not end his life a rich man. Most of his money disappeared into his expeditions and he died before he could claim his latest spoils. His time of death is unknown, but his will was executed in April 1715 and showed William Dampier still had debts.<sup>22</sup>

## Travel writing, a popular genre

The choice for William Dampier's travel journals as a research subject is deliberate. For historians, travel writings have been an indispensable source for research. Dating back to ancient times it has been and still is a formidable source of information. 'Fathers of history' Herodotus and Thucydides based their work mainly on so-called *periplus* literature. *Periplus* literally means circumnavigation, referring to the earliest Greek historians such as Pausanias and Hecataeus of Miletus who travelled around the Mediterranean describing not only the personal events one encountered but also giving accurate descriptions of coasts, ports, landmarks, sailing routes, currents, winds, tides, flora, fauna and indigenous people.<sup>23</sup> In this way, ancient travel journals did not only provide a valuable source of information but were in fact a guideline to or travel guide on the described area. William Dampier's journals fit into the definition of *periplus* literature. Dampier reports about *his* circumnavigation, around the globe in his case, and

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<sup>20</sup> P. G. Morrison, *Index of printers, publishers and booksellers in England 1641-1721* (Charlottesville, 1955).

<sup>21</sup> Tim Beattie, *British privateering voyages of the early eighteenth century* (Woodbridge, 2015), 71-85.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Preston, *A pirate of exquisite mind: The life of William Dampier* (London, 2005), 446-447.

<sup>23</sup> George Kish, *A source book in geography* (Cambridge, 1978), 21.

gives an immaculate description of practically everything he encounters. His work contains detailed reports on regions, weather phenomena, animals, plants, indigenous tribes, their culture and technology, seafaring routes and navigation, coastlines, currents and tides, astrological observations as well as descriptions of the reach of the Spanish overseas territories. His journals are the first eyewitness reports on large parts of America, Australia and South-East Asia that reached England.

When analyzing ego documents like travel journals, one has to be aware of the subjectivity of the author. Since this paper is trying to identify the author's political thoughts this will be no obstacle. On the contrary, the fact that it concerns an eyewitness report will only contribute to gaining insight in the author's mind.

Another reason this paper focuses on Dampier's journals is their massive popularity. With seven publications that were all reprinted multiple times in the decennia after Dampier's first publication, he sold tens of thousands of copies of his books. His journals were translated in French, German and Dutch early in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> People were fascinated by Dampier's compelling narrative, not unlike the fascination for space that arose in the twentieth century. Dampier's story is one big, captivating adventure that takes the reader through vast, uncharted lands and seas filled with richness, and introduces the audience to a wide range of new and strange plants, animals and people. The mentality of people changed as ideas of the Enlightenment spread. Their fear for the unknown turned into curiosity and fascination, contributing to what Max Weber would later call the 'Disenchantment of the world'.<sup>25</sup>

England's economy around 1700 was booming. Levels of alphabetism were on decline and innovations and an increase in wealth made book printing more affordable. Books were still expensive though, and one copy usually had multiple readers and was passed around.<sup>26</sup> With over thirty thousand books sold in the first half of the eighteenth century on an English speaking population of barely seven million and a literacy rate of

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<sup>24</sup> Edwards, *The story of the voyage*, 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als beruf* (Munich, 1919), 488.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Amory, *Bibliography and the book trades; studies in the print culture of early New England*, (Philadelphia, 2004), 111-113.

forty to fifty percent, Dampier's journals were surely well read and must have had influence on a large part of the English reading audience.<sup>27</sup>

## The Enlightened Pirate

The reason why specifically pirates are an interesting focus point concerning research on nationalism in this period is best expressed by Anna Neill, professor English at Kansas University:

*"They embody the spirit of a newly invigorated imperium as an imagined political community where the relationship between state and subject is constantly being negotiated; cultural transformation in this period from opportunistic plundering pirates into ethnographic observers grows directly out of connection between imperial administration and modern conceptions of political sovereignty"*<sup>28</sup>

