The Devil's Anarchy

The Sea Robberies of the Most Famous Pirate Claes G. Compaen

— & —

The Very Remarkable Travels of Jan Erasmus Reyning, Buccaneer

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PREFACE

Peter Lamborn Wilson

ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO I arrived at the island of Koh Samui by boat (at that time the jetport hadn't yet been built) — off the coast of Thailand in the sluggish South China Sea — and at once was regaled by the locals with a grisly pirate story. A week ago, they said, seven corpses washed ashore: Vietnamese boat people slain by pirates. The "boat people," you may remember, were then escaping Vietnam in droves on anything that floated, from derelict freighters to homemade rafts. The pirates followed the despicable practice of killing everyone they robbed. Their level of tech was so low (their modified fishing craft scarcely faster than the refugee rafts) that only such slaughter enabled them to elude pursuit. No witnesses. The boat people themselves naturally lacked recourse to police protection from any state or power. And in fact few of these neolascar pirates were ever apprehended. The islanders of Koh Samui saw no reason to report the seven corpses to mainland authorities. "Why bother? It won't bring them back to life."

As Stephen Snelders points out in this book, most classical pirate violence was "instrumental" — that is, explicable in terms of the real existing conditions of the pirates. Quixotic chivalry and sadistic cruelty provided extreme cases of temperament that must be measured against a norm based on maximum "purchase" with minimal effort. The Barbary corsairs were famous for never fighting unless they had to, in

which case they always tried to get everything done in one mad rush, shrieking and waving big scimitars and hoping to induce paralyzing terror. Moreover they tried not to kill anyone unnecessarily since they planned to ransom or sell their victims as slaves. In order to continue as pirates they had to kill very sparingly, but in the South China Sea in the early 1980s to be a pirate necessitated killing everyone. Cruelty to some extent seems determined by technology and economy — which explains why modernity has outstripped the past not only in cruelty but also in the depersonalization of cruelty. We moderns may no longer have "servants to live for us," but we have machines to kill on our behalf.

As Snelders points out, classical piracy depended on a technological edge. Simon the Dancer and other European renegades introduced Atlantic sailing tech to the Mediterranean corsairs, thus helping to launch a golden age for Barbary piracy. In the period of the "Spanish Main" the buccaneers operated in a power vacuum where skill and solidarity (and plenty of looted gunpowder) made them the equals of shaky colonial infrastructures. In Madagascar the pirates often outgunned and outsailed the Arabs and Indians and even the East India Company on occasion. In such circumstances the classical pirates could afford gestures of magnanimity, where the modern South China Sea pirates could not.

In a pamphlet attributed to Defoe, *The King of Pirates... Captain Avery*, the pirate himself is made to deny the calumny that he raped and murdered (or married) the Moghul princess whose ships he plundered during one of the most profitable and famous pirate cruises in all history. He admits that some of her attendants and maids consorted with some of his crew, but

the Princess was released unharmed, and with cool anti-chivalric irony Avery claims he was far more interested in her diamonds than her maidenhead.

Some Marxist historians rejected any comparison between pirates and "social bandits" because the pirates seemed to lack either a *maquis* or a "people" to represent. Christopher Hill, Marcus Rediker, Peter Linebaugh and other piratologists however identify the pirates' maquis as a class rather than a "people": the Atlantic proletariat, so to speak. Snelders traces the buccaneers' sometime alliances with Indians and even Indian culture; the same analysis holds more strongly for Madagascar, where the *Zana-Malata* of "Pirates' Children" played a significant role even after the pirate fathers had departed or died out in beachcomber bliss. And of course all writers comment on the international and interracial aspect of piracy: the "motley crew" as Linebaugh and Rediker call it (in their book *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Beacon, 2000). The "social" aspect of piracy no longer needs defense — although it does require explication and analysis. Sea-going muggers who prey on the poor, and murder them as well, would seem to have forfeited all claim to consideration as social bandits or even "real pirates."

In my work I've argued that the pirates' activities on land (pirate utopias or temporary autonomous zones) should be considered just as significant as their activities at sea and the "Articles" that made each ship a floating republic. The *buccaneers* or hunters on Hispaniola began as an autarchic "Brotherhood" of castaways and only later took to the sea. And in Madagascar many pirates returned to the land quite happily. Looking at the whole picture, rather than individual careers, we get the impression that desire for total liberty constituted

perhaps the deepest motive for classical piracy. For this judgment we need not depend alone on "Captain Johnson" (whoever he may have been; and I still have trouble believing he wasn't Defoe). Snelders has found delightful quotes from Ringrose, Dampier, Exquemelin, and his own obscure Dutch pamphleteers, that echo the radical rants of Capt. Misson and Capt. Bellamy. In such primary sources the idea of liberty appears not as unconscious intuition but articulated action. I still maintain that Mission could have been real — but I agree with Snelders that even if he were fiction, he represents a reality composed of many true stories: Baldridge, Plantain, Avery, Tew, North, even the Madagascar castaway Robert Drury (whose diary may have been edited by the ubiquitous Defoe).

Colonial America suffered from a shortage of specie, and often made do with wampum, tobacco, pelts or even playing cards as "money". Madagascar piracy pumped huge amounts of gold into New York City, a kind of primitive accumulation that launched our metropolis as another future Babylon. Impeccable merchant/patrician families such as the Philips and Livingstons owed their fantastic wealth to investments in the "Madagascar trade" (including slavery) as Snelders notes. *Piracy Was A Business*: so one historian titled his study of the period. When I was a child I used to dig on the beach at Cape May, New Jersey, for Captain Kidd's treasure. Of course Kidd was never there. But one night in 1699 (the year of Kidd's return and arrest) a whole shipload of Madagascar pirates landed at Cape May, each with his own treasure chest, hoping to blend into the landscape and retire into obscurity. Most of them were caught but vast amounts of treasure eluded the authorities. Some of it was probably buried at Cape May.

But if piracy fueled nascent capitalism in New York it served other functions at the far end (or rather the real center) of its trajectory in Madagascar. The pirates on St. Mary's Island paid £300 for a pipe of Madeira that cost £18 in New York. Why not? Rimbaud or Gaugin would have understood these other selves, perhaps inarticulate but resolute in action and revelry, poets of lived experience rather than texts or paintings: the buccaneer dreamers reborn, brethren of coasts and islands, utopians without an "ism", the pirates of St. Mary's and Ranter's Bay.... But then, even children can understand such ideas — especially children. Piracy in this sense has less to do with violence, or even with treasure, than with untrammeled desire and anarchic freedom, Rimbaud's *liberté libre*. Wasn't William Blake a pirate?

Snelders has made a major contribution to piratology in English by introducing certain rare Dutch sources full of anecdote and illumination. But he's contributed even more to the field of radical piratology as envisioned by my friend the late English anarchist Larry Law, or the late William S. Burroughs — pirate as libertarian hero, pirate as symbolic focus for anti-Capital's desire. Rimbaud might've dreamed something like this when he was twelve. But here it is at last, a book of true stories.

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van den Alderfameus-
ten zee-rover Claas G.
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THE SEA ROBBERIES OF THE MOST FAMOUS PIRATE CLAES G. COMPAEN

Let us admit that we have attended parties where for one brief night a republic of gratified desires was attained... Some of the "parties" we've mentioned lasted for two or three years.
— Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS THE STORY of one of the famous Dutch pirates of the early seventeenth century: Claes Gerritszoon Compaen (also known as Claas Compaan, or Klaas Kompaan — Gerritszoon, meaning "son of Gerrit," is abbreviated Gerritsz.). He lived from 1587 until about 1660 and "terrorized" the seas from 1623 until 1627. In telling the story I try to follow closely the original biography by the anonymous Schoolmaster of Oostzaan, the Dutch village in which Compaen lived the greatest part of his life. But my re-telling of the Schoolmaster's tale is also a re-reading. What interests me in the life of Compaen, besides the adventure itself, is not the Schoolmaster's confirmation of the Christian morals and ethics he was able to abstract from his biographical data, or the concomitant implications for sustaining the social and economic status quo. What interests me is how completely

Compaen's exploits are embedded in the social fabric of his time. I am interested in the question of whether or not we can take these exploits as a form of social rebellion. Were Compaen and his men (it is a tale of men) saying "No!" to their society, while getting away with as much booty and having as much fun as possible in the process?

The idea of the pirate as a rebel against society is of course nothing new. It stretches back at least to Captain Charles Johnson's *General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates* (1724), with its intriguing and possibly mythical account of the attempts of Captain Misson to create an alternative society on Madagascar. Since then the pirate has taken his place among other bandits and highwaymen as a kind of Robin Hood, scourging the rich and powerful. It has not been very difficult for historians to show the mythical and fanciful character of this idea, which has only seldom had any connection to the bloody reality of the business. E. J. Hobsbawm, in his study on social banditry, has analyzed how the poor and powerless create their own myths of Robin Hoods, idealizing bandits and employing them to introduce the possibility of transcending social limits. That is the dream of the exploited servant girl in Brecht's version of the *Beggar's Opera*, hoping that the pirate ship will take her away.

Though the pirate as Robin Hood may be a myth, we need not discard the idea of piracy as social rebellion. Discontent among seamen about labor conditions and their material prospects could and did lead many of them to become outlaws. Furthermore, there is a discernable parallel between their behavior and the different forms of resistance developed by African slaves in the Americas from the sixteenth through the

eighteenth centuries. Gabriel Debien makes a distinction between three different categories of slave rebellion: "day-to-day" resistance appearing as work slowdowns, low morale, and petty holdups in the work process; *petit marronage*, or temporary absence from work; and *grand marronage*, when slaves fled to join or found societies of their own (Debien 1966; cf. also Thornton 1999, 273–303). I suggest that piracy can be seen as a form of grand marronage, where crews of seamen created an alternative society with alternative rules aboard their vessels.

Compaen's personal grand marronage extended for three years, and the Schoolmaster's biography gives us some idea of how it was structured. It also makes clear that Compaen did not intend it to be permanent. The social rebellion involved in his piracy resembles the instinctive and violent social rebellion of Bonnie and Clyde: as much concerned with having a good time as with shooting down the enemy. Though for Compaen, who took to piracy to revenge himself on his country's authorities and who mixed force with cunning in his craft, comparison with the clever and charismatic Dillinger may be more accurate.

In his thought-provoking study, *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes*, Peter Lamborn Wilson rightly remarks that we can view pirate ships as social communities, albeit of a temporary character ("temporary autonomous zones"). Every member of these communities is involved in social banditry, i.e. redistribution of economic wealth that would otherwise flow to merchant capitalists and state bureaucracies. One cannot take issue with Wilson, only add that to survive the pirates had to make temporary alliances with certain of the same bureaucracies and merchants, notably those of

the pirate towns of the Barbary Coast. It is in the sphere of these alliances that Wilson finds an ideological dimension to early seventeenth-century piracy. He is particularly interested in the European renegadoes, who converted to Islam and based themselves in towns like Algiers and Salé on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, from which they warred against European class oppression and became rich. Wilson points out that in a society where all ideology is couched in religious terms, heresy and apostasy can be seen as forms of social resistance. He maintains that the renegadoes dropped out and took to war under the flag of Christianity's arch-enemy, and his thesis has prompted me to a re-reading of the Schoolmaster's biography of Compaen.

Although he never became a renegado, Compaen did use Salé as his base of operations. What's more, he is the only pirate from this era about whom we have any detailed biographical data. The Schoolmaster's biography was first published in 1659, when Compaen was still alive, under the title: *'t Begin, midden en eynde der zee-roveryen van den Alderfameusten zee-rover Claas G. Compaen van Oost-Zanen in Kennemer-Land, Vervattende zyn Wonderlyke, vreemde Lands schadelijke Dryftogten. Waar in vertoond word, Hoe hy met weinig Scheepen de Zee onveilig gemaakt, een ongelooflyken Buit, en een groot getal van Scheepen, van alle Landen gerooft en Afgelopen heeft.* (*The Beginning, middle, and end of the piracies of the very famous pirate Claas G. Compaen of Oostzaan, Kennemerland, with his Miraculous, strange, and, for the Country, detrimental voyages. With an account How he, with few Ships, terrorized the Sea, robbed, and took from all Countries an incredible Booty, and a large number of Ships.*) Not much is known about the anonymous author of the pamphlet, except what he tells us himself.

He was in Oostzaan at the time of Compaen's homecoming, which we can date to 1627. Some time later he taught one of Compaen's bodyguards how to write; and, he says, when returning from his walks behind the (Calvinist) church of Oostzaan, Compaen often walked through the classroom where the author was at work. This indicates that the author must have been the schoolmaster of the village.

Our Schoolmaster is clearly both repelled by and attracted to Compaen. Repelled because the pirate violated all Christian values and temporarily became an enemy of society; attracted, we read between the lines, because of the man's sheer adventurousness and daring, which contrasted the life of a pirate so sharply with that of a schoolmaster. In his preface to the biography the Schoolmaster stresses that he isn't writing the pamphlet "to light a candle for the Devil." The work is meant as a cautionary tale showing the "vanity" of the path that Compaen chose. Here the word *vanity* indicates a recurrent theme in the Christian literature of the period: the sense employed is one developed in the Book of Job indicating the "idleness," uselessness, and senselessness of pursuing paths of life other than those leading to Christian salvation. This distinctly colors the Schoolmaster's narrative. He *must* emphasize the insecurity and dangers of the pirate's life because, ironically, Compaen's biography is a success story. If anything, it proves that choosing to be a pirate could be a clever career move: the hero leads an adventurous life for three years, becomes rich, and returns without being punished! Christian morals were the Schoolmaster's only defense against developing a positive view of Compaen's actions, especially in a violent society where professions like slave-trader and colonizer were very respectable

and where the life of an ordinary sailor was no less dangerous, but much less profitable, than that of a pirate.

As a biographer the Schoolmaster worked from a variety of sources, but the most important ones were not accessible. The pirate was too cautious and too loyal to his former friends to talk openly about his exploits. (When the Oostzaan bookseller Soeteboom wrote a history of the region, Compaen refused to talk to him, too.) Nonetheless, the Schoolmaster diligently sought out eyewitnesses: people whose ships Compaen had taken. And he had access to the important chronicle written by the Amsterdam physician Nicolaes à Wassenaer (one of Soeteboom's sources), which was published in Amsterdam in 1628, one year after the pirate's return. The thirteenth part of Wassenaer's chronicle, the *Historisch Verhael aller gedenckwaerdiger geschiedenisse, die in Europa … Asia … Africa … America … voorghevallen zijn* (*History of all memorable affairs that took place in Europe, Asia, Africa, America*), discusses the period from April through October of 1627 and has a large section on Compaen. Compaen confirmed the accuracy of Wassenaer's account to his neighbor Jan Vechtersz. Smit, and the Schoolmaster follows it closely. Another important source, which serves as the basis of one-third of the pamphlet, is the journal of the Dutch admiral Wybrant Schram from the year 1626, in which he describes his sea-battle with Compaen's pirate fleet — one of the last engagements of his pirate career. The journal was not published until 1650, but a manuscript of it was available to Wassenaer.

Re-reading the Schoolmaster's biography, it became clear to me that Compaen's story did not expressly vindicate Wilson's thesis. Though Compaen did become a pirate because of a

grudge against the Dutch authorities, he didn't turn renegade like some of his Dutch contemporaries — particularly the famous corsair admirals the Veenboer ("Peat-farmer"), who was also known as Soliman Reis, and Jan Jansz. of Haarlem, the notorious Murad Reis. Turning renegade may have been the final breach with the old society, but Compaen was neither willing nor forced to take that step. There were limits to his marronage. Furthermore, the Schoolmaster's sources are inadequate to give a good impression of just how idyllic life was in Salé.

As David Cordingly (1975, 281) has written in his *Life among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality*, our fascination with the pirate who escapes all social limits to go adventuring in exotic places will remain with us as long as we feel confined to monotonous, repetitious lives. Compaen's biography gives us a glimpse of a fascinating world with extensive networks of contacts — pirate's nests, fences, refuges on the Barbary coast and in Ireland; the shadow-world in which pirates survived. Apart from the biography's historical value, this fascinating world is a major reason for reexamining the Schoolmaster's story, as I attempt to do in the following pages.

In choosing to re-tell the Schoolmaster's story I am inspired by Larry Law's retelling of the story of Captain Misson and his colony of Libertatia, which was based on Charles Johnson's version. However, my text is not just a simple retelling. The Schoolmaster interpreted his "facts" in a Christian sense. I have tried, as much as possible, to undo this interpretation by looking at the events not in terms of the violation of the laws of God and men, but as possible forms of social rebellion and banditry (which may come down to the same thing). I hope to have done this without falling into the common trap

of the professional historian: analyzing the tales of history to the point where they stop being good tales. For this reason I have refrained from loading the story with an extensive apparatus of notes and citations. I have compared the Schoolmaster's version to those of Wassenaer and Schram and have taken into account modern literature on piracy. I have also added information on Dutch society with the aim of clarifying the events — the interested reader is referred to the bibliography. For the rest, the tale of Compaen is worth telling for its own sake.

1.

"Claas Gerritsz. Compaen, born at Oostzaan in Kennemerland, living north of the church, has not been one of the least successful of Dutch pirates, he has not had his equal in the many centuries that the Dutch have sailed the seas." With these words the Schoolmaster starts his account of the exploits of his famous fellow townsman. At that moment they both lived in Oostzaan, a small village a few miles to the north of the IJ, an inlet on the south side of which the port of Amsterdam is situated. Oostzaan had a few thousand inhabitants. The village lay in a region of polders, waterways, and water mills. By boat it was within easy striking distance of Amsterdam, and its inhabitants employed themselves in a variety of occupations: agriculture, fishing, dying cloth, and trade, primarily with the East and with France.

The Schoolmaster tells us that the young Compaen was very "bourgeois" (*burgerlijk*, with the connotation of "law-abiding") when he first went to sea. He was still a youngster

then, with blond hair and a beautiful build, and he traded in Guinea and other places. From this we may gather that he was involved in the gold or the slave trades. He did well.

After a truce of twelve years, in 1621 the Dutch Republic again went to war against the Spaniards, who controlled the southern Netherlands. From their strongholds at Calais, Dunkirk, and Ostende on the Channel coast Catholic privateers harassed Dutch trade. At some point in the 1620s, Compaen decided to invest the greatest part of his profits in the privateering expeditions sanctioned by the Dutch authorities against their Spanish enemies. Privateering expeditions promised good profits, but what happened was contrary to Compaen's expectations. For some reason, he was deprived of his profits: it may have been declared that the expedition's prizes were illegally taken.

This Compaen would not accept, and in his anger he devised a plan to even the score with the authorities. He applied for and received a new privateering commission from the Prince of Orange, who as Stadtholder of Holland was admiral-general of the Dutch navy. The Schoolmaster writes that Compaen received his commission from both the Prince and the States-General, the supreme assembly of the Dutch Republic, which was composed of representatives of the federated provinces. This must be a mistake. In 1625 it was the Prince who issued commissions, and by 1659, when the Schoolmaster's biography was published, the regents had taken control and it was the States-General that issued privateering commissions. (After the death of William II in 1650, the republican faction refused to appoint his son as successor. William III, who eventually became King of England, only rose to

power when the French invasion of 1672 brought an end to the supremacy of the republican faction.)

Compaen's professed target was Spanish shipping. In order to employ his new commission he bought the *Walta*, a ship of 200 tons with seventeen guns and a crew of eighty men. The *Walta* had participated in the famous Battle of Gibraltar in 1607, when the Dutch defeated the Spanish fleet. Her former owner was another privateer, Gerrit Pietersz., from the town of Medemblik, who, on returning from a successful expedition against the Spaniards, stumbled in the dark and fell through an open hatch, as a consequence of which he died. Compaen bought the *Walta* from Gerrit's widow for a very reasonable price.

2.

Although the difference between a privateer and a pirate was not always apparent to their victims, legally and socially it was vast. Like the slave-trader, a privateer was an accepted member of society who performed an important dual role. First, he fought the enemies of the state — commissions were always directed against ships from countries one was at war with. Second, he brought profit to his employer, who outfitted his ship and bought the commission. A pirate, on the contrary, was an outlaw who preyed on any ship he chose. A pirate kept the surplus value of his work for himself and his comrades, to spend on the good things of life.

We must add, however, that in practice the dividing line between pirates and privateers was rather blurred. In fact, they were often the same people who alternately chose different

roles. Many pirates returned to a life of privateering after receiving a pardon by the state, which was often the only effective way to stop the pirate's activities. But the opposite could also be the case, and Compaen was not the only privateer who turned pirate. It is also important to note that one could be a privateer in the eyes of one's own country but treated as a pirate by other countries, as were the corsairs of Algiers or Dunkirk.

During this period the Dunkirk privateers became such a nuisance to Dutch trade that the States-General ordered the Dutch navy to treat the Dunkirkers as pirates. When a pirate was caught he was in more trouble than a privateer. When a Dutch captain took Dunkirk prisoners, he was expected to make them walk the plank — *voeten spoelen* in Dutch, "washing their feet." Many Dutch captains refused, taking their prisoners back to their ports instead, and were punished by the authorities. But the Dunkirk privateers reacted in their turn by frequently hanging or drowning Dutch prisoners. The result of all this was that it soon became difficult for the Dutch navy to find enough commanders for their ships.

In his struggle against the Spaniards, the Prince of Orange began issuing letters of marque as early as 1568. His personal sea-sharks, the notorious *watergeuzen* (sea-beggars), had played a crucial role in 1572, when they liberated Dutch ports and gave the revolution a decisive impetus. As sovereign of a small principality in France (Orange), in a strict legal sense the Prince of Orange had a right to issue letters of marque, but the sea-beggars were seen by the Spaniards as pirates. Indeed, their motivation was as much lust for booty as hatred of Spaniards and Catholics.

3.

In the 1570s, Compaen's native county, the Zaanstreek, a region of rivers and creeks, witnessed a fierce war between sea-beggar guerrillas and the Spanish army. In 1573 or 1574 the village church at Oostzaan was destroyed by the Spaniards. Can we have any doubt that Compaen, who was born in 1587, had relatives who played a role in this struggle? Compaen and other Dutch pirates were not born into a peaceful environment, but into a country that had been continuously at war since 1568. "It seems that the hard drinking and partying Dutch had their heads so full of the spirit of liberty, that they did not care about the discomfiture of other people and silenced their will for no one," wrote Dutch historian A. Th. van Deursen (1978, 50–52). "Dutch burghers and farmers drew their knife at the slightest provocation." The inhabitants of a region like the Zaanstreek were not as law-abiding as their twentieth-century descendants are.

It should not then surprise us to read in Wassenaer's chronicles that some Dutch privateers "misused" their letters of marque and attacked not only Spanish ships, but also those of their allies. Wassenaer mentions some of the rogues by name, the greatest of whom was Simon de Danser (Simon the Dancer). In the early 1600s, The Dancer taught the pirates of Algiers to replace their oar-driven galleys, burdened by the weight of the rowing slaves, with light sailing ships "capable of speed and surprise" (Braudel 1973, 884). The Spaniards had such fear of The Dancer that they locked themselves behind their city walls whenever his fleet hove into sight. Later, after he was pardoned by King Henri IV of France and left Algiers to live in Marseilles, The Dancer was financed by the king and was

surrounded by bodyguards, his *bravos*, whenever he took to the streets. Nonetheless, in 1616 his old friends the Barbary corsairs captured him and settled an old account — some say he was murdered in an atrocious way. (His son would, as we will see, follow in his father's footsteps.) Other famous Dutch pirates included the Veenboer, who scourged the Mediterranean, and Jan Jansz. of Haarlem. According to Wassenaer, though he had left wife and children in the Netherlands, Jansz. chose to squander his booty in Barbary ports, where he kept a Moslem wife. We will meet him again, too, but Compaen came to surpass these notorious pirates in the Dutch public eye.

4.

It was the Admiralty of the North that had deprived Compaen of his earnings from his first privateering expedition. There were five regional admiralties in the Republic, each responsible for a different area and having supervision over all maritime affairs in that area. The members of the admiralties were appointed by the States-General. They were responsible for maintenance of the navy and protection of the coast. They also had jurisdiction over crimes committed at sea and arbitrated conflicts concerning prize money and piracy. Practically, they had become completely independent and rather corrupt, often engaging in the conflicts they were called to arbitrate upon, as in Compaen's case.

This same Admiralty of the North now believed it was about to make a good profit by taking a percentage of Compaen's new privateering enterprise. The members were in

a good humor when he invited them to a farewell dinner on his ship in the port of Medemblik. Their good humor did not change when, after a bountiful meal, he presented them with the bill saying that he had used all his funds for the preparation of the expedition. That Compaen had not for a moment entertained the thought of working for them only became clear a few days later, when the captain of a fishing ship presented the members of the Admiralty in the town of Hoorn with a bill for a cargo of herring. After he set sail, Compaen took the first ship he had met, near the Dutch port of Egmond aan Zee. The fisherman at first thought that he was being attacked by Dunkirk privateers and had been very relieved to learn that Compaen was "buying" his herring, giving him a letter to the Admiralty in exchange. Of course, the members of the Admiralty did not acknowledge the bill. To their chagrin, they realized that Compaen had entered upon a course of piracy.

5.

The requisition of the fisherman's cargo was only a warm-up. Compaen was still in Dutch waters four days later when he took his first real prize and divided the booty with his men. Were they in his confidence from the beginning? The Schoolmaster does not say, but when Compaen dropped anchor in the port of Vlissingen because of bad weather his men sang his praises in the taverns where they spent the spoils. As a result, when Compaen left (the authorities at Vlissingen were clearly unaware of his career choice) fifty men from the "rabble of the town" joined the *Walta*. This was a welcome addition. A pirate's crew always had to be much larger than that

of a merchant because pirates were expected to fight, and more men lessened the burdens of work on board.

Throughout the seventeenth century the Dutch marine industries experienced a labor surplus. Since the merchant marine was an important recruiting ground for pirates, we must pay some attention to the social and economic positions of common sailors. Life was hard for Dutch seamen and they lived on the edge of starvation, especially if they were married and kept families. The introduction of the flyboat (*fluyt*) in 1590 had played an important role in creating this situation. Flyboats carried large tonnage, lacked defensive guns, and required only small crews. As unemployment rose, Dutch ship owners took advantage of sailors by economizing on wages and provisions. By the 1600s, a captain could be reasonably certain of signing on a crew despite poor wages and inadequate provisions. And the sailors' unfavorable position was soon amplified by the increased immigration of German and Scandinavian seamen. Only ships sailing to the East and West Indies, where the chance of returning alive was only 50 percent and wages were lower than normal, experienced problems in finding crews.

The life of crewmen on merchant vessels emphasized to sailors the extent of their exploitation (Boxer 1988, 73–80). They were expected to obey orders at every moment. They had to man the rigging despite the weather or time of day, and were required to stand at attention whenever an officer passed by. They were, in short, expected to act as "a bunch of subservient slaves." If they did not they were punished. They were also punished for impudent behavior, blasphemy, drunkenness, and knife play. The less severe punishments included whipping, confinement in narrow spaces, confinement in irons, being

rationed only bread and water, having one hand nailed to the mast, and keelhauling. The death penalty was reserved for mutiny, murder, and acts of homosexuality. For those offenses sailors were hung, thrown from the yardarm, or chained to the victim or sexual partner and cast overboard.

Add to this repressive mix corrupt or cowardly captains, cooks who pocketed part of the food money, and inadequate clothing, and it is not surprising that mutiny and riots on behalf of sailors were common. Popular literature of that time stresses again and again that Dutch sailors were very unruly. Officers claimed that they maintained strict discipline to protect their own lives. Soldiers and sailors of the Dutch East India Company were said to be "wild swine, who robbed and stole, drank and fornicated." But in many instances the exploitation continued even after the successful completion of a voyage. In 1629, when the privateer Piet Heyn returned after capturing a Spanish silver fleet, most of the booty went to the West India Company, and Heyn's sailors responded to their meager shares by rioting. They attacked the treasury where the loot was stored and had to be driven off by armed militia. And in Den Briel in 1665 a mob made up of the wives, children and relatives of sailors who had suffered in a recent sea battle accused the Dutch admiral Johan Evertsen of cowardice and tried to lynch him. They were denied redress for their grievances when soldiers rescued the admiral. It seems entirely reasonable, therefore, that men so clearly aware of their own exploitation might consider membership in a pirate's crew an acceptable career option.

6.

Compaen started his career as a pirate with an enthusiastic crew. In the next few years he came to terrorize all sea-faring nations: Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and all others. In a passage the Schoolmaster lifted directly out of Wasssenaer's chronicle it is said that he was feared because his men often attacked with extraordinary vigor and destroyed everything (apart from the lading, one gathers) in their fury. However, when fury wasn't necessary, and they weren't provoked, they maintained their sangfroid and hurt no one. This passage suggests that Compaen owed his success to a combination of strategic and tactical skills, alternately employing scenarios of violence and restraint. (We will examine the question of his praxis later.)

It is not known how many prizes these tactics brought Compaen, but Wassenaer believed there must have been hundreds. In a conversation with his first victim, the fisherman from Egmond, the retired Compaen claimed to have taken more than 350 vessels. If this is accurate he was almost as successful as the famous Bartholomew Roberts (Black Bart), the Welsh pirate who took some 400 prizes between 1719 and 1722. It is not unreasonable to think it might be, because at the summit of his power Compaen had a pirate fleet of seven ships and was attacking everywhere. Within a few months of starting out as a pirate he had already taken several prizes (both Dutch and non-Dutch) and was exacting his revenge for the injustice done to him by his country.

7.

By becoming an outlaw Compaen had dropped out of Dutch society and joined another one: the international brotherhood of corsairs. This is, in a surprising way, illustrated by the next of the Schoolmaster's stories. National and formal differences disappeared between sea rovers, who were flexible in their attitudes to legal niceties. We have seen the deadly animosity that developed between the Dunkirk privateers and the Dutch merchants and navy. Compaen, whose privateering commission was directed against the Dunkirkers, was welcome in Dunkirk. A richly laden Dutch ship captained by Siewert Cornelisz. van Suurwont, from the county of Waterland, encountered a storm that lasted three days. As the weather broke on the morning of the fourth day Compaen saw Suurwont's ship in the English Channel. For a day and a night he gave chase and when the wind fell he was able to board her. After taking possession, Compaen sailed the ship to Dunkirk. On his way there he sailed past the French port of Calais, where four Dutch warships were lying at anchor, but they had no stomach for attacking him and helping their compatriots. In Dunkirk van Suurwont was thrown in jail, followed during the next few days by seventy more Dutch prisoners. We know these details because a ship's boy managed to stay hidden on the ship. At night he swam to the beach and walked for one hour to the neighboring town, unfortunately also controlled by the Spaniards. He swam around that town and walked three hours more to Calais, arriving wet and almost frozen to tell his tale.

8.

Although he knew he could count on the support of his brother pirates, Compaen was cunning and careful enough to avoid making all nations his enemies. In the beginning he never attacked ships from England or the Barbary coast, especially from the Moroccan towns of Salé and Safy. In this way he was able to use the English-controlled coasts and the Barbary ports to maintain his liberty. Compaen's contacts with officials and merchants in various locations show how deeply the economics of piracy were interwoven with the "legal" economy. The Schoolmaster tells us that Compaen often went to Ireland, a country infested with pirates. He had contacts there at the highest levels — contacts that were purely business-like and filled with mutual distrust, as the next story shows. During 1625, Compaen went regularly to St. Clare, where he once visited the governor, "Willem Hol" (William Hall). While there Compaen's armed bodyguard (eighty men, Wassenaer adds) never let him out of their sight, "just as was the case with the elder Simon the Dancer." Compaen spent the night in Hall's castle with his bedroom guarded on all sides by his men. At dawn he returned to his ship, never to visit St. Clare again.

The reason he never returned was that his relationship with the English took a sudden turn for the worse. On his next trip Compaen was carrying goods worth 16,000 Dutch guilders to sell at St. Clare. (It is difficult to say how much this would be worth in today's currency. One indication might be a comparison with the basic wages of a Dutch sailor circa 1665–1780: fifteen guilders a month; cf. Boxer 1988, 75. With the wages of his whole life added together, a Dutch sailor would never see

16,000 guilders.) Unfortunately, in this instance Compaen had some bad luck. Contrary to his normal practice he had seized some English ships loaded with wine, almonds, and anise, and had stored his booty in a warehouse in Plymouth, England. When the authorities discovered the origin of the goods they returned them to their former owners. The king of England (either James I, or Charles I, who succeeded him in 1625) then ordered the capture of Compaen, giving it full priority. An English squadron sailed out after him, arriving at St. Clare just as Compaen arrived there with his 16,000-guilder cargo. Though Compaen fled and his goods were confiscated the pirate vowed revenge, and that same day he took seven English ships with goods worth ten times what he had lost at St. Clare. From this day on he attacked all the English, Scottish, and Irish ships he encountered.

The story occasions some pious sermonizing from the Schoolmaster on the vanity of the pirate's world. How easily Compaen's friends in Ireland became his enemies! When the king wanted Compaen, dead or alive, his former business associates among the officials of Ireland professed not to know him and he was treated as an outlaw. In life, however, Compaen did not pause in his career. Not far from Dublin he encountered the son of the Admiral of Ireland. The young man had no knowledge of the changed relations between his father and the pirate. He came aboard Compaen's ship and was treated with hospitality, but was detained when he wanted to leave. The pirate sent an Irishman by the name of François to the governor of Dublin demanding ransom: he wanted goods valued at 30,000 guilders, which he had stored in a warehouse in Dublin and could not now retrieve. To Compaen's surprise, François returned with

the news that the governor would not negotiate. François was sent back three times with the threat that the pirates would hang the admiral's son. Three times he returned with the same answer: the governor would not negotiate. Compaen was furious, especially because he was in want of provisions, but he was no Blackbeard. Despite his anger he freed his prisoner, saying: "Ay! Why revenge myself on the innocent boy? What good would his death do to me? See! These Devils are not even moved by family ties and prefer to see him hang more than to give me the goods!" He released the boy and continued on his way, taking all English, Scottish, and Irish ships he met and getting in this way his provisions and a lot of booty besides.

The earl of Stafford, viceroy of Ireland, was one of the people on whom Compaen wanted to revenge himself. The viceroy and the pirate had previously been good friends and business associates. After the intervention of the king, however, Stafford ordered his navy to capture Compaen. All the pirate's attempts to negotiate a new agreement failed, so Compaen decided to raid the viceroy's castle. One night he sailed with his men, armed to the teeth, in strict silence to the castle. Unfortunately, some of his men had revealed the plan to the viceroy. Suddenly the castle guns opened fire and the pirates had to flee.

However, as Stafford had his agents among the pirates, so Compaen had his own in the viceroy's retinue. A few days after the failed raid the castle burned to the ground. Both Compaen and the Schoolmaster identified this Stafford as Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, lord-deputy of Ireland from 1633 and later Prime Minister to Charles I, eventually decapitated in 1641 by order of the English parliament. When the news of Stafford's imprisonment reached Holland, Compaen is said to

have remarked that he was sorry for the man because they had spent many hours in merriment together.

9.

After the collapse of his English alliances, Compaen's bases of operations were limited to the cities of Salé and Safy on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. The merchants and governors of these towns were just as eager to trade with pirates as the viceroy of Ireland had been before his king had intervened. In fact, as Peter Lamborn Wilson notes in his *Pirate Utopias*, the Casbah or old town of Salé, which is now in the Moroccan capital Rabat, was virtually a pirate republic. From 1614 until 1640, Salé was controlled by a community of pirates of various nationalities. The Schoolmaster tells us that the people of Salé behaved "almost as if they were a republic," meaning that they did not obey a prince. They actually refused entrance to the emperor of Morocco during his flight from the nomad tribes. According to the Schoolmaster, in Compaen's time the city council accepted twelve guns from some English merchants in exchange for all the English prisoners they held captive. The guns were used to guard the city walls. While he was in Salé, Compaen had two ships lying at anchor in the harbor and spent each night on one of his ships, not fully trusting the people of the town.

We gain some measure of Compaen's great renown in Morocco from the following story. The "emperor" of Morocco (the Sultan Mulay Zaydan) was continuously at war with the nomad tribes who preyed on the countryside. He had his capital at Mogador. Compaen went there trying to sell a lading of iron and the emperor showed himself very anxious to meet

him, calling him "master of the sea" and friend, and giving him a safe conduct. He seems to have wished to make Compaen his ally among the pirates of Salé, but nothing came of the overtures because a storm prevented the meeting from taking place.

10.

Compaen, the outlaw wanted by all European powers, found a safe haven in Salé. He sold his booty there, ships as well as goods. At the start his most important fence was Simon the Dancer the Younger, son of the famous Dancer (who had died in 1616). For the first booty Compaen sold in Salé the younger Dancer paid only a fourth its value and made a handsome profit selling it. In general, the Salé fences seem to have done good business with the pirates, capitalizing on their need for security and provisions. Compaen once had to sell goods worth 85,000 guilders for only 5,000 because he was in desperate need of gunpowder, ammunition, and fuses. He admitted, however, that for his 5,000 guilders he got the best gunpowder in existence. His trading position was stronger and he could sell his booty for better prices when his ships were well-provisioned and supplied. Interestingly, he never seems to have sold his prisoners as slaves, preferring to put them on shore when it suited him. Sometimes he even put them on ships returning to their countries of origin. Perhaps in this his Dutch sense of liberty was stronger than his Dutch business sense.

Another of Compaen's brokers in Salé was the Dutch pirate Jan Jansz., of Haarlem. Jansz. was able to sell goods worth many hundreds of thousands of guilders for Compaen, and was handsomely rewarded in return. Like Compaen, he had started out as

a privateer before shifting to piracy. He, too, sold his booty in Salé and Safy, and at some point he turned renegade, renouncing Christianity and turning to Islam: *Renegadoes Mamulcos*, the Schoolmaster calls him. After his conversion, Jansz. proselytized actively for his new faith, trying to convert Christian slaves and make them renounce "the salvation that is in Christ." To the Schoolmaster he was much worse than any Turk. The saying was: "A renegade Christian is the worst Moslem." Although he had a wife and children in Haarlem, in Salé Jansz. took a Moslem wife. Eventually, he was appointed to the rank of Admiral of the Sea by the emperor of Morocco, and he became wealthy from the rights of anchorage, pilotage, and other harbor revenues that accrued to him as Admiral.

Unfortunately, at this point the power relations in Salé changed. The emperor was out, and the "Alcalde" took over. This at least is the understanding of the Schoolmaster. In Wilson's *Pirate Utopias* we read that the Sufi Marabout al-Ayyadi, leader of a Jihad (Holy War) against Spain and other Christian powers, had established himself in Salé. "By 1627," Wilson writes, "the political situation in Salé had become a bit warm. It seems that Jan Jansz. (or Murad Reïs, as he called himself after his conversion) was politically outmaneuvered in the complex politics of Salé." From other sources we know that at this point he again took up the life of an active pirate, eventually ending as governor of Ouilda, on the west coast of Morocco. The Schoolmaster, however, suggests that he went from bad to worse when, under the threat of poverty, he became broker for Compaen. At first Compaen did not trust the old fox, but this changed, and before Compaen left Salé for good he gave Jansz. a ship of twelve guns with which to start again as a pirate.

Perhaps this was the ship in which Jansz. sailed to Algiers to make this town his new base of operations? The Schoolmaster piously gives Jan Jansz. a bad end, probably for moralizing reasons. His source for this story is the 23rd part of Wassenaer's chronicles — a part that does not exist, since the chronicles consist of only 21 parts. According to the Schoolmaster, the same theme — lucky beginning and bad end, showing the vanity of the way of the pirate — characterizes the career of Simon the Dancer the Younger. Like his father, the Young Dancer was a notorious pirate. Though he was Compaen's first fence in Salé, he paid such low prices that Compaen soon found other brokers and enmity grew between the two men. One day Compaen got word that the Young Dancer and another pirate were planning to steal some of his booty. Compaen had just returned from a voyage and he cordially invited the Young Dancer on board of his ship. The Dancer left after a good meal, returning the next day for a second dinner accompanied by his friend and conspirator. After a sumptuous dinner, with everyone in high spirits, Compaen said, "I know of your plans and make you my prisoners. Either give me your ships or engage me in battle."

The Young Dancer and his friend seem to have been in great awe of Compaen's martial accomplishments, but decided that they'd rather fight than surrender their ships. They returned to their vessels and prepared for battle. One gathers that they were not able to leave the harbor because of the placement of Compaen's fleet, which may also have outnumbered them. Twenty-four hours later, when Compaen attacked, it took only a few broadsides for the second pirate to surrender. The Dancer himself succeeded in reaching the open sea, but his rep-

utation in Salé was much damaged. We know from Dutch pirate historian L.C. Vrijman that the Young Dancer was pardoned in 1627 or 1628, and returned to Holland to become a privateer.

11.

At its strongest Compaen's fleet numbered seven ships. This turned out to be too large for a pirate fleet, where discipline was conspicuous by its absence. For this reason Compaen sold two of his ships and divided his best sailors and fighters among the others. Even so, his men occasionally deserted him and sailed away with a ship and its booty.

Discipline was, as might be expected, a major and continuous problem among the pirates. Danger and lack of discipline were the two main characteristics of their existence. The Schoolmaster and Wassenaer both write that Compaen and his comrades were always on guard, with musket and loaded pistols within reach even when they were asleep. These writers suggest that Compaen lived in fear of his men. After his retirement he is reported to have told his first victim, the fisherman from Egmond, "You complain about your discomfort. I have often had to pay large sums of money to be guarded during two or three hours sleep, and still had to be careful not only of others but even of my own people." Compaen had a few personal bodyguards, men he had to richly reward, but both Wassenaer and the Schoolmaster may exaggerate his fear in order to emphasize the vanity of the pirate's way of life. (In this regard the Schoolmaster refers to the Book of Job and the sword of Damocles.) In other contexts they say that most of Compaen's men were loyal to him, since he was the only one who could

keep the "disorganized heap" together. Most of his crew stayed with him until he retired, and after that some regretted that they no longer served under someone like him, who abided by the bandit's rule and divided the booty on the spot. He rewarded his men handsomely. In return he expected his authority to be acknowledged.

The Schoolmaster gives the following example of the disciplinary problem pirate captains faced. One day Compaen took a ship in Spanish waters. The cargo consisted of 200 tons of sweet wine and some 200 crates of sugar, and Compaen feared that he had taken "the wolf by his ears." As he expected, his pirates soon started a drinking bout, mixing the wine with sugar and drinking until midnight, when most were dead drunk. At that point three pirate officers led by Hendrick the boatswain, who had long held a grudge against his captain, saw their chance to depose or kill Compaen. They waited until he retired to his cabin (with one musket under him ready to fire, and another one next to him) then told the pirates with whom they were on closest terms that the time was right for deposing the captain and seizing the booty. To the other pirates they said that they had been held under the authority of one man for too long, that Compaen was enriching himself and keeping his men poor and dependant, and that they, the officers, would give the men a better deal.

Most of the pirates were too drunk to realize what it was all about, but started an uproar anyway. When some went to Compaen's cabin to take him prisoner or kill him, not being too clear about it themselves, he faced the mutiny head on. He came out and asked what the men wanted. Hendrick demanded his resignation. Compaen turned to the other pirates: he

would do as they asked, he said, and his charisma swayed them. They yelled that they wanted to live and die with their captain. At this a general melee began, during which Compaen and some loyal men drove the conspirators below decks and clapped them in irons. Four pirates were killed before order was restored.

What did he do with the mutineers? Blackbeard would probably have slowly tortured them to death, but this was not Compaen's style. On the contrary, he treated the conspirators generously. Instead of executing them he kept them in irons and put them ashore one by one in such a way that they wouldn't be any more danger to him. Hendrick was the last to be set free, and was handed a parting present of ducats. In this way Compaen enhanced his reputation among his own crew.

12.

The pirates' standard of living oscillated between excess and want. Order was maintained in eating and drinking on board the ships (unless a cargo of wine was taken), but food was often scarce on the open sea and pirates couldn't just sail into any harbor to fetch supplies. Often they went hungry. Compaen would later say that there were times when he had gladly given one of his yachts for two or three casks of peas. In this condition the pirates sometimes made pillaging expeditions on land — not for treasure, but for food. "Hunger is a sharp sword," the Schoolmaster piously reminds us.

On one of these expeditions Compaen's fleet arrived at a port controlled by the Spaniards. The pirates decided to attack. Compaen and a large number of his men took to the boats, but

the surf was so strong that they could not reach the beach. The pirates had to walk and swim through the water to the beach while trying to keep their powder, ammunition, and fuses as dry as possible. Once they reached the beach Compaen drew his men up in battle array, but the Spaniards were ready. The pirates were gunned down before they could reach the city walls. Compaen had no cannon to attack the walls, and a Spanish sortie drove the pirates back into the sea. Many of the corsairs fell on the beach. Some drowned in the surf. Fewer than half reached the boats. Compaen, who was a good swimmer, was the last pirate in the general flight. He bound the drummer, who could not swim, on his drum and swam with him to the boats.

As usual Compaen seems to have maintained his sangfroid throughout the incident. Later he said that while he was swimming to the boats he saw one of his officers already dead on the sea bottom and had to restrain himself from diving down to cut a gold ring with a precious stone from the dead man's finger. Back on board he counted his men and declared that too few had died. There was still too little food for all the survivors.

13.

In addition to their lack of food the pirates often lacked other necessities, such as yarn, which they sometimes had to buy at two or three times the going price. On the other hand, there were times when they could live in abundance. Then, the gambling and the drinking did not stop on board the ships. When lying in harbor, the pirates spent their days trading and their nights partying. As many as a hundred people might

come on board, committing, as the Schoolmaster puts it, "every act of impiety, fornication, and uncleanness." From early in the morning until deep into the night one could hear people curse and swear.

After his retirement Compaen often said that during the first two years of his piracy he tried to maintain order using the Bible, books of prayer, and the Psalms, and irons and chains to punish offenders. But his men became so fierce that in the end he threw the religious books *and* the irons and chains overboard and developed a better way to maintain order. Whenever his men had words and came to blows, he forced them to fight with each other encircled by their fellow-pirates. In this way, unable to flee, they fought until one of them went down. The wounded had to pay the doctor 100 guilders on the spot before he would attend to them. This system brought, as one might imagine, better order to the pirate ships.

On the whole the regimen among Compaen's pirates seems to have been less a democratic system, as was the case with some pirates who elected their captains, than a mixture of tyranny and anarchy. Certainly rough, but not unpleasant if we compare it to the conditions aboard contemporary merchant and navy ships, where the captain ruled as a king. The pirates had to obey their captain during times of fighting, chasing, and being chased. For the rest, however, they were left almost as free as pleased them, settling their disputes with fists and knives. Moreover, their material prospects were much better than those of "normal" seamen. For this they paid the price of turning outlaw, but one suspects that the transition between being a pirate and serving on a merchantman or a man-of-war was not difficult for the ordinary sailor.

14.

Concerning strategy, Compaen primarily tried to use cunning rather than brute force, and took his prizes with as little violence as possible, often under the pretension of friendship. Many a captain paid for his credulity with his ship and cargo, without facing any sword or gun play. But when necessary Compaen proved himself an accomplished sea warrior. As has already been said, his pirates were feared among the seafaring nations for their fierce attacks, but they never hurt anyone in cold blood.

Let us examine the praxis of Compaen's strategy. The Schoolmaster tells of a Dutch ship, the *Omval van Hoorn*, captained by Evert Cornelisz. van Barkhout, that was taking on a lading of wood at the isle of May (off the west coast of Africa). Compaen dropped anchor beside the *Omval* and started a friendly conversation with Barkhout. They exchanged the latest news visiting each other — Barkhout was under the impression that Compaen was a Dutch navy captain. On one visit to Compaen, Barkhout and two other Dutch captains were startled when Compaen asked, "What would you think if I took your ships? Here, you are in my power." The captains thought this a good joke. Compaen was a fellow Dutchman and they were all patriots, he would never do anything like that. They all parted on friendly terms.