Neill sees pirates as a symbol for the transition of states into nation-states in this period. While the state went through a political transition, the pirate went through a cultural transition. No longer was the state simply a piece of land but a sovereign complex of laws and values and an own identity. The pirate makes a transition from outlaw to respected explorer, observer, naval officer and even scientist. William Dampier is the perfect example of this transition. Dampier took pride in the fact that he was a privateer, calling the English fleet *"The envy of all nations"* in his books.<sup>29</sup> He brags about English naval power by describing events in which English privateers took over Spanish ports or ships.<sup>30</sup> He presents himself as an honourable privateer, but at the same time he condemns privateers sailing under other flags, calling them *"rogues"* and *"bandits"*.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, politically speaking, privateering remained a grey area. Privateers were the ultimate opportunists, preying on any ship they could take. This resulted at times in the taking of ships the country under which flag it flew was allied to or were even originating from the same country. This meant although England and Spain were not always at war during Dampier's expedition, it did not stop him from engaging Spanish ships and towns whenever he could take them. On top of that, given the fact his

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<sup>27</sup> David Mitch, 'Education and skill of the British Labour force'. *The Cambridge economic history of modern Britain 1 Industrialisation 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 2004), 345.

<sup>28</sup> Anna Neill, *Buccaneer ethnography: Nature, culture and nation in the journals of William Dampier, American society for eighteenth-century studies* 33:2 (Baltimore, 2000), 165-180.

<sup>29</sup> William Dampier, *A new voyage around the world* (London, 1697), 68.

<sup>30</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 70.

expeditions kept him at sea for years it was impossible to stay informed on current politics, with wars in Europe rapidly succeeding one another between shifting alliances.

Dampier considered himself a true natural, Baconian scientist, fascinated by everything he observed or came across and corresponding about it in detail. He believed devoutly in Francis Bacon's quote "*Scientia potentia est*" ("*Knowledge is Power*").<sup>32</sup> Although his scientific contributions were recognised by the English government, sources lack proof of William Dampier's political ambitions. His main drive seems to have been financial gains and specifically, according to his own words, genuine curiosity and the spread of science; "*To indulge my curiosity rather than to get wealth*".<sup>33</sup> From his journals it becomes clear that Dampier had read the tales of his predecessors Francis Drake (famous for defeating the Armada) and Bartholomew Sharp.<sup>34</sup> He shared their hatred for the Spanish. The difference between these journals and Dampier's is that the former two were not written by the captains themselves. Furthermore, they lack the accurate descriptions Dampier's work is famed for. Drake was politically very ambitious and even served in parliament.<sup>35</sup> William Dampier did not have such a clear political ambition. However, Dampier does seem to have been infected by imperialistic thought as he mentions good sites for future settlements in the New World in his journals.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from Knapton, politicians tended to interfere with the publishing process. The state encouraged new editions of Dampier's work, especially after 1701 when the English are once again at war with the Spanish. Moreover, Knapton accepted investments from well-to-do citizens from London in order to publish more books. These investors were keen on seeing a return on their money, which worked as a catalyst on the intensity of printing and the translation of Dampier's travel journals.<sup>37</sup>

Although Dampier claims only to travel out of scientific ambition, the fact that he becomes a harsh and cruel captain for his crew when his journey doesn't go as planned and no or few loot is gathered, show he is under pressure to achieve something tangible

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<sup>32</sup> Francis Bacon, *Meditationes sacrae* (Cambridge, 1597).

<sup>33</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 39, 132, 233, 280.

<sup>35</sup> John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (London, 1990), 209-215.

<sup>36</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 273.

<sup>37</sup> Preston, *A pirate of exquisite mind*, 347.

on his journeys. Dampier's mood could swing easily into an unpredictable anger at the moment his expedition threatens to go awry.<sup>38</sup>

His publications did not make William Dampier a rich man. James Knapton and his investors took the lion's share of the profits. Dampier himself dies a poor man, unaware of his legacy. Although Dampier's main motives were not monetary or political, his place in society did make him susceptible for political thought.

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<sup>38</sup> Preston, *A pirate of exquisite mind*, 406.