Then a French pirate showed up, and the brotherhood of pirates asserted itself. The Frenchman told Compaen that he had lost most of his men and could no longer sufficiently man his ship. With some apprehension Compaen invited the Frenchman to join his fleet (he seems to have wondered

whether or not he was welcoming an enemy). He decided to work with the Frenchman to take the three Dutch merchantmen, then to give the other pirate a smaller ship and send him away. The pirates waited for favorable winds and currents that would enable them to get away. Then they sent ashore a few of their men to inquire what the crew of the *Omval* was doing. The men from the *Omval* were busy getting salt from the salt-pans, and there were only a few men left on board the ship. The pirates took their chance, boarded the *Omval*, slipped the anchor, and sailed to a spot closer to Compaen. Barkhout, who was on shore, suddenly became aware that his ship was gone. He visited Compaen, perhaps still hoping that it was a joke, but despite all his protestations his ship wasn't returned to him. Instead Compaen gave him fifty ducats to assist him and his men to return to Holland, and promised to return the ship when he returned there himself. (Amazingly, Compaen did indeed give Barkhout the *Omval* back when he finally returned to Holland.) In the meantime, however, he put the ship, a quick sailor, to good use, and took booty worth more than 90,000 guilders with it. The French pirate had to be satisfied with provisions and a yacht from Compaen's fleet, but wasn't given any of the booty from the *Omval*. Threats availed him nothing.

Compaen employed a similar strategy when he had to flee from Ireland to Salé and was in want of provisions. It being too dangerous to sail to Dublin, he went north around Ireland. On the Atlantic coast he sailed into a bay and anchored next to another ship, a merchant. As with Barkhout he became friendly with the captain. Two brand new guns mounted on the ship awoke his desire. He offered to buy them, but the captain refused, so Compaen devised another plan. He let his men get

the other ship's crew drunk in the local taverns. Having done this, the pirates returned to their boats, disabled the merchant ship's boats, and took possession of her. Compaen boarded her and sailed her away. He kept the guns and the cargo, but returned the ship and most of its provisions to its captain.

Compaen's tricks became so well known, and he himself became so notorious, that fewer and fewer people trusted him. One Dutch (Frisian) ship captained by Auke Douwes, with fourteen mortars but few men, lay at anchor in the port of Salé. Compaen sailed into the harbor and spotted the ship. His first thought was to attack her, but he devised another strategy. He invited Douwes to visit him, but by this time the ruses of the fox were too well known. Douwes refused the invitation, and when the news was brought to him Compaen remarked: "No one trusts a knave."

When necessary, however, Compaen was quite prepared to fight. Take the following story as an example. Although he had chosen to wage war against his own Republic, Compaen the pirate remained a bitter enemy of the Spaniards. They in their turn were determined to capture him at any price. One of their best admirals was the Belgian, Colaert. (Colaert was later stationed at Dunkirk, and ravaged Dutch trade with his privateers. He was defeated in 1637 when his fleet met a Dutch fleet from the province of Zealand.) When Colaert was notified that Compaen had been seen off the Spanish coast, the Belgian immediately sailed from the isle of St. Lucas with four men-of-war, well armed and well manned. With a favorable wind he ran Compaen to the coast and forced him to engage in battle. At first it seemed that the pirates would be defeated, but they fought like lions and succeeded in breaking through the Spaniards and reaching open sea.

15.

After three years of fighting and pillaging Compaen seems to have become weary of the game. He had amassed enough treasure to live the rest of his life in comfort, and began to think of getting a pardon from the Dutch government that would enable him to retire. Offering pardons was a widespread tactic of governments trying to rid themselves of pirates they couldn't hang. The suggestion to pardon Compaen had already been given to the Dutch States by a man named Backeleroth. A Scottish pirate had captured him as a passenger on a Spanish ship and took him to an Irish port, where he met Compaen (this must have been before the English authorities in Ireland turned against the pirate). Backeleroth got the impression that Compaen possessed a large treasure: his arms and neck were covered with gold jewelry and his pockets were stuffed with ducats. The pirate was nearing forty, with his wife and children still in Holland. He had a crew of 115 or 120 men on his ship, "the boldest there were, each one a Hercules." And Compaen threatened that if he didn't get a pardon, he would join the Turks and turn renegade like Jan Jansz.

In his report to the Dutch government Backeleroth stated that Compaen did great harm to Dutch trade. A pardon was the only way to stop him. The government seems to have accepted the advice, because Compaen's half-brother Hein Aartsz. (who must have had the same mother) was sent to offer the pirate his pardon. Hein, however, could not find his brother.

16.

Before the pardon was effectuated Compaen had a violent encounter with the Dutch admiral Wybrant Schram — a battle about which we are well informed because Schram's logbook, containing an account of his voyage to the East Indies and the battle with Compaen, was published in Amsterdam. The logbook was an important source for both Wassenaer and the Schoolmaster. It is the most detailed available account of Compaen's exploits. The Schoolmaster follows it closely, taking whole passages verbatim out of it — fully one third of the Schoolmaster's booklet concerns the pirate attack on Schram.

On the 3rd of May 1626, Schram set sail bound for the East Indies. He commanded a nine-ship merchant flotilla belonging to the Dutch East India Company. On May 30th Schram's ship, the yacht *Hollandia*, began to draw water. The larger part of the fleet separated off to take the quickest route, while the *Hollandia* and the yacht *Grootenbroeck* steered toward the port of Sierra Leone on the West African coast. On the 4th of July, Schram arrived at Sierra Leone, but because of the high tide he was unable to enter the harbor. At sunrise the following morning he sighted four ships steering their course to the harbor. Because it was unclear what kind of ships they were, Schram made ready for battle. Chests and cupboards were placed below decks in the soldiers' sleeping quarters. Seventy tuns of beer and water were placed on deck, with holes drilled in them so they could be thrown overboard if Schram had to sail more quickly. The portholes were opened and the guns made ready to fire. The soldiers were ordered on deck in battle-array. When the mysterious fleet approached it hoisted the colors of the

Prince of Orange, but it too had its guns ready and a red cloth (*roode Schant-kleeden*) hung on deck.

One of the ships sailed close enough that Schram could ask where she came from, i.e. from which country. "From the sea," came the reply. It was Compaen, who cordially informed Schram that he was awaiting his pardon. The two ships saluted each other, then Compaen returned to his small fleet and hoisted the blood-red flag. When the pirates came on in good order towards the *Hollandia*, Schram hailed them and announced that he had "already heard much about Compaen's goodwill and knew what it meant." His soldiers fired a musket volley that forced the pirates below decks. Compaen, who was standing with drawn sword on the poop, fell on his belly, shot in the arm. His original plan had been to board the *Hollandia*, feeling that the *Grootenbroeck*, which kept her distance and cannonaded the pirates, would be an easy prey once the larger ship was seized. Now Compaen changed tactics and started to cannonade the *Hollandia* at a distance. The *Hollandia* tried to close the distance and succeeded in firing more musket volleys that forced Compaen to close his gun ports. His vice-admiral started to draw water and had to move farther away. The battle continued for four hours, from noon until four. When Compaen realized that he couldn't take the *Hollandia*, he steered toward the *Grootenbroeck*. The *Hollandia* ran after him with all sails set. She got windward of Compaen, forcing him into shallow water. The other pirates followed him, and came to anchor in six fathoms of water.

Schram dropped anchor at eight fathoms. The battle had cost him six wounded, four of whom would die. The preacher, who had to have a leg amputated, and the preacher's wife, who had lost both her legs and her left buttock, both died on the 8th

of July. Later, the head carpenter and a soldier who had lost a leg also died. Two other men, a sergeant and a midshipman, suffered only flesh wounds. (It was later discovered that the pirates lost seventeen dead and another seventeen wounded, including Compaen himself.) Schram's casualties seem rather light after a four-hour sea battle, especially considering that the *Hollandia* had 450 men on board. But the size of his crew and his very capable defense may account for his victory over the larger pirate fleet. Though Compaen may have had only 115 or 120 men on his ship, he had more guns in his fleet. His ships had, respectively, 44, 26, 24, and 12 mounted guns. The *Hollandia* had 26 guns and the *Grootenbroeck* 14, but Schram successfully closed the distance between the fleets so Compaen couldn't easily cannonade him.

The day after the battle, July 6th, the pirates sailed into the harbor. Schram, however, needed three days to mend his ships. On July 9th he was ready to set sail, and at ten in the morning on July 10th, he too entered the harbor, where the pirates still lay at anchor. Compaen judged that cunning must now replace violence. At his request two Negroes from Sierra Leone went in a canoe with a letter to Schram. In it Compaen apologized for what had happened, offering to forgive and forget and to become friends. He even had the audacity to ask for some provisions (he would pay double the going rate, of course), and asked for information concerning his pardon. He claimed that his aim had been to attack English ships, but that his three eldest officers (the rascals), who had been with him since he left Holland, had lost all their money gambling and had forced him to attack Schram's ships. To show that he was basically a good fellow Compaen mentioned his latest battle with Colaert's

Spanish squadron (Spain and the Netherlands still being at war with each other), and requested conversation with a fellow Christian, saying, "I only visit heathens and Moslems."

The writer of the logbook comments: "See how a dog wags his tail after he has been beaten!" He further reports that it was later learned that Compaen himself had decided on the attack, telling his men: "She is bound for the East Indies. They have at least eight chests of gold and silver with them."

Here Schram displayed some cunning of his own. He did not want to continue the battle either, so he wrote back that he too was sorry. He also made the interesting remark that many men on his ships had friends on the pirate ships: "Ay, a son his father." So we have further evidence of how easily the transition could be between "normal" seamen and pirates in those days. Schram was willing to accept Compaen's "friendship" on condition that the pirates weighed anchor and moved farther away, so he could run into the sea lanes. Compaen didn't intend to open the way. Again he sent messengers, this time his master Jan Symonsz. Struys and six men who were all "richly and costly attired," the logbook notes. Schram held to his demands, but Struys was in no hurry to return to his ship, spending the whole afternoon drinking and carousing with the crew on the *Hollandia* before returning dead drunk.

On the next day, July 11th, more letters were exchanged, to no avail for the pirate. Late on the 12th, he finally weighed anchor. The ship that had started to draw water during the battle was stripped of its anchor, guns, and ammunition and beached. Its crew was divided among the other ships, and Compaen dropped anchor half a mile away. Schram could now run his ships out to the open sea, but the pirates were so close

that with a favorable current they could attack him in half an hour. He therefore held his men on guard with burning fuses while he further mended his ships and took on lemons.

On July 19th Schram weighed anchor and left the harbor. Compaen was still lying there and saluted him with his big guns. But he hadn't given up hope. On July 21st, in very bad weather, the *Hollandia* lost sight of the *Grootenbroeck*. The next day the pirates reappeared. Seeing the *Hollandia* alone they came toward her. But when they noticed that Schram was ready for them they left again. The writer of the logbook mocks Compaen for this: "Why does he call himself Neptune and Master of the Sea? Could his claim be true that once, in the English Channel, he had sailed through a fleet of thirty Dutch and English ships who all fled from him, except the two he took as prizes?"

Compaen, however, was searching for the *Grootenbroeck*, a weaker victim. On finding her, he managed to get windward of her, but at this moment the *Hollandia* showed up and went at the pirates. At this Compaen dropped the whole matter and sailed away.

17.

After being outmaneuvered by Schram, Compaen sailed north, taking on the way a merchantman en route from Guinea richly laden with goods. The ship turned out to belong to his neighbor in Oostzaan, Jacob Quick, and it may have been the one that Compaen eventually gave to Jan Jansz. Compaen returned to Salé well provided with booty. There he learned that his pardon had finally arrived. Abram Valkenburg had brought it to Salé, together with Evert van Barkhout, whose old

ship the *Omval van Hoorn* was now part of the pirate fleet. Valkenburg and Barkhout had waited for half a year at the house of Jan Jansz. in Salé for Compaen to return, joined later in their stay by Compaen's brother Hein. Compaen was expected to report before a certain date or his pardon would be voided. Hein brought news of the prolongation of the pardon.

When Compaen heard the news he decided that the time had come to return home. He sold his booty for approximately 50,000 guilders, but the "alcalde" of Salé still owed him money. Without divulging his plan to leave, Compaen invited the alcalde aboard his ship for dinner. After a rich meal Compaen pulled one of his surprises, telling the alcalde that he was ready to sail away and would take him along unless he was given his money. The alcalde sent for the money, but most of the silver *reales* that were brought to Compaen were false. In his anger the pirate threw them out the window. Most sank, but some fell in the boat that had fetched them and were taken by the sailors. Compaen did not free the alcalde until he had gotten all his money in good silver coins.

Compaen was ready to sail when he discovered that there was a Jewish merchant on board accompanied by a Dutch slave. The slave turned out to be related to one of the pirates, who was negotiating his ransom from the Jew. Compaen fell into a mighty rage. He yelled that he allowed no slaves on board his ships. All his men, and all his countrymen, were free, as far as he was concerned, and no one would pay for his freedom. When the Jew protested, Compaen said, "Shall I let myself be forced by the betrayers of Christ? Throw the dog overboard." A couple of pirates immediately obliged. Luckily, some boatmen fished the Jew out of the water and took him ashore.

18.

Compaen then sailed out bound for Holland. But before he could become a respectable citizen again he had to mend his ways. Valkenburg, Barkhout, and Hein Compaen were with him on board, and when they shared their first dinner in the captain's cabin they took off their hats and started to say the Lord's Prayer. Claes Compaen had already started to eat, and asked what they were doing. When they told him, he replied, "Oh, there is no need to thank God, since He has not been on this ship for two years." (Two years earlier the pirate had thrown all his religious books into the sea.) At this point the Schoolmaster laments that Compaen showed such little fear of God, and that the pirates lived as if there was no God!

In another way Compaen soon showed that it would not be easy for him to abandon the life he was leading. The pirate ships encountered two Dutch ships near the Strait of Gibraltar. When some of the sailors visited Compaen's ships, they secretly offered to help the pirates take possession of the ships in return for part of the booty. The officers approved the plan and put the matter before Compaen. Knowing that taking the ships would nullify his pardon, Compaen put the plan before an assembly of his pirates, telling them that everyone would suffer the consequences of their decision. The pirates told him that they would accept his choice. (Clearly, the pirates were ambivalent about a return to civil life.) Compaen was willing to take the ships, and his career as a pirate might have been prolonged if Barkhout hadn't intervened with tears in his eyes at seeing all his labor threatened. Barkhout had one powerful argument that finally swayed Compaen: the news that a powerful Dutch

navy squadron commanded by Admiral Lourens Real was looking for him. Real had dropped anchor at Salé only four days after Compaen had left, so the pirate decided to leave the ships alone and sail for Holland.

On the Irish coast Compaen fetched supplies. His men took on not only food and drink, but also a large number of whores. As the Schoolmaster puts it, noticing that the pirates were well provided with gold, silver, and jewelry the "wanton" women came aboard and did not leave "until they [the pirates] were satisfied from the work of Venus." During the revelry Evert van Barkhout again urged Compaen not to waste time and exceed the time limit of his pardon. At last Compaen gave the order to weigh anchor. The whores were taken ashore in the boats. And once ashore the pirates took away the money they had given to the women, tearing their clothes apart with great laughter and chasing the bare-assed women across the beach. The only woman who escaped this fate was Compaen's sweetheart. On Barkhout's advice she had chosen not to take the boats to the beach, and probably got back by swimming. On hearing that she had escaped Compaen said that he was glad and would have been angry if his men had harmed her.

19.

As Compaen sailed along the Irish coast Jan Quenoy brought him a fourteen-day extension of his pardon. When Compaen reached Dutch waters he had four days left. Entering the Vlie, a straịt connecting the North Sea with Holland, he sent a messenger to Medemblik to get the pardon. At this stage

of the Schoolmaster's story we at last get an answer to why Barkhout went to such great effort to make certain that Compaen arrived in time for his pardon. Compaen's flagship was no longer the old *Walta*, it was now the *Omval van Hoorn*, which he had taken from Barkhout. The ship, which was worth 22,000 guilders, would now return to its owner, Jan Dirksz. Deugt. Deugt had ensured Compaen his pardon and Barkhout was Deugt's representative, sent to return with Compaen *and* the *Omval*. The other two pirate ships were also returned to their rightful owners. As were the nine guns that Compaen had once taken from Pieter Evertsz.

On the Vlie Compaen left his fleet and went in secret to the town of Vianen, where he waited for his pardon. Only when he had received it did he feel secure enough to go to The Hague, the government seat of the Republic, and make obeisance to the Prince of Orange in presence of the States-General. Compaen offered a large present of gold, but the Prince wanted no part of stolen goods. His courtiers, however, had no such scruples. In fact, many important and less important people in The Hague beseeched him. Compaen didn't stay there long, going as quickly as possible in a barge to Oostzaan in company with a large number of his men. The Schoolmaster was present at his homecoming, and it must have been a strange spectacle to see the notorious pirate and his richly dressed bodyguards being welcomed by his relatives and neighbors.

20.

Compaen did not relax his guard when he reached home. He kept a bodyguard of three men: Willem de Visser, who had been with him from the beginning; Agge from Frisia, who had been his cabin-guard and first servant during the piracies; and a Frenchman. Agge died a few years after returning to Holland, but not before the Schoolmaster had taught him how to write. Compaen and his men were always armed. At home two loaded pistols were kept behind the door. The Schoolmaster got the impression that Compaen lived in constant fear of a hold-up, but he couldn't have been too frightened because he often walked alone behind the village church, dressed in strange clothes that must have added to the impression he made. Coming back from his walks he often passed through the Schoolmaster's classroom, where "everyone was too busy with reading to look up at him." Perhaps they did not dare.

The Schoolmaster describes the returned Compaen as a man of forty, of large build with a manly countenance, well spoken but too careful to say much about his pirate years. After his return he lived quietly in Oostzaan for more than thirty years, his great passion being fishing. Work was, of course, no longer necessary, but fishing was also a good strategy for evading people who came to see him. Some were friends, as in the case of a Portuguese who embraced him as a brother, but others had accounts to settle.

One of the latter was the fisherman from Egmond, Compaen's first victim. His loss still rankled, and he visited Compaen asking for compensation. Compaen, however, did not wish to speak to him and left the house, saying he had other

business to attend to. But his wife took pity on the fisherman, giving him four gold coins and a glass of wine. However, the man was still unsatisfied and waited until Compaen returned to ask for more money. "How much did you get?" the former pirate asked. When the fisherman showed him, Compaen took the coins and refused to give them back. Later in the day Compaen and his family and servant went for an outing to the city of Zaandam, taking the fisherman with them — the only way, one gathers, to get him out of the house, now that the simple expediencies of a pirate were no longer acceptable behavior. Compaen was richly attired in red cloth with a silver collar, and was armed with pistols and other weapons (possibly a sword and dagger). On the way to Zaandam the fisherman complained about the great hazards of his profession. Compaen replied that his profession had been much more dangerous and uncomfortable. He had to be always on guard, even against his own men. He had often wished to be home living in peace and quiet with only three or four thousand guilders. Had he the choice to start over he would rather be a cavalryman in the army of the Prince of Orange.

We should not take Compaen's complaint too seriously, though he must often have longed for some peace when he was a pirate — as he occasionally must have longed for some action after he returned to Oostzaan. The fisherman, however, was stunned by the story. He hadn't looked at a pirate's life from this point of view and seems to have secretly envied the sea robbers. In Zaandam the company went to a tavern for a drink. The municipal secretary of Oostzaan, Jacob de Grael, had joined the party, which shows how far Compaen was from being a pariah in his village, notorious pirate or no notorious

pirate. When the fisherman again begged for money Compaen asked how much his share of the cargo would have been, since the boat didn't belong to him. He said that he didn't care a fig for ships' owners, none of the owners of the 350 ships he had taken, and would look them in the eye anytime they liked. In the end, however, Compaen promised to give the fisherman a gift when next he came to visit. Hereafter it became a merry drinking party, during which Compaen asked the fisherman what he would have done had both his boat and his cargo been taken from him. The fisherman replied, "Surely, I would have stayed with you, to share booty and tussling."

21.

The Schoolmaster finishes his story saying that Compaen is now seventy years old, and times have changed. Both Compaen's son Jan and his half-brother Hein have drowned at sea. What's more, the former pirate has become a poor man. With this ending, he gives the necessary example of the vanity of the way of the pirate. But is it true? Soeteboom, in the history of the region of the Zaanstreek that he published in 1658, when Compaen was 71 and not long before he died, does not mention the pirate's poverty. And other oral traditions in Oostzaan also bring the Schoolmaster's version in question. In the 1930s, gold fever spread through the village, with all kinds of people unsuccessfully searching for Compaen's treasure.

Afterword

What are we to make of Compaen's *marronage*? As an active pirate he may have been an outlaw, but one interesting subtheme of the Schoolmaster's story is how easy it was to return to normal life. Whether piracy or trade, business was business, and the pirate Compaen was as heartily welcomed back to Oostzaan as any merchant. Perhaps notions of the sacred right of property and the duty of obedience to the law were not yet significantly internalized at this period. There seems to have been some flexibility concerning the boundaries between ordinary seamen and those who opted for the grand marronage of piracy. And it may have helped Compaen that he avoided unnecessary bloodshed and preferred to take ships by cunning; that he didn't execute his hostages, and often gave his victims money and other necessities. Feared he may have been, but he doesn't seem to have been hated much.

Of course, pirates were not Robin Hoods. The benefactors of their social rebellion and banditry were themselves. Despite any conceptual flexibility between pirates and other seamen that might have existed in the public mind, pirates created their own laws and "pirate utopias," not caring whether they were fated to last. As Compaen's biography makes clear, this was no idyllic world for soft-hearted idealists. But for most pirates it was better than slaving on a merchantman, or starving as a poor fisherman.

In his essay "Basic Banalities" (*Internationale Situationniste* # 7, 1962) Raoul Vaneigem wrote, "By refusing to play the rules of the game, pirates, gangsters and outlaws disturb those with good consciences (whose consciences are a reflection of myth),

but the masters, by killing the encroacher or enrolling him as a cop, reestablish the omnipotence of 'eternal truth': those who don't sell themselves lose their right to survive, and those who do sell themselves lose their right to live." Because Compaen did not sell himself, the Schoolmaster had to take from him his right to survive. Otherwise the omnipotence of the eternal truth of Christian values and merchant capitalist society would have been violated. Early accounts of piracy (the Schoolmaster's as well as Charles Johnson's, 65 years later) sat in moral judgment on piracy and took care that most of their villains came to a bad end. To me the interesting point is that we enjoy their stories *despite* this judgment. I believe it's because a pirate takes his life in his own hands and transcends all limitations, including those of ideology. Like his brother-pirates, Compaen played his own game. And for three years he got away with it, which is much longer than most of us will ever even try.

Zeer Aanmerkelijke Reysen

veel andere deelen des werelds

THE OTHER LOOSE ROVING WAY OF LIFE: THE VERY REMARKABLE TRAVELS OF JAN ERASMUS REYNING, BUCCANEER

Of all the affairs we participate in, with or without interest, the groping search for a new way of life is the only aspect still impassioning.... We need to work toward flooding the market — even if for the moment merely the intellectual market — with a mass of desires whose realization is not beyond the capacity of man's present means of action on the material world, but only beyond the capacity of the old social organization.

— Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography"

INTRODUCTION

DISGUSTED WITH THE CORRUPTION of the merchant capitalist bureaucracies in his homeland and the unjust treatment of himself, Compaen had chosen to set out on his own, creating in effect a moving republic on the vessels of his small pirate flotilla. It was an autonomous republic that found its hiding places and markets in port towns in Ireland and on the Barbary coast and kept close social contacts with the European maritime proletariat. The codes that regulated pirates' behavior among themselves on their vessels, and

their conscious expression of difference from the world of "normal", regular merchantmen and warships became more outspoken and articulate after 1630, as the preferred scene of employment for European pirates shifted to the West Indies. At the same time as the Dutch, English, and French naval powers expanded their influence into the Spanish-controlled Americas, European adventurers and outlaws began smuggling and colonizing on and among the Caribbean islands. Plantations were started and attempts were made to break the Spanish monopoly on trade. African slaves and indentured servants from Europe were imported as labor for the plantations, and a state of almost continuous warfare ensued between the Western European interlopers, who did not hesitate to plunder Spanish vessels, and the Spaniards. It was warfare punctuated by raids, counter-raids, and piracies. Regardless of the state of diplomatic affairs on the European continent during the seventeenth century, "beyond the line" (west of the longitude of the Azores and south of the Tropic of Cancer) there was no peace.

The Dutch became especially active when, after the Twelve Years' Truce with Spain that held between 1609 and 1621, hostilities between the two nations recommenced. Dutch fleets sailed into the Caribbean, sacking Spanish cities on the coast of the Yucatan and capturing richly-laden Spanish galleons. Dutch expeditions attacked Puerto Rico in 1625 and captured a Spanish treasure convoy off Cuba in 1628. (The admiral of this particular expedition, Piet Heyn, was a more respectable version of Claas Compaen who lives on in public memory through children's verses about his "silver fleet.") Pie de Palo (Wooden Leg), as the peg-legged Dutch captain Cornelis

Cornelisz. Jol was called, soon became feared throughout the West Indies, and pioneered many buccaneer tactics. Besides taking Spanish prizes, Jol played a prominent part in the sack of the Mexican port of Campeche in 1633, and raided Santiago de Cuba in 1635. Unfortunately, while sailing back to the Netherlands, he was taken prisoner by a squadron of Dunkirk privateers under the command of the same Jacques Colaert who gave Compaen such a hard time.

"Legal" privateering expeditions like those undertaken by Heyn and Jol, which promised pay and plunder to common sailors and soldiers, naturally attracted a lot of unruly elements. Despite their legal status, Heyn and Jol were not much different from their Barbary counterparts, though their expeditions were not organized as pirate expeditions — these were not actions by autonomous units with their own agenda. The potential for sea roving in the Caribbean was not lost on less-respectable sea captains. After about 1630, a European pirate who might formerly have joined the Barbary corsairs was probably shifting his primary attention to the West Indies. This is partly because the innovative maritime techniques commanded by the West European captains (as had been introduced in Algiers by the elder Simon the Dancer) were no longer new in North Africa, and partly because "the European marauders found all authoritarian rule stifling and so preferred to seek their livelihood elsewhere" (Marley 1997, 13). We know that the autonomous pirate republic of Salé ended in 1641. Little research has been done on the subject, so we cannot say whether there was any connection between Barbary corsairs and Caribbean privateers, but is it too fanciful to suppose a connection between the fall of Salé and a move to the Caribbean?

MEMOIRS OF THE BUCCANEERS

As we learned in Compaen's story, the boundary between common sailors and pirates was not an inflexible one. Piracy was, in that violent era, always a possible alternative for maritime proletarians. We know more about the flexibility of this boundary for the second half of the seventeenth century than for earlier periods of piracy due to a number of published memoirs and reminiscences. The Englishman, William Dampier, four times privateered around the world. Jean-Baptiste Labat, a French priest, sailed with the buccaneers. Ravenau de Lussan, the adventurer, and Basil Ringrose, the English buccaneer, both wrote memoirs. For the history of the Caribbean buccaneers before the 1670s, historians and pirate enthusiasts have been primarily indebted to *The History of the Buccaneers*, a book published for the first time (in Dutch) in 1678 in Amsterdam. From that source have come all those images that haunted our childhood fantasies: the hunters preying on Spanish treasuries; the cruelties of L'Olonnais; the epic saga of the sack of Panama by Morgan's pirates. *The History of the Buccaneers* was written by one of the freebooters, a French surgeon named Alexander Olivier Exquemelin (1645–1707), who is known to have settled temporarily as a respectable surgeon in Amsterdam, but who is also found participating in the French attack on Cartagena in 1697.

THE *ZEER AANMERKELIJKE REYSEN*

However, the focus of this essay is another Dutch pirate memoir, a book now almost totally overlooked — partly because it was never translated into English or any other language and partly because its style is less appealing than that of Exquemelin. (L.C. Vrijman, the piratologist whose retelling of the book was published in 1937, proclaimed it virtually unreadable.) The memoir was written by David Van der Sterre, a physician in the Dutch settlement on the small Caribbean island of Curaçao (where he was medical supervisor of the slave station). It was published in 1691 in Amsterdam by Jan ten Hoorn, the same publisher and bookseller who printed Exquemelin.

In the *Zeer Aanmerkelijke Reysen Gedaan door Jan Erasmus Reining, Meest in de West Indien en ook in veel andere deelen des werelds...* (*The Very Remarkable Travels of Jan Erasmus Reyning, Mostly in the West Indies and also in many other parts of the world*), Van der Sterre transcribes the memories of his good friend Jan Erasmus Reyning. At the time it was written Reyning was a Dutch navy commander who had fought against the French in King William's War and was regarded as a hero by the colonists of Curaçao. In his introduction (dated 12 October 1688), Van der Sterre writes, "Our Jan Erasmus has made a considerable contribution to saving the inhabitants of Curaçao from famine" (by privateering against the French, we learn in the book). He must be remembered, "because one can regard him with reason as a Father and Savior."

I don't agree with Vrijman's assessment of the book as unreadable. There are certainly longwinded and boring parts,

and there are no hidden literary gems. The power of concise description that characterizes Exquemelin is missing. But, precisely because Van der Sterre has no literary gifts and worships Reyning as a true hero, the book has much to offer students of piratology. Van der Sterre is content to be the uncritical mouthpiece of his friend, and in this way we come to know how an unrepentant old sea rover, turned respectable, remembers his sea-roving life. We see Reyning as he wishes to portray himself. His reminiscences are a nice accompaniment to those of Exquemelin because they concern the same period and both men fought in some of the same campaigns. And for our purposes, Van der Sterre's book can be read as a template for the making of a man: first, Reyning rises from the rank of common sailor to become a pirate commander in the West Indies; then he returns to respectability as a commander in the Dutch navy. I am, of course, primarily interested in the first theme, and what Reyning tells us about the customs and mores of the sea-rovers of the West Indies.

In the pages that follow I will follow his career as a privateer, interlacing the narrative with comments based on other studies of the West Indian freebooters. In this way we will explore the world of the freebooters set in contrast to the "straight" world of the seventeenth century. For me the central question remains: how far can the freebooters' world be seen as an "upside-down" world, inverting normal social relationships?

YOUNG JAN ERASMUS

Reyning's father was an immigrant, one of the thousands of German and Scandinavian sailors who moved to Dutch port towns to find work. Reyning does not tell us his name, only that he was a Dane born in Copenhagen who settled in Vlissingen (Flushing) and married a Dutch girl. In 1640, Jan Erasmus Reyning was born from this marriage. From early in his life Reyning was one of those maritime nomads who circled the world, settling themselves when they could work, moving on when they couldn't. In later life, he served as easily under Dutch, English, French, or Spanish flags as under his own pirate flag.

As a boy, Jan Erasmus followed in the footsteps of his father. He was only ten years old when he first went to sea, as a ship's boy on the same merchantman his father signed on as a boatswain. Two years later he experienced his first sea battles and privateering. In 1652, the First Dutch War began between England and Holland. The English navy blockaded Dutch trade. Labor opportunities on merchantmen were minimal, so the Reynings signed on with a privateer — on a flyboat with twenty-one guns captained by Jan van Hooze. The flyboat (in Dutch: *fluyt*) was a popular vessel among pirates and privateers. As British pirate historian C.M. Senior explains (1976, 26), the flyboat came closest to fulfilling their criteria for an adequate vessel: "[it possessed] speed, sturdiness (pirate vessels often had to mount large numbers of heavy guns), stability in rough seas, a shallow draught for inshore work and, of course, general seaworthiness." He describes the flyboat as "a single-decked, shallow-draught vessel with three masts, square-rigged and designed to be handled by a small crew. Flyboats had no

figureheads, a minimum of decoration and had few or no gunports." But they were very fast vessels and, although designed to be handled by a few men, were able to accommodate more than a hundred men in the space below decks. Another advantage was that the sturdy build of the hull enabled the flyboat to carry extra weight, including the twenty or thirty cannons that many pirate ships carried (ibid., 27).

The first freebooting expedition in which Jan Erasmus participated was successful: the privateers brought eighteen prizes back to Flushing. The Reynings didn't wait long before signing on with another privateer, this time the *Ter Toolen*, with eighteen guns. Jan Erasmus became a gunner's mate, which meant that in battle he supplied ammunition to the gunners. In those days young sailors grew up quickly. Three days after the *Ter Toolen* set out she met her match in an English man-of-war with forty guns. The privateer succeeded in escaping, but only after a fierce battle that left her hull and rigging heavily damaged and a large number of men dead or wounded. Among the dead was Reyning's father, but the pace of events left little time for mourning. Shortly afterwards, in a fight with five English merchantmen just outside the English Channel, the *Ter Toolen* was again heavily damaged and had to sail for the neutral French port of Brest, where repairs were undertaken. Setting out again, the privateer took two prizes laden with wine. Two months later the *Ter Toolen* returned to Flushing.

It had been a very bad trip for the crew: thirty men were dead or wounded and only two prizes had been taken. Twelve-year-old Jan Erasmus Reyning had to break the news of his father's death to his mother, and we are told that the impact of his loss only got to him when he saw the sadness on her face. At

that moment he wept for the first time. But life went on and money had to be made. His mother urged him to go to sea again, and Van der Sterre tells us that his bold hero had no need of encouragement. A few days later the *Ter Toolen* set sail bound for Portugal with Jan Erasmus on board.

Portugal was taking advantage of the Anglo-Dutch War to recapture its possessions in Brazil from the Dutch. For privateers it was more profitable to cruise the Portuguese coast than to search for prizes in English waters, where the enemy was much stronger — it is important to keep in mind that privateering was, above all, a business, and patriotic sentiments took second place. The *Ter Toolen* and two other Dutch privateers sailed together from Flushing. They didn't take the short route through the Channel, where the heavily armed English ruled the sea. Instead they sailed north around Scotland and Ireland, but even on this longer route they had an encounter with three English men-of-war near the Shetland Islands. They managed to take possession of the biggest ship, which had forty guns, and chased the others away. Then, after careening their ships on the island of Virgo, they sailed to the Azores in the hope of meeting a richly laden Portuguese galleon returning from the Indies — the dream of every freebooter.

It does not profit us much to get into all the details of the voyages on which the young Jan Erasmus served his apprenticeship. Suffice it to say that on this voyage the privateers encountered two galleons, but were unable to take them. They did, however, capture two Barbary corsairs from Salé, and sold the ships and their crews in the Spanish port of Cadiz, where Moorish prisoners were much in demand as exchanges for Christian prisoners in the Barbary ports. The privateers took

two more prizes near the Portuguese coast before dropping anchor again at Flushing after an absence of eight months.

In 1654, the First Dutch War ended and Reyning returned to sailing with merchantmen. He was learning the techniques of sailing different types of ships, and at seventeen he signed on for the first time with a man-of-war, the *West-Cappel.* War had now broken out between the Dutch Republic and Sweden, and the *West-Cappel* was ordered to escort Dutch merchantmen sailing for Spain as protection against Swedish privateers and sea-rovers from other countries with Swedish commissions. Reyning saw little action on these voyages, and after the war he signed on as a steward's mate with another privateer.

The *Red Cow* was captained by Jan van Dort and bound for Portugal. She was a frigate, a three-masted vessel, fully square-rigged throughout but built more slimly than ships of the line, the warships that fought the great sea battles. One important target for European privateers seems to have been their Moslem counterparts, because the one memorable encounter of this voyage again concerns Barbary corsairs. After sailing into the Atlantic, the *Red Cow* encountered a ship that hoisted the colors of the Prince of Orange and of Flushing. Jan van Dort assumed that the ship was under the command of Lyn Brand, another Flushing privateer, but as the two ships approached many of its crewmen were seen to be wearing turbans, meaning that they had to be Moslem corsairs. Van Dort summoned his men on deck and had all fifty-three swear that they would stand by each other in the expected battle. Muskets were loaded and fuses lit. Strangely enough, the Moorish ship, which bore the name *Five-Pointed Star*, didn't seem inclined to fight. When the ships closed Van

Dort asked where the *Star* came from. "From Amsterdam," came the startling reply. On Van Dort's command the Star sent out a pinnace, and to Reyning's astonishment one of its rowers was an old mate from the *Ter Toolen.* The man explained that for three years he had been a slave on board the *Star*, which came from Algiers. Just the day before they met the *Red Cow*, the Dutch renegadoes who made up the greater part of the crew had settled an inter-pirate conflict with the Moors by liberating the slaves and seizing the ship. Reyning was in the boarding party sent to the *Star* and noticed the mess aboard the ship. In one cabin he found, hiding in the "shit-house" (*'t kak-Huys*), a Moor and two boys, and a one-eyed Greek renegado hidden beneath a bunk.

The Dutch renegadoes (who had converted to Islam) expressed their willingness to return to Christianity, and Van Dort agreed to take them and the liberated slaves back to the Netherlands. He showed less consideration to the Moors. Near the coast of one of the Azores islands they were unceremoniously dumped overboard. (We are told that they were close enough to the coast that they could swim ashore, but we aren't told whether the Dutch asked if they could swim before dumping them over the side. When the survivors landed the Portuguese took them prisoner, and presumably they ended up as slaves.) Van Dort put some men and a coxswain aboard the *Star* to sail her back to Flushing. He may have intended to keep her as his prize, but when the *Red Cow* returned to Flushing he learned that the renegadoes had preferred to go to Amsterdam and had forced the coxswain to steer his course there.

Reyning was now a full-grown sailor. Like many of his peers he married, set up a household in Flushing, and fathered

a son. He probably wasn't home much, since he continued as a sailor on various voyages. He saw even less of his family after the Second Anglo-Dutch War started in 1664. Reyning signed on with the *Mercurius*, a privateer that was a cross between a galleon and a flyboat. On setting sail the *Mercurius* was attacked by an English man-of-war — the Pearl with thirty-two guns. The Dutch lasted no less than five days in the unequal struggle, by which time water was five feet deep in the *Mercurius*' hold and she was unable to steer.

Reyning now experienced another of the hazards of the freebooter's life: imprisonment. For eighteen months he was locked up near Kinsale, in Ireland. Prisoners in those days paid the costs of their own imprisonment, and he had to live on the very meager allowance of one penny a day, occasionally supplemented when he was paid to help the farmers in harvest time. Three times he tried to escape, never getting farther than Kinsale, twelve miles away. He was at last exchanged for an English merchant, and when he returned to the Netherlands he resumed the life of so many thousands of Dutch sailors. In his retelling of the story, Vrijman comments at this point:

> It didn't look as if the career of Jan Erasmus would differ much from the life of thousands of his equals. Sailing freight from one harbor to the other, trying his luck on a privateer, fighting, risking his life for a small piece of bread, dangers of the sea and of the enemy... this was the life of the ordinary Dutch seaman in those days (Van der Sterre 1937, 39).

THE MAKING OF A BUCCANEER

Reyning was twenty-seven before he escaped the fate of the common sailor. In 1667, he couldn't find a ship to sign on with in Flushing and went to the nearby town of Middelburg. There he found a hooker ready to set sail for Surinam. A hooker was, in the seventeenth century, a covered vessel approximately ninety feet long with a main mast and a mizzen and a rotund stern. She was used as fisherman or merchantman, but also as privateer carrying six to fourteen cannon. Together with a Dutch man-of-war, Reyning's hooker sailed for Surinam and arrived without incident at the coast of Cayenne. Dropping anchor at Fort Saint-Louis, the crew found the French colony abandoned — the fort burned down, the houses destroyed, the plantations empty. In October of 1667, the English had raided the colony because France was, at that time, a Dutch ally, so the commander of the Dutch warship decided that this was a good opportunity to return Cayenne to Dutch hands — the Dutch had first colonized the site in 1663, a year before the French ousted them. The person chosen to found the new Dutch colony was none other than Jan Erasmus, and to accomplish his task he received six men, six month's provisions, and the title of *Chief*.

It seems a rather strange and inadequately supplied operation, and when French troops arrived in December Reyning made no effort to defend the colony, allowing himself and his men to be taken to the French island of Martinique. There, to his surprise, he found his old ship, the hooker, lying in the roads, and after the strange intermezzo he again took his place

as a boatswain on the ship.

There, on Martinique, occurred the incident that initiated Reyning's transformation into a Caribbean buccaneer. The incident was, as Vrijman puts it (Van der Sterre 1937, 43), a "daily incidence, as ordinary in our own days as in the time of Jan Erasmus." The ship was laden with crates of sugar, and one of them fell and was damaged. The ship's captain, Willeboort de Kok, exploded, and because Reyning was supervising the operation de Kok held him responsible. He threatened to subtract the costs from Reyning's wages, but Reyning took a stand: Wasn't the captain himself present, and as responsible for the accident as anyone? "[Would you have me] sail for you and my wife and children go hungry?" he asked. One word led to another until Reyning flatly refused to sail under de Kok's command. He would not reboard the ship, preferring, he said, "[to] die of hunger on the beach." Threats of imprisonment and whipping were to no avail, so the ship left without him.

Stranded on Martinique, Reyning signed on as a steward on a French ship under the command of a nobleman, a Monsieur de Clodoré. He didn't enjoy the position, and when, after arriving at the island of Tortuga, it became clear that Clodoré intended to take him to France, he left the ship. From Tortuga Reyning went to Santo Domingo, only a few miles away, and worked on a French tobacco plantation: "where he daily for his living / that was very sober / went to work / with the Negroes and the Mulattos or Indians on the fields / for a period of seven weeks" (Van der Sterre 1691, 12). The work was heavy, the hours long, the pay just enough to keep him from starving. Reyning walked away. At this stage, without means or prospects and far from his own country, he made the move

most congenial to his temperament: he became a buccaneer. He hired four servants, bought some muskets, powder and balls, and seven or eight dogs, and went into the woods of Santo Domingo to hunt.

ORIGINS OF THE BUCCANEERS

For the moment we will turn from Reyning for awhile to look at the scene of his wanderings. Sea-roving, as a means of survival and a mode of social rebellion, was breeding a new kind of pirate. The phenomenon started on the island of Hispaniola, or, as the Spaniards had begun to call it, Santo Domingo. (The French called it Sainte-Domingue, and it is now divided in two states: French-speaking Haiti and Spanish-speaking Santo Domingo. I will use the Spanish *Santo Domingo* for the whole island, and the French *Sainte-Domingue* for the French colony.) These new freebooters were variously called *buccaneers* (by the English), *flibustiers* (by the French — derived from the English word "freebooters"), *piratas* (by the Spaniards), and *zee-roovers* (by the Dutch). The word *buccaneer* became a general designation only in 1684, as a result of the publication of the English translation of Exquemelin's work. The freebooters themselves preferred to be known as Brethren of the Coast, and considered one another to be part of a loosely organized Brotherhood of the Coast. Their social code, which contrasts strikingly with the authoritarian and hierarchical codes ruling seventeenth-century society, was called the Law of the Privateers (by William Dampier), or the Custom of the Coast. As summarized by historian Marcus Rediker (1996, 122), the Custom of the Coast "boasted a distinctive concep-

tion of justice and 'a kind of class consciousness' against 'the great' — shipmasters, ship owners, 'gentleman adventurers.' It also featured democratic controls on authority and provision for the injured."

It was a code of rules and behavior that sometimes ruled against a buccaneer's immediate material interests, but could even then be upheld. For example, in 1681 Captains Wright and Yanky took a Spanish prize. Wright was the first to attack, but Yanky was first to board. William Dampier, who took part in the action, commented: "At the Rio Grande [where they had sailed for repairs] Captain Wright demanded the prize as his by virtue of his [legal privateering] Commission: Captain Yanky said it was his due by the law of the Privateers." In this instance, Yanky's men had been most at risk during the hand-to-hand fighting and Yanky's argument swayed most of Wright's men. Yanky got the prize (Dampier 1906 [I], 75).

One important group of buccaneers consisted of the hunters on Santo Domingo, whom Reyning joined in 1668. In the early 1600s, the northern coast of the island had been a center of "illegal" trade in the hides of wild cattle between Spanish colonists and Western European interlopers. Illegal, that is, from the point of view of the Spanish colonial government, who wanted to enforce a Spanish trade monopoly on the Americas. The Spanish were insisting on total control of all trade, and to maintain it King Philip III was prepared to go to extremes. He ordered all Spanish colonists to leave the settlements on the north-western shores of Santo Domingo, and in August 1605 Spanish soldiers burned down the dwellings and forced the inhabitants to migrate to the south coast of the island, where the local government could keep them under tighter control.

The long term effects of this policy were the exact opposite of its aims. When the plantations in the north were abandoned tens of thousands of cattle and pigs went feral. The depopulated sections of the coast were quickly filled by European adventurers: seamen, deserters, and runaway indentured servants came to the island to hunt cattle and wild boars. The hides of the cattle they sold to European merchantmen, as the Spanish colonists had done before them. The meat of the wild boars they sold to French planters who settled themselves on the abandoned plantations.

The lifestyle of these outlaw hunters soon threatened the Spaniards. Self-reliant and autonomous, they made their own laws and developed their own egalitarian codes of conduct, which eventually evolved to become the sea-rovers' Custom of the Coast. The basis of their way of life, their most common characteristic and in a sense their raison d'être, lay in their expertise with small firearms: muskets, blunderbusses, and pistols. With these weapons they stalked the island in small bands of five or six hunters, some with their own indentured servants. Van der Sterre writes that the hunters dressed very soberly, in a shirt and cotton drawers with strange boots made from the hide of wild boars. The leather was made from the hide from the hind legs of the animals, tailored in such a way that the boots fitted the legs like gloves. In joining these hunters, Reyning entered a life that was the antithesis of the hierarchical and disciplined life on the men-of-war, merchantmen, and privateers that he had served on so far.

When hunting in groups, the buccaneers first drew up documents arranging for the partition of profits, taking care of eventualities in case one of them died. (The indentured ser-

vants, however, were excluded from these agreements. They were under obligation of service for three years, and were sometimes treated very harshly — the hunters were a wild bunch.) After drawing up their individual "constitution" documents the hunters started on their expeditions, sometimes staying as long as a year or two in the woods. They hunted cattle and boars with their dogs, drying the hides and selling the meat to the planters, and occasionally they skirmished with the Spaniards. The dogs drove the game, and in the case of the boars the hunter had to shoot the animal precisely, either from the front or hitting it in the neck. Reyning once shot a wild boar in the side and it turned on him — he only saved himself by climbing a tree.

Meat was the most important part of the hunter's diet. When Reyning killed a cow or bull his servants immediately cut off its head and the tongue and parts of the breast were eaten for dinner. The hide was taken to the campsite, which might be as far as three miles away from where the animal was shot but was always near a river for easy transport. The rest of the carcass was left for the birds of prey.

In addition to organizing themselves in egalitarian fashion, the hunters stood by one another. "No one on a hunting trip would eat a mouthful of food until as many beasts had been killed that day as there were hunters in the company," writes Exquemelin (1972, 9). They became crack shots able to survive extreme privations, and adopted some Indian customs. Meat they cured in the Indian way, over low fires on grills made of green wood. Exquemelin tells us that there were, in his time, various regular sites where the hunters settled for anywhere from three or four months up to a year. These places and the

wooden gratings over which the meat was cured were called *boucan* by the hunters, a word borrowed from the Arawak Indians. And so they developed their name buccaneers (ibid.).

After his arrival in 1665, D'Ogeron, the new French Governor of Tortuga and the coast of Sainte-Domingue, wrote to his superior, the French Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert:

> They [the buccaneers] live three or four or six or ten together, more or less separated one group from the other by distances of two or three or six or eight leagues [one league is approximately one mile] wherever they find suitable places, and live like savages without recognizing any authority, with a leader of their own, and they commit a thousand robberies.
>
> They have stolen several Dutch and English ships, which have caused us much trouble; they live on the meat of wild boars and cattle, and grow a little tobacco which they trade for arms, munitions, and supplies (Pope 1991, 58–59).

Father Du Tertre, whose history of the Antillian islands was published in Paris between 1667 and 1671, describes the buccaneers further:

> An unorganized rabble of men from all countries, rendered expert and active by the necessity of their exercise, which was to go in chase of cattle to obtain their hides, and from being chased themselves by the Spaniards who never gave them any quarter.
>
> As they would not suffer any chiefs, they passed for undisciplined men who for the greater part had sought refuges in these places and were reduced to

this way of life to avoid the punishment due for the crimes which could be proved against many of them.