## 2. Cultural and scientific influence

*"It is not easy to name another sailor who has supplied such valuable information to the world; he had a passion for reporting exactly as he saw it, with a delicate and perfect style; he felt an unending curiosity that made his accounts have a unique delicate touch"*<sup>39</sup>

- James Burney, rear admiral under James Cook, describing William Dampier

Although his life did not end too well, his legacy is enormous. Ample has been written about the influence of Dampier's travel journal on various academic disciplines. His contribution to the scientific and cultural discourse is enormous.

To start with, he affected English language by adding over eighty new words to the English dictionary. Dampier is responsible for the importation of words from the Spaniards and Indians such as 'cashew', 'barbeque', 'catamaran' and 'avocado'. Moreover, he has also coined new words like 'chopsticks' and 'subspecies'.<sup>40</sup>

Besides the incorporation and coining of new words, Dampier's journals were the inspiration for a whole new genre in literature. *Robinson Crusoe*, from 1719, was considered the first modern novel. The author, Daniel Defoe, got the idea for his book from travel journals. The protagonist in Defoe's story has been based on a character out of Dampier's stories, Alexander Selkirk.<sup>41</sup> Selkirk was marooned on a deserted island during one of Dampier's travels. After having spent years in solitude he was rescued and returned to England safely. Although Defoe had never been anywhere near the parts of the world his story takes place in, the accurate descriptions of William Dampier and his successor travel writers enabled him to write his novel.<sup>42</sup>

Besides Defoe, the English poet Samuel Coleridge has also been directly influenced by Dampier's journals. Not only does he use the information from Dampier's publications,

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<sup>39</sup> James Burney, *Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea* (London, 1803), 17.

<sup>40</sup> William Hasty, Piracy and the production of knowledge in the travels of William Dampier, c.1679–1688, *Journal of Historical Geography* 37:1, (Cambridge en Glasgow, 2011), 40-45.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Severin, *In search Robinson Crusoe* (New York, 2003), 5-16.

<sup>42</sup> Percy Adams, *Travel literature and the evolution of the novel* (Lexington, 2015), 11.

some of his poems are based directly on crewmembers of Dampier's voyages as their characters and life stories have been described in the journals as well.<sup>43</sup>

Another author that has been inspired and influenced by Dampier is Jonathan Swift. His most famous book, *Gulliver's Travels*, is in fact a parody on the genre and popularity of travel writing. The protagonist in this story introduces himself as a full cousin of William Dampier, referring directly to the author Swift turned to for inspiration. In the preface is proclaimed Dampier could have never made his journey or write his journals without the help of the protagonist.<sup>44</sup> Dampier's contribution to the field of literature is therefore unmistakable.

Dampier also gave name to tons of topographical names still used today. Many sites, such as Mount Dampier, Dampier strait, Dampier District, Dampier Peninsula and so on in Australia and South-East Asia bear his name or were named by him. Another example is Botany Bay, the site of England's first settlement now known as Sydney. Its original name was derived from the fact that Dampier had found so many previously unknown plants in this part of the world.<sup>45</sup> Praised as Australia's first natural historian, Dampier's observations, descriptions and drawings of plants, fish and other animals were a true information boost to the disciplines of biography, botany and zoology.<sup>46</sup> His accounts of indigenous tribes contributed to the field of ethnology.<sup>47</sup>

As said earlier, Dampier's journals can be viewed as *Periplus* literature. His descriptions of weather phenomena were of great value for meteorologists. His journals contain, for example, the first Western description of the circulatory nature of a typhoon.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, his detailed account of coastlines, currents, tides, sea faring routes and winds helped later cartographers draw up maps and assisted navigators like James Cook and Horatio Nelson in finding their way through Terra Incognita.<sup>49</sup> On top of that, his observations on the positions of the stars affected not only the discipline of navigation, but that of astrology as well, giving scientist in Europe a better understanding of the place of the earth in the universe.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early visions, 1772-1804* (New York, 1989), 171-172.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Swift, preface to *Gulliver's Travels* (Dublin 1726), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Hasty, *Piracy and the production of knowledge*, 40-45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> David Longshore, *Encyclopedia of hurricanes typhoons and cyclones* (New York, 2010), 116.

<sup>49</sup> James Burney, *Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea* (London, 1803), 15-17.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Caruso, *The pirate who collected plants* (Washington, 1991), 48-49.

Dampier's influence reaches even further. Several scientists have used Dampier's texts in order to develop their own scientific theories. The most notable of these are Charles Darwin and Alexander von Humboldt. Both leading scientists in the field of natural history refer to William Dampier on multiple occasions in their work.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, 63-65.



### 3. Political influence

The interest for Dampier's journals as a research subject is obvious. Its influence on different scientific and cultural disciplines, unmatched popularity, the role of a pirate as a cultural transmitter and the time of publication make Dampier's journal an ideal example of the era's cultural, political and intellectual thought. A scientific eyewitness report unlike any earlier publication, it was the first of his kind and it is still being published. Although Dampier's publications have been the subject of academic research before, it usually covers scientific and/or cultural facets. Because there has not been much insight in its political influence and to strengthen DeLanda's argument for early modern nationalism this chapter will discuss the political imagery, ideas and early tendencies of nationalism that can be derived from Dampier's journals.

#### English imperialism

First of all, Dampier's publication acted as guideline for later navigators and explorers. In this way, the journals became an important instrument in the process of English imperial expansion. Based on Dampier's findings, the English could determine their colonising strategies in parts of the world without European (English) presence.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, Dampier's journals were also popular among the Scottish elite. In need of money, Scotland created a plan to establish a colony on the land bridge between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea to gain control on overseas trade. Their choice for the Isthmus of Panama was partially based on the descriptions in Dampier's journal, published a few years before the Scottish expedition set out in 1699. The expedition, known as 'The Darien Scheme', was backed by nearly half of the money circulating in Scotland at the time. Most Scottish nobles supported the idea. However, English acts of piracy against Spanish possessions and the presence of a foreign power that was there to stay invoked the wrath of the Spanish who destroyed the settlement in 1700, leaving the site uninhabited until this day. The financial catastrophe for Scotland supposedly led

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<sup>52</sup> Suranyi, Anna, *The genius of the English nation: Travel writing and national identity in early modern England*, (Newark, 2008), 192-201.

to the Act of the Union in 1707.<sup>53</sup> This argues that Dampier played a part, be it small, in the creation of the United Kingdom.

## Indians and Spaniards

Anna Neill describes how Dampier helped spread the idea of a nation. When encountering different tribes of Indians, Dampier automatically categorised them by subdividing them in different, territory-bound nations. In this way he classified Darien Indians, Mosquito Indians and Spanish Indians in Mesoamerica.<sup>54</sup> The latter was supposed to be dealt with as least as possible for they were '*contaminated by the Spanish*'.<sup>55</sup>

The creation of an opposition between the friendly Indian versus the bad and aggressive Spaniard proves Dampier's familiarity with the 'La Leyenda Negra' or 'Black Legend'. The Black Legend refers to the myth derived from the text *La Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* by Spanish friar Bartolomé de las Casas. The friar condemns the cruel and oppressive treatment of Indians by his countrymen.<sup>56</sup> The rivals of Spain translated and circulated this text en masse in order to disseminate a view of the Spanish as intolerant, oppressive, cruel and tyrannical.<sup>57</sup>

According to Dampier, any Indian who has not met the Spanish is an innocent Indian. Dampier's perception of Spain becomes clear at the very beginning of the book, explicitly calling Spain '*The Enemy*', and using the word throughout his book as a synonym for the Spanish.<sup>58</sup> In his description about interaction with Natives he already discredits Spain through the process of othering. This is remarkable because he has never witnessed the actual interaction between Indians and Spaniards. Dampier creates an opposition between the English and the Spanish in the way they interact with Indians.

The English treat them in a calm manner, according to Dampier. He shows his admiration for their physical skills and appearance and even identified the Englishmen to a certain extent with the Indians. He sees the Indians as natural, but less progressed

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<sup>53</sup> Rory Carroll, 'The story of how Scotland lost its 17th century empire', *The Guardian* (London, september 11 2007), 13.

<sup>54</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, 13, 49, 99.

<sup>56</sup> Bartholome de Las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Sevilla, 1552).

<sup>57</sup> Ricardo García Cárcel, *La leyenda negra*, Historia y opinión 3 (Madrid, 1998), 42-47.