In general they were without any habitation or fixed abode, but only rendezvoused where the cattle were to be found, and some sheds covered with leaves to keep off the rain and to store the hides of the beasts they had killed until some vessel should pass to barter with them for wine, brandy, line, arms, powder, bullets, and cooking vessels which they needed and which were the only moveables of the buccaneers (ibid.).

The total number of buccaneers on Santo Domingo was never very large. Exquemelin (1972, 45) believed that there were at their summit five or six hundred of them. By his own day, between 1660 and the 1670s, this number had dwindled to a mere three hundred. D'Ogeron estimated their number in 1665 at seven or eight hundred (Pope 1991, 58).

Nonetheless, in the Americas this was a force to be reckoned with. By way of comparison, the native Carib Indians had been mostly exterminated by violence or diseases, and the total population of what is now the state of Panama numbered no more than 12,000, half of whom lived in the city of Panama itself. That number included Negro slaves, mulattos, and Indians (Earle 1981, 134–35). The Spanish port town of Vera Cruz only had a population of about 6,000 whites when the buccaneers of the Chevalier de Grammont and Lorencillo de Graaf sacked it in 1683. Smaller port towns, such as Portobello, were almost ghost towns, having only a few hundred inhabitants most of the year, until a Spanish convoy arrived. In these circumstances a few hundred well-armed, tough buccaneers were not to be discounted.

INDIAN INFLUENCES ON THE BUCCANEERS

It is interesting to speculate about the extent of Indian influences on the Caribbean freebooters. On the whole, European colonizers were very much indebted to Arawak and Carib Indians for teaching them how to survive in their New World. For instance, the first Englishmen to settle on Barbados, in 1627, adapted Indian construction methods and designs for building their huts. The English had been joined in Guyana by thirty-two Arawak Indians, who also taught the settlers how to cultivate plants. In return for their help they were promised land in the settlement, but were instead enslaved (Bridenbaugh 1972, 29, 37).

It was general English policy to exterminate the Indians in the Caribbean. In reaction the Caribs developed strategies of piracy that resembled those of the buccaneers. In their *periaguas*, large canoes that carried fifty or sixty warriors, they moved swiftly among distant islands conducting hit and run raids armed mainly with the bow and arrow, with which they were as skilled as the buccaneers with their muskets. In 1658, the Frenchman Charles de Rochefort complained:

> [There] hardly passes a year but they [the Caribs] make one or two irruptions, in the right time, in some of the islands ... and then, if it be not timely discover'd, and valiantly oppos'd, they kill all the men they meet, ransack the Houses, and burn them, carrying off all the women and children with the booty (ibid., 172).

The Caribs were fairly recent newcomers to the Caribbean islands, having arrived by sea. Labat (1931, 109) thought that they came from Florida. The French came to employ both the buccaneer flibustiers and the Caribs (who earned the name

"French bloodhounds") as auxiliary troops in their wars against the English. Only in the late eighteenth century did Carib warriors cease to menace the European colonies.

On Santo Domingo the Indians had rebelled against the Spanish conquest, but were defeated and the survivors fled to the forests. There they led a secret life, avoiding as much as possible the Spaniards, who hunted them with dogs. They did, however, encounter the buccaneers, teaching them survival skills like the method for curing meat I described earlier, and transmitting some of their customs. They may even have exchanged ideas about pirating strategies, though this remains pure speculation.

We do have hard evidence of close cooperation between the Indian refugees and the buccaneers against their mutual enemy on the American continent, the Spaniards. In 1665, Indians guided Morris, Martien, and Morgan to Villahermosa de Tabasco in Mexico, and thousands of them joined in the sack of Granada on the coast of the Lake of Nicaragua (Pope 1977, 111–14). In his journal of a plunder voyage with English buccaneers to Panama and the South Sea in 1680, Basil Ringrose notes that the Indians of Darien came up with the idea of sacking first Santa Maria, and later Panama. The Indians gave them guides: the "King" himself participated in the attacks. There is almost an ideological ring to the message that the commander of the buccaneers, Captain Sawkins, sent to the Governor of Panama from the alliance of pirates and Indians. As Ringrose quotes it:

> We came to assist the King of Darien, who was the true Lord of Panama and all the country thereabouts. And that since we were come so far, there was no rea-

son but that we should have some satisfaction. So that if he pleased to send us 500 pieces-of-eight for each man, and 1000 for each Commander, and not any farther to annoy the Indians but suffer them to use their own power and liberty as became the true and natural lords of the country, that then we should desist from all further hostilities and go away peaceably; otherwise, that we should stay there, and get what we could, causing to them what damage was possible (Ringrose 331).

Dampier (1906 [I], 202) was one of the buccaneers who believed that the alliance between the buccaneers and the Indians of Darien ("our fast friends") was due to Captain Wright. Wright had raised an Indian boy, and in 1679 or 1680 sent him back to his tribe to conclude the alliance: "[A] thing our Privateers had long coveted, but never durst attempt, having such dreadful apprehension of their numbers and fierceness."

In 1674, Dampier heard an interesting report from some trading Caribs. They told him that one of their former chieftains, Captain Thomas Warner, was the halfbood son of the English Governor of the Caribbean and his Carib mistress. Born on Antigua, Warner found no place in English society, being a halfblood and a bastard, and so he ran away to join his mother's relatives on the island of St. Lucia. There, Dampier tells us, "conforming to their Customs he became one of their Captains, and roved from one island to another, as they did." The Caribs raided the plantations on Antigua, and the Governor sent his legitimate white son, Colonel Philip Warner, to defeat them on St. Lucia. Philip found his half brother. Pretending friendliness he offered rum to the Indians, and

when they were drunk the English treacherously slaughtered them all, including Thomas Warner. Dampier's editor (ibid., 39–40) comments that Philip Warner was brought to court for this in London, and was acquitted.

If we believe Dampier, then the Indians of the Mosquito tribes of Nicaragua also joined the buccaneers. He tells us that all privateers loved to have Mosquitoes in their crew because they were excellent hunters. One or two of them could feed one hundred privateers with turtle and seacow. The Mosquitoes loved the English but not the French, and they actively hated the Spaniards (ibid.). But despite the Mosquitoes' attitude, in other cases Indian groups fought the buccaneers when they perceived them as threats, or when they were under Spanish dominance, as was the case during the Expedition to Panama (to which we shall return later). In 1684, the buccaneers of Edward Davis feasted with Indians on the Pacific island of Mangera, whom they learned were in Spanish service. Dampier, who was with Davis, noted:

> All the Indians that I have been acquainted with who are with the Spaniards, seem to be more melancholy than other Indians who are free; and at these publick [sic] Meetings, when they are in the greatest of their Jollity, their Mirth seems to be rather forced than real. Their Songs are very melancholy and doleful; so is their Musick [sic]: but whether it be natural to the Indians to be this melancholy, or the effect of their Slavery, I am not certain: But I have always been prone to believe that they are then only condoling [sic] their misfortunes, the loss of their Country and Liberties... (ibid., 151–52).

MULATTOS AND NEGROES

Another non-European element in the West Indies to be reckoned with were the mulattos and Negroes, who had escaped from Spanish slavery. Some of them joined the freebooters. The most feared of these was "Diego Lucifer," Diego de los Reyes, a mulatto slave born in Havana who fought as a privateer in the 1630s with Dutch commissions. The Spaniards on the Pacific coast lived in continual fear that their slaves might start an uprising to coincide with a buccaneer raid. In December 1679, the Ringrose expedition took three Spanish prisoners at La Serena (Ringrose, 386–87), "who related to us that the Spaniards, when they heard of our coming, had killed most of the Chilian slaves, fearing lest they should run or revolt from them to us." A Negro who had run from the Spaniards to join the buccaneers said "that if the Spaniards had not sent all the Negroes belonging to this city farther up into the country out of our reach and communication, they would all undoubtedly have revolted [to join] us." But it is important here to remember that the picture is complicated by the fact that the buccaneers kept their own slaves and were not against slavery as such.

BUCCANEER PIRATES

Whether or not the buccaneers learned some of their pirating skills from the Caribs (or the other way around), they quickly took a liking to the pirating life. According to buccaneer lore their grand adventure started in 1602 with a certain Pierre, nicknamed "Le Grand." In that year Pierre sailed from the small island of Tortuga, which lay only three leagues to the

northwest of Santo Domingo and had been settled in 1598 by some French tobacco planters. On Le Grand's boat he had a crew of twenty-eight men. As Exquemelin tells us the story (1972, 56–57):

> The buccaneer had been at sea a considerable time, without encountering any prey. Food was short, and his vessel was in such bad shape as to be hardly seaworthy. He then caught sight of this ship, which had strayed from the rest of the fleet, and steered towards her, to find out what she was. When they were so close she could not escape, Le Grand resolved to board her, judging the flagship would be unprepared for an attack. The crew agreed to obey their chief, saying the Spanish ship had no better chance than they to succeed in the encounter. They all swore an oath of loyal endeavor. Le Grand ordered the surgeon to bore a hole in the bottom of the barque, and they prepared to board the enemy.

It was nearly dark when they came alongside. Noiselessly they clambered on deck, with no other weapons than a pistol and a cutlass each. They encountered no resistance, and made for the cabin, where the captain and some others were playing cards. Instantly a pistol was clapped to his breast, and he was compelled to surrender the ship. Meanwhile, others had gone to the gun room and seized the arms. Some Spaniards who tried to prevent them were shot dead.

That very day the captain had been warned that the vessel on the horizon was a pirate and might do them harm. Contemptuously the captain had replied he would not fear a vessel that was his equal, much less a small boat such as that —

yet, through his negligence, his ship was ignominiously captured. The buccaneer's boat had already sunk to leeward of the flagship. Some of the Spaniards, seeing such strange folk on board their vessel, assumed they must have fallen from the sky. "*Jesus, son demonios estos!*" they cried. Le Grand kept as many of the Spanish sailors as he needed to run the ship and set the rest on shore. While still at sea, he sent for his commission, in order to be able to enter a port. Then he set sail for France in his capture, where he remained and never went to sea again.

Over the next decades the hunters that lived on Santo Domingo and Tortuga were quick to see the potential that lay in imitating Pierre le Grand. Around 1630 there lived four kinds of people in the French territory: hunters (*boucaniers*), the Brethren of the Coast (*flibustiers*, defined by Father Charlevoix as those that waged war solely to plunder), planters (*habitans*), and *engagées* who worked for the hunters or the planters. Together they formed the *Corps des Avanturiers* [*sic*]. Charlevoix wrote in his history of Saint-Domingue (1733 [III], 11–12) that the adventurers "lived with each other in very good understanding, and they had established a kind of Democratic Government; each free person had a Despotic authority in his own habitation, & every Captain was Sovereign on board; as long as he was in Command, but one could depose him."

With their canoes the Brethren took to sea and boarded the Spanish barques laden with hides and tobacco that traded along the coastlines of Santo Domingo and Cuba. The plunder was sold to merchants on Tortuga, where the stolen barques were converted into pirate ships, and powder, balls, and arms were acquired. With the barques the freebooters could strike farther away, towards the Gulf of Campeche (west of Yucatan)

and the Gulf of New Spain in Central America, preying on Spanish ships.

Technically, Le Grand had been a pirate guilty of plain sea-robbery because he had taken the Spaniard without having an official privateering commission. Only later, when he had to divest himself of the loot, did he bother to obtain one. The buccaneers did try to sail with commissions whenever they could. However, their consciences remained undisturbed if they had to do without one. Often the Spaniards were legally in the right in calling them piratas, common pirates.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, AND FRATERNITY IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE COAST

The pirates' nest at Tortuga soon became such a nuisance that a Spanish force raided the island in January of 1634. Almost two-thirds of its more than three hundred inhabitants were slain in this invasion, thirty-nine more were captured; the six-gun battery that defended the harbor was thrown in the sea, and three prizes were taken, of which two were burnt. It was a glorious revenge for the Spaniards, but a limited one because they didn't leave a garrison behind and the surviving buccaneers resettled the island soon after the Spanish departure. In 1640, the population of this Republic of Adventurers had again risen to three hundred.

When Reyning arrived in 1668, he found a very small island: it is only sixteen leagues in circumference and is shaped like a turtle (hence its Spanish name Tortuga; the French called it *Île de la Tortue*). There was one harbor, a port town called Coyona on the south side of the island, which was deep enough

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It is very difficult to figure out exactly what modern equivalents to these amounts would be, but it is estimated by Peter Earle (1981, 23) that an average laborer in those days was lucky to make sixty pieces of eight in a year. Exquemelin began sailing with the buccaneers in 1666. At that time a slave was considered to be worth a 100 pieces of eight, and Exquemelin was himself an indentured servant who managed to buy his freedom for 150 pieces of eight (indentured servants generally signed on in Europe for a period of service of anywhere from four to seven years, after which they were set free). The insurance system of the

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include rules of temperance if they were setting out on especially long voyages. Such were agreed to by Captain Cook's men in 1683 (ibid., 98) when they decided to raid in the South Sea. "We agreed upon some particular Rules, especially of Temperance and Sobriety, by reason of the length of our intended voyage."

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At the end of their expedition into the South Sea, Ringrose and his comrades gave their ship to those among them who had lost their share of the booty in gambling along the way (Ringrose, 475). Gambling was one of the few things that could cause a rift in a crew. On voyages the men who won tended to want to return home early to spend their gains, while those who had nothing naturally wanted to keep on privateering. This happened with one expedition that Ringrose joined. In January 1681, the hapless gamblers deposed their Captain,

Bartholomew Sharpe, because he had amassed a personal fortune of 3,000 pieces-of-eight and thought it was time to go home. As his successor they chose John Watling, who continued the expedition.

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Let us return now to the buccaneers' nest on Tortuga that we left in 1640. During the 1640s it prospered under the formal leadership of François le Vasseur, who had been appointed by the French governor of St. Kitts. Le Vasseur constructed a large stone fortress with a battery of forty-four guns to defend the harbor. With this sanctuary, and the unofficial blessings of the French government, the Tortuga buccaneers harassed Spanish ships. But they didn't limit themselves to preying on ships. In 1650, they sacked the frontier town of Santiago de los Caballeros on Santo Domingo, which lay on the border between the French and Spanish territories. Though Le Vasseur developed authoritarian tendencies and was assassinated in 1652 by some Frenchmen, this did not diminish the buccaneers' zeal. Nor did a second Spanish conquest of the island in 1654, when, after a siege of ten days, the fortress was captured and more than 500 people were taken prisoner, among them an estimated 330 buccaneers. The Spaniards had learned from their earlier experiences and left a garrison on the island, which fought off a combined force of five French and Dutch vessels later in the same year.

However, due to Oliver Cromwell's "Western Design" the Spaniards were unable to hold on to Tortuga. In 1654 the First Anglo-Dutch War ended (this was the confrontation during

yet, through his negligence, his ship was ignominiously captured. The buccaneer's boat had already sunk to leeward of the flagship. Some of the Spaniards, seeing such strange folk on board their vessel, assumed they must have fallen from the sky. "*Jesus, son demonios estos!*" they cried. Le Grand kept as many of the Spanish sailors as he needed to run the ship and set the rest on shore. While still at sea, he sent for his commission, in order to be able to enter a port. Then he set sail for France in his capture, where he remained and never went to sea again.

Over the next decades the hunters that lived on Santo Domingo and Tortuga were quick to see the potential that lay in imitating Pierre le Grand. Around 1630 there lived four kinds of people in the French territory: hunters (*boucaniers*), the Brethren of the Coast (*flibustiers*, defined by Father Charlevoix as those that waged war solely to plunder), planters (*habitans*), and *engagées* who worked for the hunters or the planters. Together they formed the *Corps des Avanturiers* [*sic*]. Charlevoix wrote in his history of Saint-Domingue (1733 [III], 11–12) that the adventurers "lived with each other in very good understanding, and they had established a kind of Democratic Government; each free person had a Despotic authority in his own habitation, & every Captain was Sovereign on board; as long as he was in Command, but one could depose him."

With their canoes the Brethren took to sea and boarded the Spanish barques laden with hides and tobacco that traded along the coastlines of Santo Domingo and Cuba. The plunder was sold to merchants on Tortuga, where the stolen barques were converted into pirate ships, and powder, balls, and arms were acquired. With the barques the freebooters could strike farther away, towards the Gulf of Campeche (west of Yucatan)

and the Gulf of New Spain in Central America, preying on Spanish ships.

Technically, Le Grand had been a pirate guilty of plain sea-robbery because he had taken the Spaniard without having an official privateering commission. Only later, when he had to divest himself of the loot, did he bother to obtain one. The buccaneers did try to sail with commissions whenever they could. However, their consciences remained undisturbed if they had to do without one. Often the Spaniards were legally in the right in calling them piratas, common pirates.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, AND FRATERNITY IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE COAST

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However, due to Oliver Cromwell's "Western Design" the Spaniards were unable to hold on to Tortuga. In 1654 the First Anglo-Dutch War ended (this was the confrontation during

which Reyning lost his father), and the Lord Protector of England decided on a new imperialistic policy. His aim was to break the Spanish monopoly on South and Central American trade, and, if possible, to capture a few Spanish silver fleets. Cromwell set about conquering a base in the Caribbean which his superior naval forces could keep. With this in mind a fleet of seventeen warships and twenty-one transport ships, with 2,500 regular soldiers on board, sailed from Portsmouth in December 1654. After taking on provisions at Barbados, and raising there an auxiliary army of more than 5,000 adventurous volunteers, the English fleet bore down on Santo Domingo. But when the English troops landed in April 1655, they were put ashore far from the capital and had to struggle through the jungle to reach their goal. Unexpectedly they were beaten off by the Spaniards and had to evacuate the island, suffering 1,000 casualties.

The English commanders turned to the island of Jamaica, which was quickly conquered in May of 1655. Although the defeated Spanish settlers would keep up a prolonged guerrilla war for years (together with armies of escaped Negro slaves, the Maroons), and Spain refused to recognize the conquest of the island until 1670, Jamaica became the base of English power in the Caribbean. It became pivotal for the development of English imperialism, a center for the slave trade supplying labor for the plantations on other West Indian islands, and later on the North American continent, thus playing an essential role in the prosperity of Bristol and Liverpool that later financed the Industrial Revolution.

In the shorter run, the conquest of Jamaica proved decisive in fashioning the Golden Age of the buccaneers by diverting Spanish attention from Tortuga and Santo Domingo. In 1660 a

group of Frenchmen under the command of the the Sieur du Rausset, appointed by Louis XIV as Governor, and his nephew the Sieur de la Place, reconquered Tortuga. However, they were careful "not to abuse their authority, which the Adventurers [planters and buccaneers] acknowledged of their own free will" (Charlevoix 1733 [III], 41). Rausset repatriated to France in 1663, and was forced to sell his "rights" to the island to the French East India Company. (After spending some time in the Bastille he accepted a compensation of 15,000 livres.) The new Governor, D'Ogeron, arrived in February 1665 on Tortuga; but the planters and buccaneers made clear to him that they would not obey the Company, only the King; and they would only recognize D'Ogeron's authority if he did not interfere in their trade. D'Ogeron had no choice but to agree. So indirectly the conquest of Jamaica had contributed to the reestablishment of a formidable basis of the buccaneers on Tortuga, whence the first admirals of the Brotherhood of the Coast — such men as Montbars, known as the Exterminator (but who never killed an unarmed man), and L'Olonnais — began spreading fear among the Spaniards (ibid., 46-81).

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONQUEST OF JAMAICA

In addition to diverting Spanish attention from Tortuga, the expedition of 1654 introduced two major influences on the buccaneers of the New World: both the ideas embodied in the radical wing of the English Revolution, and the strategic practices routinely used by the European mercenary troops blended easily with the attitudes and thinking of the Brethren of the Coast.

The possible influence of the radicals on the buccaneers

was first suggested by Christopher Hill (1986, 161). He defined the radicals as "those who rejected a state church, supported full religious toleration, and often carried this over to advocacy of democratic, communist or antinomian ideas," and wondered what had happened to the radicals after their defeat by more conservative and authoritarian Puritans. He suggested that, around the time of the Restoration of King Charles II in 1660, many radicals emigrated to the West Indies. Captain William Righton, former member of the radical sect called the Fifth Monarchists, was active in smuggling on Jamaica. A former Ranter named John Perrot was seen in 1662 on Barbados; he was wearing a sword and was called "Captain." The Ranters were the most antinomian of the radicals, standing in the Gnostic traditions and believing that Heaven and Hell were just states of mind (this belief is expounded by Satan himself in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which was written between 1658 and 1663). As the Quaker leader, George Fox, remembered: One of the Ranters cried "all is ours" and another said "all is well" (Cohn 1984, 287). Such slogans were at least congenial to the buccaneers.

In addition to the radicals that emigrated, almost certainly a large influx of radicals arrived with the expedition of 1654–55. "There is no doubt that many [of the lower] ranks were men whom the government wanted out of the way," Hill has noted (1972, 154). "Regimental commanders were given the chance of nominating men for the expedition, and naturally took the opportunity of getting rid of undesirables." It is thus not far fetched to suggest that potential agitators with suspect political and religious views would be among the first to be sent out to the West Indies. Though there is no real hard evidence to support the hypothesis of an influx of politically conscious

and ideologically articulate radicals into the buccaneer forces, it is not improbable. Another source from which egalitarian and potentially seditious notions entered the ranks of the Brethren arrived in the persons of European soldiers and mercenaries, by way of the traditions they developed during the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution. That this influence reached the West Indies with Cromwell's troops can hardly be doubted.

J.S. Bromley (1985) has noted how closely the strategies that the buccaneers employed during their great raids of the second part of the seventeenth century resemble those of the European mercenaries. Both groups marched in ranks, and their advance guard was called the Forlorn or the *enfants perdu.* Before their march on Santa Maria, Ringrose (303) and his fellow buccaneers "... chose captain Sawkins to lead the Forlorn, to whom, for that purpose, we gave the choice of fourscore men." The Brethren called themselves by war names, noms de guerre, instead of by their civil names. Just as the mercenaries exacted tribute from small towns and hamlets, so the buccaneers did from coast villages. In both kinds of bands the quartermaster, who was elected by the troops and commanded the division of the spoils, played a very important role.

I'd like to further emphasize Bromley's observations by pointing out the similarity between the way the buccaneers were organized and the organization of mutineers in the Spanish army during the wars in the Netherlands. The Spanish army had a long tradition of organized mutiny, which was at least partially due to the lack of funds the Spanish government had available for payment of its soldiers. When a mutiny was declared the mutineers elected officers from their own ranks, with an *electo*

(leader) and a council (a soviet, we might say) to advise him. The mutineers then secured control of a stronghold (a town or a village) by direct assault if necessary, in order to better defend themselves against loyalist troops. From their stronghold they made their demands to the authorities (cf. Parker 1979).

This tradition of autonomous units with self-elected leaders, perhaps indoctrinated with radical sentiments on political and religious issues, would blend easily with the existing Custom of the Coast. Old Cromwellian officers are said to have been partial to privateering against the Spaniards (Hill 1986, 173). One example of this kind of buccaneer might be Henry Morgan, who was elected Admiral by the Brethren in 1667 and came from a Welsh military family. His two uncles had served as soldiers of fortune during the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution, and young Henry was educated more with pikes than with books. At nineteen he sailed out as a subaltern officer with the expedition of 1654. After some desolate years fighting Spanish guerrilleros on Jamaica, he received in 1662 a privateering commission for a tiny vessel of which he had been elected captain: the start of a notorious career as a freebooter, that landed him as Deputy Governor of Jamaica.

Which brings us back to the conquest of Jamaica and its third contribution to the rise of the buccaneers. After the conquest, English rule seemed threatened: How could the English defend themselves against both the Spanish resistance on the island and the threat of a Spanish invasion from the sea? Furthermore, how best could the English profit from their new dominion? The answer to both questions turned out to be the same: through privateering.

Following the conquest of Jamaica, the main force of the

English fleet sailed back home. Immediately after that the new regime's Spanish neighbors began harassing it by raiding the island. The commander of the remaining fleet, William Goodson, chose to retaliate through counter raids on the Spanish colonies. His first attempt was rather inept and scarcely yielded any profits. However, when Christopher Myngs became the senior naval officer on Jamaica in 1658 things changed. Myngs inaugurated a series of successful cruises against the Spanish colonies and merchantmen in the region, and the buccaneers joined the party. In a campaign that presaged the later exploits of the freebooters, in 1659 Myngs sacked the towns of Camané, Puerto Caballo, and Coro on the mainland. The dividing line between legal defense cum privateering and outright piracy was blurred with Myngs. He returned to Jamaica laden with at least twenty-two chests taken from Dutch merchantmen (which had hoisted Spanish colors on meeting the privateers), each containing 400 pounds of silver ingots belonging to the Spanish king (on Jamaica the authorities found the chests to have been broken open). Furthermore, Myngs sold four of his prizes to men who later became important buccaneer chiefs, among them John Morris and the Dutchman Laurens Prins.

The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 gave further impetus to buccaneering. The new royal government in London quickly sponsored a policy of aggressive privateering against the Spaniards, hoping to force them to surrender their monopoly. In 1662, a new governor arrived on Jamaica, Lord Windsor. Not only did he issue privateering commissions "for the subduing of all our enemies by sea and by land, within and upon the coast of America" (Marley 1997, 28). He also released a thou-

sand soldiers from the old Cromwellian garrison from service, with full wages paid and gratuities, and replaced them with a volunteer militia. Many old soldiers probably didn't hesitate long before joining the Brethren of the Coast. We know for certain that one of them was killed in action in 1685 during the conquest of Lèon in Nicaragua (Dampier 1906 [I], 239):

> He was a stout old Greyheaded Man, aged about 84, who had served under Oliver in the time of the Irish Rebellion: after which he was at Jamaica, and had followed Privateering ever since. He would not accept the offer our Men made him to tarry ashore, but said he would venture as far as the best of them: and when surrounded by the Spaniard, he refused to take Quarter, but discharged his Gun amongst them, keeping a pistol still charged, so they shot him dead at a distance. His name was [John] Swan; he was a verry [*sic*] merry hearty old Man, and always used to declare he would never take Quarter.

The political geography of the West Indies created the opportunities for the Brethren to continue their way of life and to pursue their privateering. Without them Jamaica didn't have the resources to defend itself against a Spanish invasion — nor was the government in London prepared to send sufficient troops to the island to perform this task. The capital of Jamaica, Port Royal, numbered only 2,000–3,000 inhabitants, and in 1684 the total white population of Jamaica (including men, women, and children) was only 15,000. The large number of Negro slaves (9,000 in 1671) could not, of course, be relied upon to defend the island and their chains. By way of contrast, the new Governor estimated the number of freebooters on the

island at between 1,000 and 1,500, each and every one a deadly animal highly skilled in weapons use. They maintained their own vessels and were capable of organized action. This was a very considerable force that only harassed (or claimed only to harass) Spanish possessions. Furthermore, the Brethren spent their spoils in the inns, markets, and brothels of Port Royal, adding considerable to Jamaica's gross national income. For the British citizens, allowing the buccaneers access to their island was a win-win situation.

In the French colony of Tortuga and Sainte-Domingue, the situation was comparable. The total European population of that colony was 7,000 in 1680. The French Governor had estimated the number of buccaneers on Tortuga at 1,000 in 1671. (We might add a few hundred buccaneers on the mainland of Santo Domingo, though these men may already be accounted for in the 1,000.) Furthermore, despite continual losses, the number was constantly replenished by adventurers, indentured servants like Exquemelin, and deserted seamen like Jan Erasmus Reyning. One Governor of Sainte-Domingue estimated that *la flibuste* renewed itself every ten years, and there is no reason to believe otherwise for the Jamaican Brethren. This suggests a total of between 2,000–2,500 Brethren throughout the 1660s and 1670s. Certainly, Henry Morgan had almost 2,000 men with him when he sailed for Panama in 1670.

The Governors of Jamaica and Tortuga provided the Brethren with legal status by issuing privateering commissions, which meant that the freebooters could legally sell their prizes in British, French, and Dutch ports without incurring the risk of being hanged as common pirates. Tortuga was officially taken over by the French West Indian Company in 1664.

Although D'Ogeron, Company's new governor for Sainte-Domingue and Tortuga, was coolly received by the freebooters, he continued issuing commissions. On Jamaica, however, the availability of commissions oscillated in the 1660s according to the attitude of the London government towards Spain. But when, in 1664, a new Jamaican Governor, Sir Thomas Modyford, announced the cessation of English hostilities against Spain (Marley 1997, 33), he wrote to London: "The buccaneers must be allowed to dispose of their captures on this island, as otherwise they will be alarmed and go to the French at Tortuga, and His Majesty will lose 1,000–1,500 stout men."

Christopher Myngs was one of the first to continue his privateering under the new royal regime. Less than two months after the arrival of Lord Windsor in 1662, Myngs took a new commission and set sail with a fleet of twelve vessels and 1,300 men of various nationalities. They joined the pirate Sir Thomas Whetstone, a nephew of Oliver Cromwell who commanded a ship (taken from the Spaniards) with seven guns and a sixty-man crew, mostly renegade Indians. Further enforced by seven more Jamaican privateers, Myngs sacked Santiago de Cuba in October, thereby demolishing the advance base for a Spanish invasion of Jamaica. The success of this expedition made the Brethren of the Coast eager to participate in the next one under the command of their elected Admiral, Edward Mansfield, and in 1663 Myngs raided Campeche.

Even after Modyford declared the cessation of hostilities against Spain in 1664, the buccaneers continued to operate under their old (now officially void) commissions. Modyford turned a blind eye towards these operations. During the Second Anglo-Dutch War of 1665–67 (when Reyning was imprisoned

in Ireland), the Jamaican Governor tried to direct the Brethren against the Dutch. They showed scant enthusiasm, preferring instead to continue attacking the Spaniards, despite their neutral position in the war. The politics of governments didn't much interest the buccaneers. "There was more profit with less hazard to be gotten against the Spaniard, which was their only interest," they declared (ibid., 37), and under Mansfield's leadership they continued their assaults on Spanish possessions. Luckily, English policy soon changed again, and Modyford began issuing new privateering commissions against the Spaniards; but not before Mansfield absconded to Tortuga to continue his career with a French commission. In 1667 he was captured by the Spaniards and executed in Havana.

CUSTOMS OF THE COAST

We have now placed the buccaneers in the political geography of the settlements on Jamaica and Sainte-Domingue in the 1660s. Within this setting they followed their own agenda, despite the attempts of the colonial authorities to make them serve their policy. The Brethren of the Coast functioned as a kind of chaotic attractor, serving as a focus for adventurous, rebellious, and outlaw elements. As long as they could hunt Spaniards it didn't matter to them whether they did so with English, French, Dutch, or Portuguese privateering commissions. They were not interested in, and absolutely unwilling to die for, the interstate rivalries of the European powers.

Tales of their anarchic behavior abound. In April 1666, 260 Jamaican buccaneers under Thomas Morgan (no relation to Henry) were promised loot and assisted in an English invasion

of the French island of Saint Christophe (now St. Kitts) — France being allied to the Dutch. When the French counter-attacked, the English commander, William Watts, ordered Morgan to repulse the attack while he himself raided the French plantations. "Incensed at this self-serving proposal, the hard-bitten Morgan poked his loaded pistol into Watts's chest, called him a coward, and threatened to shoot if he did not immediately order both units to advance into battle." (Marley 1997, 39.)

If necessary, the Brethren dispensed with formal commissions (Earle 1981, 146–47). When, after a peace treaty between France and Spain, the Governor of Tortuga stopped issuing privateering commissions, "Some of the wilder flibustiers accepted neither the Governor's authority nor the peace.... They said 'that since they had not signed the treaty, had not indeed even been called to the conferences, they were not obliged to take any notice of it.' Some went to sea with hunting and fishing commissions."

This position would be echoed half a century later in the words of the buccaneer's pirate descendant, Captain Bellamy (Defoe 1972, 587): "I am a free Prince, and I have as much Authority to make War on the whole World as he who has a hundred Sail of Ships at Sea, and an Army of 100,000 Men in the Field; and this my Conscience tells me."

In 1685, Dampier (1906 [I], 212–13) met some of these wild French buccaneers in what was then called the South Seas (the Pacific Ocean), which they had reached by crossing the isthmus of Panama with canoes. Dampier's buccaneers, commanded by Captains Edward Davis and Charles Swan, gave the Frenchmen one of their Spanish prizes. In return, the grateful French captain, Grogniet, offered them commissions from the

Governor of "Petit-Guaves" (Petit-Goâve on Santo Domingo) — Grogniet had a number of blank ones with him. Dampier was later told that these commissions gave "a Liberty to Fish, Fowl, and Hunt," and were used by the French throughout America. "Those of Petit Guaves [sic] by this means making themselves the Sanctuary and Asylum of all People of desperate Fortunes, and increasing their own Wealth, and the Strength and Reputation of their Party thereby."

The Brethren were as much led by individual whims in their mutual relations as in their relations with the outside world. William Dampier (ibid., 61) noted, "Privateers are not obliged to any Ship, but free to go ashore where they please, or to go into any other Ship that will entertain them." In quoting this passage Bromley adds (1985, 309): "The authorities agree on their [the buccaneers'] self-will, caprice, dislike of work." Père Labat, a priest who sailed with the flibustiers on their raids into the South Sea (ibid., 305), attributed their preference for the use of barques or sloops, vessels with a simple sail-rig that called for a minimum of seamanship, "to a dislike of work in the first place." To the buccaneers who joined the French fleet of the Baron de Pointis in the attack on Cartagena in 1697, the sailors on the French ships were just "white niggers," i.e., their position was no better than that of the Negro slaves.

The carelessness the buccaneers often displayed when navigating their ships, despite the qualifications of many as experienced seamen, suggests that they were fully confident of getting more ships from the Spaniards whenever they needed them. This might account for such negligent seamanship as when, for instance, Henry Morgan's buccaneer fleet arrived in 1671 at the San Lorenzo fortress and five ships crashed on the

reefs before the sixth ship in the line recognized the danger and put down her helm (Earle 1981, 195).

Although the authorities made good use of the buccaneers, they were repelled by their anarchic tendencies. In 1692, Ducasse, the Governor of Sainte-Domingue, who used the flibustiers in his attack on Jamaica in 1694 and who recruited them for De Pointis to use during his campaign against Cartagena in 1697 (Marley 1997, 116), found them "very bad subjects, who believe they have not been put in the world except to practice brigandage and piracy. Enemies of subordination and authority, their example ruins the colonies, all the young people having no other wish than to embrace this profession for its libertinage and ability to gain booty."

Under fire the brethren tended to act bravely and with discipline, but there too indiscipline sometimes took hold — as when they fruitlessly attacked Arica on the 30th of January, 1681. Ringrose (408) relates that "Captain Sharpe would have brought off our surgeons, but that they had been drinking while we assaulted the fort, and thus would not come with us when they were called." And when Captain Cook's buccaneers wanted to sail through the Straits of Magellan Dampier was against it (1906 [I], 108–09):

> Our Men being Privateers, and so more wilful [sic] and less under command, would not be so ready to give a watchful attendance in a passage so little known. For altho' these Men were more under command, than I had ever seen any Privateers, yet I could not expect them at a minute's call, in coming to an Anchor, or weighing Anchor.

The Brethren's lifestyle was a worthy successor to the one

led by the renegade corsairs of North Africa, of whom Le Sieur de Brèves, a French visitor to Tunis in 1606, had written:

> The great profit that the English [pirates] bring to the country, their open-handed ways and the excessive debauches in which they spend their money before leaving town and returning to ... brigandage at sea ... they carry swords at their side and run drunk together through the town ... sleep with the wives of the Moors ... every kind of debauchery and uninhibited licentiousness is allowed them (Senior 1976, 95–96).

Having escaped from the horrors and confines of life upon merchantmen and men-of-war, the Brethren were not interested in any kind of decency. Their world had been turned upside down and they wanted to keep it that way. I get the distinct impression from the sources that to the ordinary buccaneer "the other loose roving way of life," as Dampier called it, was not simply a way to make a living, but a way of life. When, after crossing the Pacific Ocean in 1686, Captain Swan's buccaneers have the opportunity to establish a trading settlement in the Philippines, they reject it despite the prospect of peaceful profits. Ten years later, Dampier (1906 [I], 482) claimed to have regrets about his old "roving course of life," but he was clearly a minority. Most buccaneers remained perfectly content living for the day. Proceeds were spent on wine and women more quickly than they were earned, which was also the custom for the hunters on Santo Domingo. Regarding both groups it is worth quoting Exquemelin at length (1972, 45):

> When they [the hide hunters] arrive [on Tortuga] they squander in a month all the money which has

> taken them a year or eighteen months to earn. They drink brandy like water, and will buy a whole cask of wine, broach it, and drink until there's not a drop left. Day and night they roam the town, keeping the feast of Bacchus so long as they can drink for money. The service of Venus is not forgotten, either. In fact, the tavern-keepers and whores make ready for the coming of the hunters and the privateers in the same way as their fellows in Amsterdam prepare for the arrival of the East India ships and men-of-war. Once their money is all spent and they've had all they can on credit, back they go to the woods again, where they remain for another year or eighteen months.

As for the buccaneer sea hunters:

> [W]henever they have got hold of something, they don't keep it for long. They are busy dicing, whoring and drinking so long as they have anything to spend. Some of them will get through a good two or three thousand pieces of eight in a day — and next day not have a shirt on their back. I have seen a man in Jamaica give 500 pieces of eight to a whore, just to see her naked. Yes, and many other impurities. My own master often used to buy a butt of wine and set it in the middle of the street with the barrel-head knocked in, and stand barring the way. Every passer-by had to drink with him, or he'd have shot them dead with a gun he kept handy. Once he bought a cask of butter and threw the stuff at everyone who came by, bedaubing their clothes or their head, wherever he best could reach....

> The tavern-keepers let them [the buccaneers] have a good deal of credit, but in Jamaica one ought not to put much trust in these people, for often they will sell you for a debt, a thing I have seen happen many a time. Even the man I have just been speaking about, the one who gave the whore so much money to see her naked, and at that time had a good 3,000 pieces of eight — three months later he was sold for his debts, by a man in whose house he had spent most of his money (ibid., 68).

The picture was the same regardless of the port. When the buccaneers of L'Olonnais returned to Tortuga after their successful sack on Maracaibo:

> For some the joy was short lived — many could not keep their money three days before it was all gambled away. [The raid had earned all participants at least 100 pieces of eight — more than an average laborer earned in a year!] However, those who had lost what they had were helped by others. A short time previously, three ships had arrived from France with cargoes of wine and brandy, so liquor was very cheap. But this did not continue for long: prices quickly went up, and soon the buccaneers were paying four pieces of eight for a flagon of brandy. Tortuga at that time was full of traders and dealers. The governor got the ship laden with cacao [which had been captured by the buccaneers] for a twentieth of what it was really worth. The tavern-keepers got part of their money and the whores took the rest, so once more the buccaneers — including L'Olonnais, their chief — had to consider ways of

obtaining more booty (ibid., 85).

Bromley (1985, 309–10) makes a beautiful comparison between "roving on the account" and the life of the *picaro*, the rogue-hero of the seventeenth-century Spanish novels:

> The authorities agree on their [the buccaneers'] self-will, caprice, dislike of work; on their disordered and unwashed clothing, their habit of singing while companions tried to sleep and shooting to make a noise; on their blasphemies and debaucheries. So long as they had cash to spend, it was difficult to persuade them to the sea. In this they resemble the typical picaro, willing to lose everything on the throw of a dice, then begin all over again; and the picaresque novel, though seldom set in the New World, contains some profound truths about it. Living from day to day, at the mercy of events, the picaresque rogue is seldom his own master for long, yet living on his wits he can assert his independence and turn the table on masters no more virtuous than himself. There was more than this, however, to the libertinism of the buccaneers. They were not merely escaping from bondage. In their enterprises at least, they practiced notions of liberty and equality, even of fraternity, which for most inhabitants of the Old World and New remained frustrated dreams, so far as they were dreamt at all — more than we usually suppose, perhaps.

We must not generalize, of course. Not all buccaneers remained picaros throughout their lives: Exquemelin became (at least for some years) a respected surgeon in Amsterdam,

and Reyning rose to become a captain in the Dutch navy. Notorious freebooters could end up in high places: Henry Morgan was knighted (*Sir* Henry Morgan) and became Deputy Governor of Jamaica; the feared Laurens de Graaf became a French royal officer and King's Lieutenant for the government of Sainte-Domingue. But the admiral of the Brethren who was most popular with them, the Chevalier de Grammont in the 1680s, was perhaps most typical of his men (Charlevoix 1733 [III], 268-69), not caring for career advancement, but content in living for the day, and combining "good grace, honest manners, and amiability" with "all the vices of a Corsair: he carries debauchment with women and wine to the greatest excess, & irreligion as far as it can go."

> Small and active, he had risen high among his comrades because of his bravery, quick wit, and liberality. Prize money was spent as fast as he would earn it, usually on debauchery. Hard drinking had made him seem older than his years, and he suffered from gout. Still he was much beloved by the tough boucaniers [sic] who gave their affections to few.
> (Marley 1993, 10)

In linking the European mercenary traditions to the discontent of oppressed sailors, the Brotherhood of the Coast became a sanctuary for dropouts, deserters, outcasts and social failures, and so created a myth of freedom and independence that eventually developed into the dream of Libertalia. In their rough way they kept to the ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity that exploded the world of the Ancien Regime more than a century later.

REYNING'S FIRST VOYAGE WITH THE BRETHREN

When viewed in this light, and considering the gruesome picture Exquemelin paints of the buccaneers' atrocities (which we shall discuss later), it is not surprising that Van der Sterre abstains from explicit reference to Reyning becoming a free-booter. After spending some time on Santo Domingo as a hunter he is said to have preferred his old element, the sea, to "wild trapping in the woods." He sold his hides and went to the Cayman Islands, where he signed on with a Jamaican buccaneer. His new ship was a former Spanish barque with four guns commanded by his compatriot Carsten, or Captain Cintan as the Spaniards called him; she cruised along the coastlines of Cuba, Jamaica, and Santo Domingo, but was not successful. On the contrary, the buccaneers were almost taken themselves by a heavily-armed armadillo, a Spanish coast guard man-of-war. They only escaped thanks to greater speed and nightfall.

In the story of Reyning's first cruise as a buccaneer what we hear most about is one of the greatest problems of the pirates at sea: the lack of adequate food. We have seen how the buccaneers fitted themselves out for an expedition, but sooner or later their provisions were always exhausted, and all too often there were no friendly ports where new ones could be bought. In the rhythm of the free roving life, plenty alternated with want. After the encounter with the armadillo, want was the main condition for Reyning's buccaneers. On the Isle of Palma they hoped to find bananas and other food, but, although they found a place to careen their ship, food was scarce. They had to content themselves with catching soldados, a kind of lobster; and on another island they hunted for seag-

ulls and periwinkles. All in all the food they found was barely adequate to keep them alive. They had to resort to raiding the mainland. A few plantations to the west of Cartagena were sacked, without much result. An attack on an Indian village to the east yielded only some maize, and a few men were wounded. Finally, at Melatte, the buccaneers captured some fowl, pigs, and horses, and some more maize, enough food to significantly reduce the number of sick men aboard the ship. (Initially, the number of sick pirates increased sharply when it was learned that the sick would be put on a diet of fowl; but when that decision was reversed, giving the fowl only to the healthy crew members, almost everyone declared himself healed.)

After this reprovisioning the buccaneers decided to sail to La Rancheria, near the Rio Hacha on what is now the Colombian coast. Reyning was with the force of eighteen men that landed. Again they had bad luck. In fact, if we believe Reyning's reminiscences, they encountered a force of no less than three hundred Spanish foot soldiers and some cavalry. Fortunately, the Spaniards so feared the buccaneers that the enemy fled before the fight really started.

Though, this may seem a very tall tale, and we might consider Reyning a braggart — three hundred Spaniards fleeing from eighteen pirates — similar stories return again and again in the buccaneer reminiscences. They continually defeat much larger contingents of Spanish enemies. According to Marley (1997, 86), "Awesome fire power [made the buccaneers] unafraid of any larger Spanish–American formation they might meet, knowing that their enemies did not possess the same access to arms imported from Europe, and so had to rely more heavily upon hand held weapons such as lances, swords,

and even bows and arrows." We should also remember that many of the buccaneers were former soldiers, used to disciplined skirmishing (ibid., 20.). "The battle-discipline of these early formations must not be under-estimated, as numerous eye-witnesses have attested; for example, armies such as Morgan's frequently marched into action in serried ranks, 'with drums beating and banners flying.'"

Despite their easy victory over the Spaniards, Reyning's group found little food on this coast. The inhabitants of the village of La Rancheria had fled into the forest with all their cattle and supplies. Farther along the coast the freebooters tried to exchange some clothes with the *Indianos bravos* (savage Indians) for food. Finally, they reached the Dutch-controlled island of Aruba, where they managed to buy provisions.

Upon setting out from Aruba the expedition's luck changed. After a fierce fight the buccaneers succeeded in taking a Spanish prize. Reyning claims that he played a heroic role in the battle, being the first to board the Spanish ship after connecting the two ships with a grappling-iron, and single-handedly fought the Spaniards for a quarter of an hour! The buccaneers sailed to Jamaica with their prize, where, in accordance with their commission, they gave one-tenth of the booty to His Majesty the King of England (Charles II) and one-fifteenth to his brother, the Duke of York, Admiral of England and General of Jamaica. (No wonder the King continued to issue these commissions!) The rest of the booty the brethren divided among themselves.

From the story of Reyning's first buccaneer expedition we see how little was needed for the buccaneers to make a profit — one Spanish prize was enough — and how much the colonial

authorities on Jamaica profited from the buccaneers. On their part the buccaneers had to do some fighting, but their greatest nuisance was the problem of getting sufficient provisions. The profits of this one prize were enough to enable Reyning and one of his comrades to buy shares in a Spanish ship. Strangely enough, Van der Sterre does not mention the comrade's name, though the work of historian David Marley identifies him as Jelles de Lecat, another Dutchman, possibly from Frisia. The ship they bought into had been captured and brought to Jamaica by the notorious buccaneer chief L'Olonnais. She was a *barca longa*, a small brigantine of eighty tons: a two-masted vessel that could be both sailed and rowed. She carried twelve guns but a dozen buccaneers in a canoe had taken her without much trouble, and L'Olonnais was returning with his buccaneers from their sack of Maracaibo when he sold his prize at Jamaica. We therefore know that Reyning's fortunes began to change towards the beginning of 1668.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ROCK THE BRAZILIAN

Reyning's crew of buccaneers now chose another Dutchman as captain of the brigantine, a man who went under de nom-de-guerre of Rok Brasiliano, or Rock the Brazilian. Rock had gained this nickname because he had lived in the Dutch colony in Brazil. He was one of the most ferocious and least sympathetic of all buccaneer leaders, if we believe both Exquemelin's portrait of him (written when Rock was still alive and living on Jamaica) and Reyning's memories:

> He had no self-control at all, but behaved as possessed by a sullen fury. When he was drunk, he would roam

> the town like a madman. The first person he came across, he would chop off his arm or leg, without anyone daring to intervene, for he was like a maniac. He perpetrated the greatest atrocities possible against the Spaniards. Some of them he tied or spitted on wooden stakes and roasted them alive between two fires, like killing a pig — and all because they refused to show him the road to the hog-yards he wanted to plunder (Exquemelin 1972, 64).

This psychopath became the elected captain of Reyning's new expedition, and for some reason this Dutch crew chose not to join Morgan, who by the end of 1667 had gathered a major buccaneer force for his projected raid on Portobello — which was successfully carried out in July 1668. Instead, the Dutchmen set out on their own expedition, which can serve us as a classical example of a plunder voyage.

AN EVIL GRAIL?