<sup>58</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 5.

and less civilised than the English. He describes them as “*Nimble, innocent and noble*”<sup>59</sup>, character traits Dampier deems to fit the Englishman. The English remain superior, as Dampier describes that “*They have no form of government among them but accept the King of England as their soeverign*”.<sup>60</sup> In the way he uses the word ‘friend’ as a synonym for Indians the English deal with and calls Indians that deal with the Spanish ‘enslaved’, he identifies himself with the Indians that have a common adversary in the form of Spain. Dampier devotes an entire chapter about the Indian’s relationship with England called “*Their good opinion of the English*”. He starts off by writing “*The Indian neighbourhood, who were mortal enemies to the Spanish... were our friends*”. He later comments again that the Indians “*mortally hate the Spanish, cherish no love for the French either but the English are their friends*”.<sup>61</sup> The innocence of Indians was measured by the degree of interaction they had with Spain.<sup>62</sup> Dampier notes “*for we know that the Indians which lived in these parts never had any commerce with the Spaniards so we might have had a chance for our lives*”, to indicate that Indians who did not meet the Spaniards yet might be open to diplomacy. Later on he writes “*Two Spanish ships were cruising in the bay so the Indians on this side of the country were our enemies*”, once again giving proof of the ‘contamination’ of Indians and the loss of their innocence to Spanish presence.<sup>63</sup> Dampier and his crew are often even depending on Indians for food, navigation and shelter or to hide from Spanish troops. Dampier also relied on Indian sources of intelligence on Spanish ships, forts and garrisons.<sup>64</sup>

The opposition between the Spaniard and the Englishman reappears several times in Dampier’s journals. The Spanish, being violent and rough oppressors, are the manifestation of what ‘Englishness’ is not. Besides the created opposition when dealing with Indians, Dampier defines ‘Englishness’ as opposite to ‘Spanishness’ in the way both nations approach battle. Dampier’s crew is constantly aware for Spanish attacks. He shows contempt for the way the Spanish can only win military battles when they make use of ambushes, surprise attacks. The ‘English way’ is to fight with courage and face

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<sup>59</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 10-11.

<sup>61</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 41.

<sup>62</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 42-43.

<sup>63</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 8-9.

<sup>64</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 163, 198.

your enemies head on.<sup>65</sup> Apart from their lack of courage, Dampier taunts the Spanish navy for their lack of defences that left towns to be “*Plundered at ease*”.<sup>66</sup> He also notes that the English have access to more advanced battle ships and small firearms giving them the upper hand in battle. Again the Spanish are taunted, this time for their deficiency in innovation.<sup>67</sup>

Dampier's expedition is the first privateering venture into the South Seas, a place where the Spaniards believed themselves to be secure from other European powers. That the Spanish did not expect English privateers in the seas between America and Asia is apparent from Dampier's notes on Spanish naval defence or lack thereof, commenting on Spanish ‘*ignorance*’ when it comes to these matters.<sup>68</sup>

## Social hierarchy

In order to get a grip on administrating their overseas territories and their inhabitants in the Americas, the Spaniards implemented a system of social hierarchy based on ethnicity. Dampier describes this so-called *casta* system in a chapter called “*Negroes and mulattoes*”. Based on their skin colour, people were classified in different categories ranging from Spaniard and White European to Indian and Negro. All different ‘hybrid’ or mixed races were categorised. The paler the skin, the higher one stood in social hierarchy.<sup>69</sup> The English word *caste* is directly derived from the Spanish/Portuguese *casta* and was incorporated in the English language in the seventeenth century. The caste system in India was implemented by the English in the nineteenth century and inspired by the hierarchical division the Spaniards put in place in the Americas centuries earlier.<sup>70</sup> It still has its effect because modern day atlases still make use of terms from the *casta* system in maps depicting ethnicity in Meso and South America.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 219, 231

<sup>66</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 42., 57

<sup>67</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 242-243.

<sup>68</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 273

<sup>69</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 28.

<sup>70</sup> David Cahill, ‘Colour by numbers; Racial and ethnic categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru’, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26 (Cambridge, 1994), 325-346.

<sup>71</sup> Map: ‘Ethische samenstelling van de bevolking van Latijns-Amerika’, *54<sup>e</sup> editie Bosatlas* (Groningen, 2014), 205b.