"We like to think that those who sought the Grail weren't dupes," the lettrists wrote. "Their dérive is worthy of us.... The religious makeup falls away. These knights of a mythic western were out for pleasure: [they possessed] a brilliant talent for losing themselves in play; a voyage into amazement; a love of speed; a terrain of relativity... It was a drift to great days, where nothing resembled the old — and which never stopped. Surprising meetings, stunning obstacles, grand betrayals, perilous enchantments." (*Potlatch* #8, 1954)

To best imagine the life of the buccaneers one reads their own accounts and pays close attention to the rhythm of their

lives. Stomping around Tortuga or Jamaica, they spent all their cash (and more, if possible) as quickly as they could without a thought for the morrow. Then, broke and satiated by sex and drink, they rejoined their comrades aboard a new ship. They paid close attention only to their most prized possessions and tools, their firearms and cutlasses, and their new expedition might be bound for a private hunt or for a rendezvous at the Île-à-Vache, the island near the south-western tip of Santo Domingo, where the Admiral of the Brethren might have invited all brethren to gather for an expedition against a Spanish town. After outfitting their ships and agreeing upon their articles, the buccaneers would hunt or plunder for provisions before setting out. During the voyage periods of hunger might be punctuated by fights against the Spaniards (though the brethren preferred to follow leaders like "Lorencillo" de Graaf, who found them "easy, profitable victories"). It was a life insecure in the extreme — one could not know what might happen even within the next few hours. Discipline was minimal and quarrels were resolved by duels, but somehow the fraternity was solid enough to defeat numerically superior Spanish troops. Nothing happened for whole days except the flowing of the seas and the passing of fish and birds. Then everything happened at once, danger and excitement soared, and a moment could make them rich or dead. The survivors then returned to their island sanctuaries to spend their booty and the cycle continued: "A loose roving way of life." It was a veritable feast on the Wheel of Fortune: "*Hoy por mi, mañana por ti*" (today for me, tomorrow for thee), as the mulatto pirate Diego Lúcifer once told a Spanish captive.

The voyage that Reyning undertook with Rock the Brazilian

in 1668 exemplifies this rhythm. Reyning's account reveals the problems of authority and leadership among the Brethren, and exposes the atrocities they committed on outsiders.

L'Olonnais and his men, after their successful and barbarous sack of Maracaibo, had spent their loot in a pleasant delirium of debauchery and revelry on Tortuga. Then, L'Olonnais had set sail again with a fleet of six ships and 700 buccaneers, on the expedition that led to his own death, "hacked to death and roasted limb by limb" by the Indians who captured him. In the course of this expedition, foraging in the Bay of Honduras, some of his men separated from the main force, and near the Cayman Islands they met Rock the Brazilian whose forces they now joined. Rock and Reyning had sailed from Jamaica with an English commission and were busy provisioning themselves. The piragua in which L'Olonnais's buccaneers had come was given back to some Spanish captives and Rock's brigantine, now with a crew of fifty-two, sailed off in search of prey and adventure.

They didn't have to look long. As they lay at anchor off the island of Palma taking on fresh provisions another brigantine hove in sight, larger and (it turned out) better armed than the buccaneer, with a crew of sixty Spaniards. On a warning-signal from their ship, the buccaneers hurried back aboard — not a moment too soon, since the Spaniards intended to board. It was windless and the Spaniards used their oars to come up the buccaneers. But Rock didn't wait, maneuvering in such a way that the two ships came side by side, Reyning threw the grappling-irons and the buccaneers boarded the Spanish vessel. The fierce fight only lasted an hour, by which time only twelve Spaniards were still alive, most of them heavily wounded. One

was a ship's boy who was found hanging over the ship's rail near the helm. On being promised quarter the boy climbed back aboard. When some of the buccaneers decided to slay him after all, Reyning succeeded in saving the boy's life only with drawn cutlass.

ATROCITIES OF THE BUCCANEERS

Van der Sterre eulogizes the conduct of his hero and contrasts it, perhaps to remove some of the stain from the Dutch buccaneer's past, with the conduct of his more bloodthirsty colleagues. According to the physician, Reyning never needlessly spilled blood and always kept his word to the vanquished. Because of this "he had often fought and argued with his fellow or subordinate Officers." In this way Van der Sterre emphasizes the image of the buccaneers as bloodthirsty pirates, an image they earned because of their treatment of the Spaniards and that was popularized for European readers by Exquemelin. This image can't be proven wrong, but when we address the problem of "cruelty" the point is not whether the buccaneers were cruel (they often were), but whether they were worse than their enemies and contemporaries — and whether there were reasons for their cruelty and bloodlust.

Giving or denying quarter to defeated enemies may not be the most important aspect here. More distasteful to our sensibilities are the accounts of the tortures prisoners were subjected to with the aim of obtaining information about hidden treasure. It is important to note that this kind of violence was instrumental by nature. The buccaneers were out for treasure and if they had to torture someone to get it most of them would not hesitate. No

doubt there were sadistic impulses freed in the process, but we must realize that in the seventeenth century the use of torture in no way deviated from "normal" conduct in society. Torture and other forms of physical violence were very much the standard in all kinds of social activities, not in the least in judicial processes and education. To recognize this is not to make light of it. However, a case can be made that Exquemelin overemphasized his horror stories with the objective of boosting book sales. Earle, who has studied the campaigns of Morgan from the perspective of the Spanish archives, has noted that the Spanish sources are silent about torture during the sacks of Portobello in 1668 and Gibraltar in 1669 (1981, 74–75, 114). Torture is commented upon in the reports on the sack of Panama in 1671, which seems to imply that it was exceptional then. In 1668 and 1669, the buccaneers' violence was probably not shocking to the Spanish authorities, who employed similar violence in their own treatment of slaves and Indians.

Another intimation that the primary character of the buccaneers' violence was instrumental (apart from the frenzy of bloodlust and fury that sometimes followed the heat of battle) lies in the way Morgan treated his hostages after the sack of Portobello. Trapped in the lake of Maracaibo and unable to reach open sea because of the Spanish fortifications at the lake's entry, Morgan threatened to hang his prisoners if he and his men were not given free passage to the sea. The Spaniards ignored the threat, so Morgan eluded the Spanish cannons by the famous ruse of sending men in boats to the landward side of the forts, creating the impression that he intended to storm them. When the Spaniards turned their cannons in the direction of the expected attack (quite a procedure in those days), they learned

that the boats had gone out with the men prominently visible, and returned with the same men lying flat on the bottoms of the vessels. With the Spanish artillery turned it was easy for Morgan to reach the sea, and once he had escaped he didn't bother to hang his prisoners, such violence was now unnecessary.

There is mention of torture and other cruelties committed by the buccaneers in the reports on the sack of Panama, but here there seems an obvious relationship between the level of violence and the frustrations the buccaneers suffered during the campaign. Having crossed the isthmus of Panama suffering enormous privations, the Brethren found their share of the captured treasure disappointing (*cf.* Earle 1981, 240–41). We see a similar mechanism at work when a later generation of buccaneers, led by De Graaf and Grammont, sacked the Mexican port of Campeche in 1685. The buccaneers held the town for almost two months, from July until September, and sent raiding parties out into the surrounding countryside. As was the case in the sack of Panama, their numbers were too great for the treasure, and Marley (1997, 84) writes:

> Frustration led to numerous instances of cruelty. On 25 August, fully a month and a half after they had arrived, Grammont's flibustiers celebrated Louis XIV's feast day with a display of fireworks and other festivities, then the following morning began preparing to decamp. A message was sent inland, demanding a ransom of eighty thousand pesos and four hundred head of cattle to leave Campeche intact. Governor Téllez's reply arrived a few days later, a sneering rejection in which he stated that they would be given nothing and might burn down the town, as Spain had ample funds

to build or even buy another, and people enough with which to repopulate it.

Furious, Grammont had the houses torched at dawn, then sent another missive inland threatening the captives themselves. He received much the same response, and the day after paraded the prisoners in the main square, where he ordered executions to commence.

Fortunately for the prisoners, another buccaneer leader was less inclined to be swayed by his frustrations (ibid.). "Half-a-dozen hapless Spaniards had been hanged when the leading citizens approached De Graaf, whom they knew to be more humane than the Frenchman, and begged him to intervene. After a lengthy discussion with Grammont, the executions were halted and the remaining prisoners were taken out to the ships. Immediately the pirates spiked the guns, and quit that city."

My researches lead me to conclude that, for the most part, the buccaneers' violence and brutalities were instrumental, but that frustration sometimes heightened their ordinary level of violence. I do not, of course, deny that a lot of buccaneers were certainly sadistic and not in the least disinclined to use torture.

Another more romantic image of the pirate can be traced directly to such historic prototypes as De Graaf. This attractive character "was ... tall, blonde and handsome, with a spiked Spanish-style mustache, which suited him very well." Marley (1993, 7) quotes from a contemporary chronicler:

> He always carries violins and trumpets aboard with which to entertain himself and amuse others, who derive pleasure from this. He is further distinguished amongst filibusters by his courtesy and good taste. Overall he has won such fame that when it is known

> he has arrived at some place, many come from all around to see with their own eyes whether "Lorenzo" is made like other men.

De Graaf's conduct during the sack of Vera Cruz in 1683 must have been the original source for many accounts of noble pirates. The nominal leader of the freebooters' expedition was the Dutch smuggler and slave trader Nikolaas van Hoorn, who grew impatient when the Spaniards delayed forwarding the ransom for thousands of prisoners that had been transported to Sacrificios Island. Van Hoorn decided to remind them of the gravity of the situation by sending the Spaniards in Vera Cruz a dozen of the captives' heads. De Graaf was informed and arrived just in time to stop the executions. On the beach, in the hot sun, the buccaneer confronted the smuggler.

> According to Spanish eyewitnesses, De Graaf rebuked Van Hoorn, saying "it was not right to behead any surrendered men who had been granted quarter" ... With a snarl at being publicly balked, Van Hoorn drew his blade and advanced upon his insufferable rival — a serious mistake, for the enormous De Graaf had not risen high amongst the Brotherhood simply because of his brains and love of fine music. In a blur he slashed his own sword deep into Van Hoorn's wrist, then kicked his disabled opponent into the sand. Now fully enraged, De Graaf bellowed at his men to haul his bloodied counterpart aboard the Francesa [De Graaf's ship] and clap him in irons. Van Hoorn's followers shrank away before his wrath, and there was no further talk of beheading Spanish captives (ibid., 58).

It's a very romantic story, and De Graaf was perhaps exceptional, but other buccaneers also protected their prisoners: witness Ringrose's account of how he saved some Spanish prisoners from his Indian allies (Ringrose 313–14), Van der Sterre's story about Reyning, and Bartholomew Sharpe's protest against the execution of one prisoner (ibid., 404):

> Thursday, January 27th [1681]. This morning on board the ship we examined one of the old men who were [sic] taken prisoners upon the island [Iquique] the day before. But, finding him in many lies, as we thought, concerning Arica, our Commander [Captain Watling] ordered him to be shot to death, which was accordingly done. Our old commander, Captain Sharp [who had been deposed], was much troubled in his mind and dissatisfied at this cruel and rash proceeding, whereupon he opposed it as much as he could. But, seeing he could not prevail, he took water and washed his hands, saying: Gentlemen, I am clear of the blood of this old man; and I will warrant you a hot day for this piece of cruelty, whenever we come to fight at Arica. Those words were found at the latter end of this expedition to Arica to contain a true and certain prophecy. [The attack on Arica failed and Watling died.]

Labat (1931, 235, 242) remembered, of sailing with the buccaneer Captain Daniel during the War of the Spanish Succession, that two captured English ladies were treated with all the fine points and elegance of French *galanterie*. Perhaps, then, the conduct of most buccaneers was closer to that of Van Hoorn than to that of De Graaf, but the fact remains that there

was a De Graaf, *and* he was one of the most important leaders of the Brethren.

LEADERSHIP CONFLICTS

Let us now return to the brigantine with Rock Brasiliano and Reyning. Although they had succeeded in extricating themselves from a difficult situation by defeating the Spaniards, fighting without the prospect of treasure was not a favorite pastime for the Brethren. They could not resist the temptation to tease the enemy by sending one of their prisoners to the Governor of Cartagena with a letter asking him in future to send them "bearded men [instead of mere boys] with more policy and courage." But three days later, when Reyning heard a gunshot signaling him back to the ship, and the buccaneers perceived that the Governor had obliged them by sending the small flotilla of three ships that now bore down upon them, they did not hesitate to slip anchor and sail out to open sea.

With no promise of gain the Brethren had no interest in fighting a stronger enemy. Van der Sterre writes that they would rather engage "barques with merchandise than stronger ships to fight." They sailed back to Jamaica, where they took on fresh provisions and re-outfitted the Spanish prize, electing Reyning as her captain. Then they sailed out again with two ships properly holding English privateering commissions, setting course for Bluefields Bay on the coastline of present-day Nicaragua.

As might be expected, things didn't work out in the long run between Reyning and Rock the Psychopath, shedding an interesting light on how discipline worked in the pirate flotillas. How were differences of opinion solved? Buccaneer vessels

have been called the most democratic institutions of the seventeenth century: but how was leadership established and maintained on these vessels? How, in other words, did the buccaneers in action solve the classic problem of anarchy: who is in charge, of what, and to what extent?

We know that the discipline on buccaneer vessels was not up to naval standards. We have already seen how Exquemelin emphasized the egalitarian status of the captain. Ringrose's account of his expedition to the Pacific Ocean is full of elections and depositions of captains. The buccaneers didn't hesitate to depose an unsuitable leader. In January of 1681, in the heart of Spanish waters and territory, Ringrose's crew deposed their Captain, Bartholomew Sharpe, and elected John Watling in his place. (This would, of course, have been considered mutiny in any regular naval squadron or merchant fleet.) And in the Gulf of Nicoya, in April:

> Our mutineers broke out again into an open dissension, they having been much dissatisfied all along the course of the voyage.... Nothing now could appease them nor serve their turn but a separation from the rest of the company and a departure from us. Hereupon this day they departed from the ship, to the number of 47 men, all in company together, with design to go overland by the same way they came into those seas. The rest who remained behind did fully resolve and faithfully promise to each other they would stick close together (Ringrose, 416–17).

There were two viable options when freebooters did not agree with the policy of their leaders: leaving the expedition (what on normal ships would be called desertion, but which

was not frowned upon among the pirates); or deposition of the commander (called mutiny on normal ships, but quite a frequent procedure among pirates). Dampier notes (1906 [I], 61): "Privateers are not obliged to any Ship, but free to go ashore where they please, or to go into any other Ship that will entertain them, only paying for their Provision." Captain Swan's dissatisfied men went even further than that, leaving their commander and thirty-six of their fellows on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines when they themselves had had enough of the island (ibid., 376).

In Van der Sterre's account we learn that disputes between commanding officers were solved using the same procedure by which disputes between common pirates were solved: by duelling. Jelles de Lecat had stayed on with Rock as a lieutenant or first mate, but couldn't get along with his captain. In one of his fits of anger Rock beat his lieutenant on the shoulder with a cutlass. When Reyning learned this he declared it unacceptable. Rock, the last person to decline a fight, immediately ordered two cutlasses on deck so he and his fellow captain could fight it out. The dispute had to be settled there and then. Both duelists lay down a considerable sum of money for the surgeon, in case they were wounded and had to be treated. A circle of men drew in around them to mark off the area of battle. In this duel we note almost exactly the same arrangements as in the duels that Compaen had decreed for his ships, a clear case of unbroken pirate traditions. And half a century later the tradition would live on on the ships of Black Bart Roberts, albeit in a modified form:

> No striking one another on board, but every Man's Quarrels to be ended on Shore, at Sword & Pistol thus:

> The Quarter-Master of the Ship, when the Parties will not come to any Reconciliation, accompanies them on Shore with what Assistance he thinks proper, & turns the Disputants Back to Back, at so many Paces Distance. At the Word of Command, they turn and fire immediately, (or else the Piece is knocked out of their Hands). If both miss, they come to their Cutlasses, and then he is declared Victor who draws the first Blood (Johnson 1998, 181).

At the word of command Rock and Reyning circled each other. They attacked simultaneously, and Reyning was slightly wounded near his stomach. Then the blood began to flow on both sides. Reyning chopped away part of his enemy's chin, was himself slightly wounded at the knee, then cut Rock on his forehead. It is said that Rock began to waver at this point — perhaps blood was flowing from the wound on his forehead into his eyes — and Reyning took the initiative. He hit Rock in the arm, then cut his hairline near his eyes. Forced back to the foremast, Rock had to surrender.

Reyning had won, but hard feelings between the two Brethren remained. Rock went below deck to have his wounds treated, ordering the surgeon to pay no attention to Reyning's wounds. Reyning had to go below decks himself and threaten to throw the medicine chest and the surgical instruments over the side before Rock gave in, but the Brazilian dreamed of revenge. While the ships lay at anchor at the Cayman Islands, Reyning learned that Rock was looking for a well balanced Spanish rapier to try again. He immediately sent word to Rock that he would be waiting with some excellent, loaded pistols at his side. Cooperation between the two pirates was ended, and

the ships parted to pursue their own courses.

Leadership among the buccaneers clearly required not only force of personality, but also skill at weapons-play. Van der Sterre gives another example of the qualities required. A captain who had been insulted by one of his men for being a coward immediately ordered two cutlasses on deck. The two men attacked each other "as furious lions" and after a fierce fight the captain got the advantage and his opponent had to jump overboard to save himself. The captain dove into the sea after him, ready to cleave his enemy's skull should he come up. The sea was high and both men would have been drowned if the other buccaneers hadn't, with much trouble, gotten them out of the water.

A HALLUCINATORY WAY OF LIFE

On the Cayman Islands Reyning provisioned his crew with seacow and turtle flesh, then they sailed to the Gulf of Campeche, where they again found themselves short of food and had to land on the island of Termus. Reading Van der Sterre one starts to wonder about the buccaneers' mental state — half the time starved and flowing with the waves and the wind, then caught up in the heat of battle, then gorging themselves on meat and wine, they existed in an environment of total insecurity where anything could happen at any moment. On Termus Reyning and nine of his men set off to hunt wild cattle, and were soon lost in the deep wilderness. Four men split away from the main group and vanished. There was now nothing to eat but an occasional bird and some wild prunes, and they lived in constant fear of an attack by wild animals.

After sixteen or eighteen days they found two of their lost comrades covered with lice and lying half-starved beneath a tree, incapable of doing more than crawling to the fruits that fell from the tree. The other two men were never found. Finally the group found the shore of the island again, and discovered that they were on the wrong side of a lagoon. Reyning and an Englishman built a raft, but it could only carry one of them. The Englishman, who couldn't swim, floated on the raft with Reyning swimming alongside, only climbing on when the crocodiles got too close. It took four days to get all the men across. The ship was nowhere to be seen. There was still hardly anything to eat, apart from a few lobsters. Following the beach they spied a sail and hid themselves. It was Rock, the last person Reyning wanted to meet. Twenty-eight days after they first started out they encountered their own ship, returning aboard in a totally exhausted state.

While Reyning was searching the Campeche coastline for prey, Rock had his own troubles: a tornado wrecked his brigantine. The thirty-two men on board succeeded in saving themselves, but with only their guns and a little ammunition. Their Indian cook saw his chance and ran away, taking word to the Spaniards that Rock was stranded near Merida. The Spanish Governor sent thirty mounted men to capture the infamous pirate. Although the pirates were starved, the task proved itself formidable. The Spaniards got off their horses, demanded that the pirates surrender, and were immediately chased away by musket-volleys. The Brethren dined again, on horseflesh. Next day they found a canoe and Rock and one of his men set out to sea, where they met Reyning. Fraternity prevailed and the stranded men were taken on board.

Then more hunger. Crocodile-eggs and turtle became the main part of the diet. But their luck turned and the privateers encountered and took a Spanish merchantman laden with cacao, wine and sugar, and 10,000 pieces-of-eight. Part of the gold was found hidden in the arses of chickens, though the buccaneers also found gold hidden in small pouches on the captain's back. The lading was sold at Pissin's Island, a colonial outpost, and the buccaneers returned to Jamaica, where they quickly spent their hard-won earnings in a debauchery of "drinking, whoring, and gambling."

(As an aside, by this time Rock had already returned to Jamaica aboard another ship, that of Joseph Bradley. This stage of the narration occasions Van der Sterre to fulminate against the work of Exquemelin, who says that Rock returned to Jamaica with a prize. It was Reyning who had taken the prize.)

REYNING AND EXQUEMELIN

We should note here that there seems to have been considerable friction between Exquemelin and Reyning. (Was the Frenchman perhaps the surgeon on Rock's ship who refused to treat Reyning's wounds after the duel between the captains?) Van der Sterre writes: "It is a mistake of the author of *The Buccaneers of America*, when he says that Jan Erasmus also without a commission, as a pirate has privateered for himself." However, in the published editions of Exquemelin's book no mention at all is made of Jan Erasmus Reyning. Did he figure in an earlier manuscript of *The Buccaneers of America*, and later, as a Dutch navy captain, did Reyning take offense at being portrayed as a pirate? *The Buccaneers of America* was first pub-

lished in Amsterdam in 1678. Reyning was in Amsterdam in 1676, before sailing out again as commander of a brigantine in Admiral Binckes' navy expedition to the West Indies, and could at that time have persuaded Exquemelin, the former buccaneer surgeon, to erase his name from the manuscript. It is possible, and might even be likely. By then Reyning was no longer committed to the loose roving way of life, and his career would only have suffered from any connection to buccaneer atrocities.

THE EXPEDITION TO PANAMA

After their return to Jamaica, Reyning and Lecat, like almost all the buccaneers and flibustiers, joined the latest (and last) of Morgan's expeditions: the Jamaican buccaneer's grand finale expedition to Panama in 1670–71. Van der Sterre starts his account of the expedition with a long eulogy to General Morgan, who is said to lead the fight against the Catholic arch-enemy. The documentary evidence that we possess, as researched and revealed by historians such as Peter Earle, shows Morgan in a less positive light, more akin to Exquemelin's portrait of him. It's a portrait that led Morgan to accuse his former surgeon of libel before the London courts. There can be no doubt, however, that Morgan was a hard man, primarily motivated by his own ambition and a desire for treasure to such a degree that after the sack of Panama the Brethren would accuse him of having deceived them in the division of the loot (probably the worst crime in their code).

The raid on Panama took place within a complex interplay of powers in which the London government, the colonial regime on Jamaica, the Brethren, and the Spaniards all played

their roles. In June 1669, only a short while after Morgan's return from the sack of Maracaibo, the Jamaican Governor Modyford issued a proclamation declaring that the Spaniards were to be treated as "good neighbors and friends." The pendulum of English–Spanish relations had again swung toward friendship but, apart from the Brethren's absolutely opposing the agenda, there was now a further complicating factor. The government in Madrid, incensed by reports of Morgan's plunder campaigns, had finally lost patience with the English and was issuing commissions to Spanish privateers raiding against the English. Due to the length of time it took for communications to travel from Madrid to the governors of Spanish America the first of the Spanish privateers didn't start attacking English ships and burning settlements on Jamaica until January of 1670. By then English authorities on Jamaica had started implementing the new policy of friendship towards Spain by detaining some of the Brethren. The news that Spanish privateers were threatening English trade quickly put an end to this. The damage inflicted on the English by the Spaniards was in no way comparable to that inflicted by the Brethren on Spanish possessions and trade. This was certainly the view of the government in London (Marley 1997, 57), where it was thought that the Spanish retaliations were "not at all to be wondered at, after such hostilities as [the buccaneers] have acted upon their territories."

Righteous indignation on Jamaica about Spanish attacks combined with other interests to create new opportunities for the Brotherhood. Governor Modyford (who was Morgan's crony) gave London the impression that Jamaica might at any moment become a victim of Spanish invasion and elevated

Morgan to the rank of Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of all the ships of war belonging to Port Royal, with orders to attack, seize and destroy all the enemy's vessels. This, as the Governor must have known, was tantamount to cutting the Brotherhood loose, and Morgan lost no time in taking advantage of his new freedom. On the 11th of August 1670 he left Port Royal with eleven vessels and six hundred men, sailing to the Brotherhood's old rendezvous point at Ile-à-Vache. Knowing that great things were in store, the Brethren hastened from all over the Caribbean to join him. When Morgan eventually sailed from Ile-à-Vache on December 18 he had nearly all of the Brotherhood's forces at his disposal: thirty-eight vessels and more than two thousand men.

During the attack on Portobello, Morgan's force of five hundred men had consisted of Englishmen, "Dutchmen, several Frenchmen, Italians, Portuguese, mulattos and Negroes, and, according to Spanish sources, at least one Spaniard, a citizen of Cordoba" (Earle 1981, 66). During the expedition to Panama, the composition of his forces was not much different:

> The invasion force was a mixed bunch socially as well as racially, ranging from gentlemen and impoverished planters to men whom even their best friends would have described as the scum of the earth. They were "men of the sea, canaille of little social pretensions," as a Mexican who had been a prisoner in Jamaica for five years put it. But their morale was good. "They are very happy, well paid and they live in amity with each other. The prizes that they make are shared with much brotherhood and friendship" (ibid.).