#### 4. The Anglo-Spanish cultural exchange

Dampier's texts show how the English perceive Indians, Spaniards and themselves in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Moreover, it demonstrates how the English competed against the Spanish on one hand, but at the same time shows their dependency of Spanish knowledge on the other. Dampier's travel journals suggest paradoxical views of the English towards Spain, ranging from hate and resentment to admiration and envy.

To navigate around South America en route to Asia, the English used captive Spanish pilots from prize ships. These pilots were in possession of navigational books containing information not unlike the travel-journals English captains like Dampier wrote. They contained descriptions of geography, flora, fauna and resources apart from navigation charts and information on sea routes. Because the English had never been in this part of the world before, nearly all of Dampier's knowledge is derived from his personal recollections and observations or from the navigation books he took from the Spanish.<sup>72</sup> Dampier acknowledges he frequently uses Spanish pilots and their navigation books to gain information about the uncharted territories they were travelling through, but he never mentions authors or titles, something he does do when referring to English authors. In addition to drawing from the knowledge of the Spanish explorers and navigators, the English pirates and privateers at times strategically adopted Castilian Spanish and passed as Spaniards while interacting with Spanish Indians.<sup>73</sup> Dampier describes how he admires the size and wealth of Spanish colonies he comes across, dotes on the vastness of the Spanish empire and expresses his awe for their extensive knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Dampier has ambivalent feelings towards the Spaniards and realises that obtaining Spanish cultural, geographical, natural and maritime knowledge is crucial for the success of his expeditions. This phenomenon has been described as the 'Spanish debt' by Barbara Fuchs, Professor English and Spanish at the University of California, who claims that England is in eternal debt with Spain because last-mentioned played a

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<sup>72</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 134, 163, 171, 198.

<sup>73</sup> Dampier, *A new voyage*, 114, 170, 301.

<sup>74</sup> William Dampier, *Voyages and discoveries* (London, 1699), 28, 55, 274.

great part in the aggregation of English wealth and knowledge during the rise of their empire.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Barbara Fuchs, *The poetics of piracy*, (Philadelphia, 2013).

## 5. Conclusion

William Dampier's travel journals were unlike any earlier publication. Besides an amusing and captivating narrative of happenings, it is especially unique when it comes to the amount of scientific knowledge on newly discovered parts of the world. His immaculate descriptions of nearly anything he encountered had a huge impact on the scientific discourse. Academic fields such as zoology, meteorology, astrology, biology, botany, natural history, ethnology, cartography, literature and geography have all been affected by Dampier's discoveries. Furthermore, in his position as a privateer, he was susceptible for political ideas and acted as a cultural transmitter between Spain, England and the continents he visited. The journals also influenced English culture by contributing to English language and literature.

It has not been verified that any imaging or political influence Dampier may be accused of is deliberate. Dampier deserves the benefit of the doubt in claiming sincere curiosity because of his cultural and scientific contributions although his history as a pirate can be seen as evidence he had another goal, scilicet financial gain. In any case, political ideas from his publications were very convenient for English authorities in their creation of a global empire and for enhancing the *imagined community* of England. In the identification with Indians and by self-definition against Spain as 'other', tendencies of early modern nationalism can be derived from Dampier's travel journals. They do contain political messages and ideas that have contributed to the establishment and conservation of the English and later British empire.

Given the numerous publications and translations that were sold throughout Europe and read by tens of thousands of people, it is likely to assume William Dampier's travel journals have indeed influenced England's political discourse in the eighteenth century. Dampier's books show evidence of nationalistic thought, have helped spread the ideas of nations and racial inequality, promoted 'Englishness' as an identity, and gave voice to the imperial ambitions of the English.

Further research could focus the Anglo-Spanish exchange to see in what ways and extent the English were depending on the Spaniards. Another idea would be to analyse different types of text from the same period to see whether they show evidence of the same nationalistic tendencies to broaden DeLanda's argument for the early occurrence of nationalism. To conclude, another way of strengthening this thesis would

be to see if the described political ideas and forms of imaging resurface in the literature that was inspired by Dampier's travel journals.



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