Most of the men were undisciplined and lived only for the

morrow. Only a few of the Brethren's leaders — among them Morgan himself, Reyning, and De Graaf — ever showed more ambition or seem to have had a wider strategic and political agenda to advance. In the words of Earle (180), most buccaneers were "hardy privateersmen who thought nothing of traveling a thousand miles in an open boat, if there was a promise of plunder at the end of the voyage."

One member of the expedition to Panama is particularly interesting. Morgan is said to have had with him an old English witch, who advised him and who is supposed to have drowned at San Lorenzo when some of the buccaneer vessels struck the reefs (ibid., 180, 196). In considering the witch's presence and the role she might have played we must remember that the expedition took place during the age of the great witch hunts, and that possibly more than a few of Morgan's men had been Ranters or other antinomian sectarians. Ravaging the Spaniards would have been for them not only a chance for plunder, but also the perfect opportunity to settle accounts with totalitarian Catholicism. It is not contradictory to their antinomianism to imagine that many of the buccaneers were firm believers in witchcraft and the magic arts, since those beliefs were widespread at that time. The witch's presence may not, in fact, have been unusual for such an expedition. Captain Swan kept a personal astrologer whose advice he always took, and who predicted on the 18th of February 1686 in Mexico the great danger that materialized when the Spanish sprang the trap that killed fifty of Swan's two hundred men, including Basil Ringrose (Dampier 1906 [I], 284–86).

The story of the expedition to Panama has often been told, starting with Exquemelin, and I do not intend to write a new

account: the best scholarly book to be consulted on the subject is that of Earle. My concern lies in how Reyning participated in the campaign, experienced it, and remembered it in his later days. Let us, then, follow the story as Van der Sterre tells it.

THE BROTHERHOOD SETS OUT

The story starts in the seventh chapter of the *Zeer Aanmerkelijke Reysen* with the eulogy to Morgan that is clearly intended to further whiten Reyning's reputation, since it creates the impression that we are talking about a war instead of a plunder campaign undertaken by pirates in a period when England, Holland and Spain were at peace with each other.

The logistical demands of Morgan's campaigns were not much different than those for voyages of one or two buccaneer vessels. First provisions had to be taken on, so while the buccaneer fleet was gathering at the Ile-à-Vache and the ships were careened, hunting parties were sent out to shoot pigs and cows. At the same time, a small flotilla sailed for the Rio Hacha because it had been learned that there was a lot of maize held in stock in the village of La Rancheria. Reyning's ship seems to have been with this flotilla. A surprise attack on the village was impossible because the wind fell just before the buccaneers reached their destination. The Spaniards had time to prepare their defense and sent their richest possessions and provisions into the woods. At night, a Spanish ship lying in the docks slipped its cable and tried to escape, but was seized by the buccaneers. To their joy, it was laden with maize. The next day the buccaneers got in their boats and landed, taking the fort and the village. Raiding parties were

sent to the countryside to take prisoners, who were held for ransom. Ultimately a deal was struck and the Spaniards exchanged the prisoners for a thousand tons of maize. Well satisfied, the buccaneers sailed from the Rio Hacha, returning to Ile-à-Vache after an absence of five weeks.

According to Reyning, the Brotherhood's fleet was now well prepared. It was stocked with provisions and consisted of thirty square-rigged vessels and seven smaller ones. Reyning and Lecat had joined the expedition with two ships: the *Seviliaen* and another ship they had charted specifically for the expedition. As later events bear out, it seems that Reyning was in command of the charted ship. There was a total of about two thousand pirates on board the whole fleet, all of them well armed with pistols, muskets and cutlasses, and the ships had sufficient cannons, hand grenades, powder and shot. The traditions of the European mercenaries showed themselves in the organization of the force, which was divided into two regiments, one under Morgan's command and the other under the command of his vice-admiral, Joseph Bradley. Each regiment was divided in ten companies, recognized by their flags: green flags with different numbers of white disks — one for the first company, two for the second, etc. At Cape Tiburon all the officers were called together for a final council, during which they decided to sail for Panama. To keep their plans secret, the pirate crews were prohibited from talking to strangers, aboard or ashore, and were not allowed to leave their ships without permission from their captains. The Brethren thus showed themselves capable of reasonable efficiency and discipline, as long as there was prospect of plunder. (Regardless of these precau-

tions, however, the news of course leaked out, and when they reached the San Lorenzo fortress they found the Spaniards very well informed about their plans.)

Concerning the expected loot, the following division was agreed upon:

General: one share for every hundred participants.

Captains: eight shares for their ship plus one personal share; if the ship was lost, 18 slaves or 1800 pieces of eight damages.

Surgeon: apart from the personal share, 100 pieces of eight for the medicine chest.

Special gratuities for acts of bravery, for instance ten shilling for a good grenade throw.

Damages [Injuries]:

Loss of both hands: 18 slaves or 1800 pieces of eight.

Loss of one leg, or one hand: 6 slaves or 600 pieces of eight.

Loss of one eye, or one finger: 1 slave or 100 pieces of eight.

Damages were to be paid before the booty was divided, and we notice that Morgan's share was not enormously greater than those of his men, not even totaling one percent of the net profits — not much compared to the earnings of princes or generals in their campaigns, though still enough to get rich. Reyning stood to get nine shares, about half of what the Admiral would get. About the arrangements Van der Sterre notes: "The privateers are not jealous, but very generous concerning others, never letting each other go short, whether in money, clothes, food or drink."

It was further decided that, before sailing to the isthmus of Panama, the fleet would first capture Providence Island (also called Santa Catalina) with the aim of obtaining some guides.

In 1666, the former buccaneer Admiral Mansfield had taken the island and set up another pirate utopia. Since then, however, it had been recaptured by the Spaniards.

Santa Catalina was actually not one, but two islands connected by a bridge. When the fleet arrived, Morgan landed a thousand of his men, who easily took the first island. The Spaniards retreated to the smaller island where they put up a spirited defense. One advantage of the Brethren's independence of spirit was that they were excellent skirmishers. Instead of marching forward in line they fought from the cover of the trees. Unfortunately, night fell before they could storm the Spanish positions, and the buccaneers had to camp in the open, without cover or food and in the rain. They couldn't even keep their powder dry, and were lucky that the Spanish feared them so much that they wouldn't risk a sortie. The next day the rain continued to pour down. The buccaneers managed to find a few huts in which to dry their powder, but were again assailed by their old companion, hunger. They found a sick old horse, pus flowing from its wounds, killed the beast, and divided the meat in such a hurry that they did not save anything for their officers. Reyning was fortunate to be given a piece of the rotted liver by his lieutenant, Lecat, which he consumed after slightly roasting it.

Despite the buccaneers' difficulties, the Spaniards shat their pants trying to anticipate just what the pirates would do. Finally, rather than fight, they struck a deal with Morgan that they would surrender after a fake attack by the Brethren during which both sides would fight with loose powder and the Spanish would be allowed a free retreat. That night the buccaneers attacked, their muskets — just in case — loaded with real powder, and the Spaniards kept their word. By morning Santa Catalina was once

again in the Brotherhood's hands. Reyning headed the advance force, and his only problem during the attack lay in missing the bridge in the dark and stumbling into a boat.

SAN LORENZO

The fortification had been taken but the buccaneers' worst enemy remained. They found no food within the fort, so Reyning gave priority to leading a party of men into the countryside in search of provisions. They were more successful than they could have hoped, taking fowl, turkey, pork and sheep from the local population. The cooking and roasting continued until everyone had eaten his bellyful. Then attention shifted to the problem of finding the guides they needed. A mulatto prisoner told them about two Indians who, he said, had been raised in the neighborhood of Panama city. The Indians didn't like the idea of serving as guides, but the buccaneers forced them. (Morgan claimed that one of the Indian guides, Antonillo, went voluntarily with the expedition; cf. Earle 1981, 186.)

A council of officers decided to send an advance force to take the San Lorenzo fort which guarded the mouth of the Chagres River, where Morgan intended to start crossing the isthmus to reach Panama. Joseph Bradley was put in command of the San Lorenzo expedition. Along with his own ship and men he took Reyning and his crew and Richard Norman's sloop and crew — in total, Bradley had three ships and 470 buccaneers under his command. Reyning's old enemy, Rock the Brazilian, was also a member of the expedition. We do not know whose ship he was on, but can be sure it was not Reyning's.

According to Reyning's recollection it took three days for

the flotilla to sail to the mouth of the Chagres, which they reached on the 6th of January 1671. A Spanish ship hove in sight and was immediately chased by Reyning and forced into shallow water. The Spaniards beached it and set it on fire before fleeing inland. The buccaneers put out the fire and salvaged the lading of two hundred chickens, various merchandise, gold rings, and a little sugar.

The next day the buccaneers forced their way through the wilderness to the fort. We now know that the fort defenders had recently been reinforced by 360 Spanish soldiers, and when the buccaneers finally reached the fort in the afternoon they had to cross a wide plain where there was no cover against the musket and cannon volleys from the fort. The attack was in serious trouble. On the far side of the plain, a partly demolished bridge was the only entrance to the fort — which was protected on one side by steep cliffs, on another by the river, and on the fourth side, opposite the plain, by the sea. Four bastions guarded the landward side, two faced seaward, and the entrance was guarded by a strong tower. From the Spaniards' preparations it is clear that they had been informed about the pirate's plans.

In the fruitless attacks that afternoon Rock the Brazilian is said to have been wounded by a bullet and to have left the battlefield, sending a message to Morgan that all buccaneers had been slain. (This may be Reyning's exaggerated way of putting his old rival in a bad light.) By dusk things looked bad for the buccaneers and Reyning and his men took cover in a dry ditch. We can be reasonably sure that in the dark they hardly knew what was happening, so we have some trouble in correlating Reyning's memories to the reconstructions by twentieth-century historians. In Marley's account, Bradley led his men forward

in the dark and succeeded, by tossing hand-grenades and fire-pots, in setting the wooden stockades on fire. Most of the outer defenses burned down and 150 Spaniards deserted, but Bradley's renewed attacks the next day were still unable to breach the inner defenses.

Reyning claims that he is the one who finally succeeded in breaching the stockades. The fighting was very fierce. His company's flag was shot to shreds, and several flag bearers were killed, but he kept his flag flying. During the action he pulled a bloody arrow from the arm of one of his comrades, wrapped it in cotton which he set alight, and shot it with his musket into the fort. It hit a roof of dried palm leaves and started a fire, during which several houses where the Spaniards kept their powder exploded. A group of buccaneers then succeeded in entering the fort, but were beaten off. By this time, according to Reyning, there were only about one hundred buccaneers who weren't wounded. All the officers, with the exception of Reyning himself and Bradley (who was severely wounded), were dead. At ten o'clock in the morning Reyning finally succeeded in planting his company flag on the fort's wall (in other accounts this was done by a group of French flibustiers), but the Spaniards continued defending themselves until their Governor was shot dead. Only thirty Spaniards survived the battle, nine of whom fled to Panama carrying the news of their defeat.

According to Morgan's own reports, Reyning and Rock rather exaggerated the buccaneers' losses. Nonetheless, they were severe. Thirty men had died and seventy-six had been wounded, with Bradley dying ten days after the battle. It was not the kind of fight the buccaneers relished, costing too much blood and bringing no loot, and in the aftermath they gave

sway to their ignoble impulses. With much effort Reyning had persuaded his men to give quarter to the women, and had them locked up in a church out of harm's way. The other buccaneers were furious about this. As they buried their dead a musket shot felled a Negro who was standing next to Reyning, and seventeen years later he still believed that the bullet had been meant for him.

Concerning the buccaneers' attitude to women, we note the same inconsistencies there as with their atrocities in general. We can have no doubt that, in an age and society where women were subordinate, many buccaneers did not hesitate to ravish them, especially after long sexual abstinence and the deprivations of life at sea. Perhaps in this instance Reyning's conduct was a rare exception, though evidence is mixed in that regard. In fact, if we examine later pirate traditions there are indications that such behavior was not totally rare. For instance, in 1723 Captain John Phillips' crew stipulated in their articles: "If at any time you meet with a prudent Woman, that Man that offers to meddle with her, without her Consent, shall suffer present Death" (Johnson 1998, 315).

Whatever the actual costs of the battle, the advance guard had succeeded in taking the first obstacle to the march on Panama. Their prisoners informed them about the situation in Panama, and that an Irish traitor had betrayed their plans for San Lorenzo.

THE CONQUEST OF PANAMA

The story of the march on Panama shows the extent to which the buccaneers were prepared to suffer when there was the

prospect of loot, and how, despite their lack of discipline and general anarchic behavior, they could still function as a formidable fighting force. Two weeks after the seizure of San Lorenzo, Reyning remembered, the main buccaneer fleet dropped anchor at the Chagres River. (Morgan actually arrived on the 12th of January, five days after the seizure of the fort.) The Brethren held council and decided to start at once for Panama, hoping to take the fullest advantage of the Spanish defeat. Incidentally, we know that the force defeated at San Lorenzo had consisted of the best soldiers the President of the Audiencia of Panama, Don Juan Perez de Guzmàn, had at his disposal. One hundred and fifty buccaneers were left to guard the ships, and five hundred more (three hundred according to Morgan) defended the remains of San Lorenzo under the command of Norman. The remaining 1,400 buccaneers made ready to cross the isthmus under the command of Morgan. Reyning claims to have been given the fifth place in rank in Morgan's own regiment — which means that he had command of one of the companies.

On the 18th of January 1671, Morgan began his epic march — epic, it turned out, not because of any adequate defense by the Spaniards (they fought to defend their homes but were incapable of really resisting the Brethren), but because of the natural obstacles they had to overcome: the tropical climate, the tangled vegetation in the wild woods, and especially thirst and their old companion hunger. "These were the days," Geọrge MacDonald Fraser wrote (1996, 297–98) with slight exaggeration, "when Morgan and Dampier and their crews were wont to plunge into trackless, fever-ridden jungle with a handful of salt and a cutlass, hack their unerring way to where the loot was, fight their half-starved battles

against impossible odds, hack their way back again, and go home, thinking nothing of it."

At first, the buccaneers transported themselves in ships, small boats, and canoes across the Chagres River. By the second day the ships had to be abandoned because of the shallow water (two hundred more buccaneers stayed behind to guard them), and the force carried on in the small boats and canoes. Beginning the third day, Morgan marched part of his force along the riverside to forestall any traps the Spaniards might lay. The fourth day the Spaniards seemed about to attack, but panicked and fled before a fight really started. The failed attack was a great disappointment to the buccaneers, who had hoped to take something to eat from their enemies: their provisions had by now dwindled to some crumbs of bread and they had started to eat their leather bags. On the fifth day, the buccaneers passed some abandoned plantations but found no food apart from one sack of flour. The next day they were luckier and found a barn full of maize, which they ate raw because the men were too hungry to cook it first.

The Spaniards and their Indian subjects may have evaded the buccaneers out of fear, but the evasion functioned as a kind of scorched earth policy, drawing the buccaneers farther and farther inland with no supplies, and might have had considerable strategic effect had the Spaniards been able to fight. In Santa Cruz the colonists fired their houses and drove their cattle into the woods; the Brethren had to eat the dogs they found. In one storehouse they found a little bread and sixteen jars of Peruvian wine, and many men got sick when they drank the wine on empty stomachs. On the eight day, there was a surprise attack by Indians who shot a few arrows and retreated. A little

farther along the way they put up a more spirited defense, but fled into the woods after their chieftain was shot dead. The buccaneers moved on, surrounded by Indians they could neither see nor catch. These were not independent *Indianos bravos*, but tribes subject to the Spaniards. Finally, on the ninth day, the buccaneers clambered up a hill and saw the Pacific Ocean and Panama City. Their joy was heightened when they left the hill and the woods and spotted herds of cattle on the open plains in front of the city. Soon they were feasting on roasted meat, shooting and slaughtering oxen, cows, horses, donkeys, and mules.

That night the Brethren camped on the open plain with their stomachs full, knowing that soon their misery would be at an end and they would either fight and die or take Panama and eat again. The following morning they faced two companies of Spanish cavalry (two hundred men apiece, we know from other sources) and four battalions of infantry (twelve hundred men) coming out of the city in good battle order to meet them. Reyning learned from a Spanish prisoner after the battle that the Spanish force had consisted of twenty-four hundred infantrymen, four hundred cavalry, six or seven hundred Indians, and a large number of Negroes with some ill-tempered bulls. The bulls were a special weapon, two herds (fifteen hundred head according to Morgan) that Perez de Guzmàn intended to stampede through the buccaneer forces. He knew, as the buccaneers did not, that his inexperienced and poorly armed troops were no real match for the hardened freebooters.

Morgan had chosen an unusual route to Panama, which forced the Spaniards to meet him on open terrain near the city. The buccaneers were coming down a slope, which gave them an

advantage. With an advance guard of 200 *forlorn*, and the rest of the men divided into two columns they swept onto the plain where the Spaniards opened the assault. The buccaneers' experience with European warfare now stood them in good stead: half of them fired at the enemy while the other half knelt and reloaded their muskets, thus putting up a continuous fire. Reyning does not seem to have seen much more of the battle than this, most of the men involved wouldn't have. He does not mention that in the first volleys four or five hundred Spaniards were killed or wounded, opposed to only fifteen buccaneers. When the hand-to-hand fighting started the Spaniards had no chance. A group of buccaneers with drums and flags chased away the stampeding herds. The Spaniards soon followed the cattle. The buccaneers who, as Van der Sterre writes, "were not the least but the best exercised men who had showed their brave deeds not only in many raids but also in several sea-battles," were too hungry to give chase. No quarter was given to wounded Spaniards or those who surrendered, and the few Catholic monks who were brought to Morgan were executed at once.

Perez de Guzmàn joined the mass flight of soldiers and citizens from Panama, leaving six hundred dead soldiers behind (four hundred according to Morgan). The buccaneers, having lost only a very few dead and wounded, entered the city, where they encountered spirited resistance — or so Reyning remembers. Earle writes (1981, 223):

> There was some resistance in the three main streets, where barricades defended by guns had been set up. But most of the guns had already been spiked ... and the explosions that the privateers heard were of a different kind. Two hundred barrels of gunpowder had

> been placed in houses throughout the city, and these were now touched off one after the other in a riot of noise and flame. The scene was one of total confusion. Privateers broke into bars and quenched their thirst from the broached wine-barrels. Privateers rushed into houses to prevent the citizens getting away with their more portable valuables. Privateers ran through the streets mopping up the last signs of resistance at the west end of the city, and then pushed a way through towards the great square behind the port. The citizens fled before them, some shrieking "Burn, burn...." Soon, new fires started as Negro and half-caste militiamen raced from wooden house to wooden house with flaming torches in their hands.

It is not surprising then that Reyning had the impression that the fighting was fiercer in the city than in the field, and that the buccaneers lost most men in the city mopping up the last resistance. That may partly account for the atrocious behavior of the Brethren later. No quarter was given to anyone. Although the citizens succeeded in fleeing with most of their possessions, the plunder that was still available looked at first very impressive: expensive goods, Chinese porcelain, luxuries, storehouses and stores brimming with goods. Van der Sterre writes of the apothecaries, that the smallest of them was as large as the largest in Amsterdam, with all implements and pots being of silver. Though most of the loot was destroyed by the plunderers in the festive celebration of the victory, the impression was that Panama had yielded an enormous treasure to the Brotherhood.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

Was this really the case? That first day all was chaos for Reyning. Although the officers had strictly forbidden their men to get drunk, it is doubtful they really believed for one moment that the Brethren would abstain — even after the rumor spread that the Spaniards had poisoned the wine. By midnight the whole town was on fire. The flames could not be quenched, although Reyning tried to create a fire-break by blowing up a few houses. By the next day most of the town had burned to the ground, apart from some churches (which were made of stone) and three hundred houses in the suburbs. The buccaneers lay scattered and exhausted.

At dawn everyone went to work again, gathering as much loot as possible. Unfortunately, most of Panama's treasure had been evacuated in ships when it became clear that the Spaniards had lost the battle. Craft were sent out to capture the fugitives and their possessions. Although Reyning mentions that a few ships were captured, he was unaware that the main prize had eluded the buccaneers due to their appetite for alcohol. Robert Searle had been sent to the offshore islands in command of a small flotilla. On one of them his men found a large cache of wine, which they immediately consumed. Too drunk to post lookouts, they didn't notice a big galleon, the *Santisima Trinidad*, which together with another galleon carried the bulk of Panama's treasure, circle back to the coast to send a shore party in search of water. As Exquemelin relates the story (1972, 165), the shore party was captured and brought before the drunk Searle, who tortured them and learned of the presence of the galleon. Searle, however, "was more inclined to sit drinking

and sporting with a group of Spanish women he had taken prisoner, than to go at once in pursuit of the treasure ship."

By the time the buccaneers got around to chasing the ship, the bird had flown. In a dark festival of drink, destruction, and death, the buccaneers temporarily reversed the Spaniards' position as rulers of the New World. Morgan was disappointed with the spoils and ordered raiding parties sent out to the countryside to fetch back the fugitives. Reyning headed one party, and claims to have let several small parties of three or four fugitives escape. He did, however, bring in his fair quota, including seven monks dragged from their cloister seven miles outside of town.

Catholic monks and priests were generally unpopular among those Brethren of Protestant origins and/or libertarian leanings. Stories of monks' repellent behavior were shared. Often monks were used as go-betweens, and Reyning tells the story of a poor Negro who came to Panama City with the ransom for his wife and was surrounded by monks who persuaded him to loan the money to them, for a short time and against interest. They even persuaded him to surrender his person to the Brethren as hostage for another monk. The monks promptly left with the money and the Negro and his wife were taken to Jamaica by the buccaneers and sold. Other stories about the monks abounded: how they wouldn't deliver ransom for women prisoners, and how gallant buccaneer captains, cursing the monks, freed the women for nothing on the return journey from Panama. Reyning's recollections occasion Van der Sterre to a vehement attack on the Roman Catholic clergy, which he describes as "Beasts." Among the English and Dutch buccaneers, hanging seems to have been the preferred way to treat a Catholic priest.

Reyning confesses that a certain amount of torture was generally employed to elicit information about hidden treasure from prisoners. As for women, Reyning asserts that the buccaneer's advances were not so unwelcome as the Spaniards later claimed. However, his nature often led him into conflict with his Brethren, whom he sometimes restrained with cutlass in hand. Van der Sterre notes (Vrijman, 111):

> General Morgan did not have so much insight that he put a limit to the cruel sports, as Captain Jan Erasmus (who had gotten into quarrels because of this on several voyages) would have wished. The great majority of these Privateers were uncivilized men, who could not for any reason be brought to a sense of duty, without becoming immediately opposed to their Commanders. Because of this, Captain Jan Erasmus had to Duel, on several voyages, against his most common Soldiers or Sailors.

The buccaneers had taken some 3,000 prisoners in total. On the 25th of February, after four weeks in Panama City, they left town for the return journey taking one hundred and seventy-five mules to carry their silver coins and plate, more mules for other goods, and five or six hundred prisoners with them — some were Spaniards who had not been ransomed, and the others were black slaves. On the 8th of March, the column reached San Lorenzo. Before they arrived Morgan had everyone, including himself, searched and all the treasure gathered together. When the loot was divided the result was very disappointing to the Brethren. Each share consisted of only 200 pieces of eight: a small sum for so dangerous an expedition. Immediately, rumors began circulating that Morgan

had swindled them. He was said to have given very low estimates when valuing the treasure, setting the price of one pound of silver plate at ten pieces of eight (one piece of eight had approximately the same weight as one pound of silver) and pocketing the difference. Morgan reported that the whole treasure came to 30,000 pounds sterling, though other estimates came to almost 70,000.

Morgan knew his men too well to wait for their unrest to quiet down. After destroying the San Lorenzo fortress he and four ships of his most loyal men sailed away, leaving the rest to fend for themselves. Did he swindle the other buccaneers? Modern historians don't think so, pointing to the fact that the number of buccaneers in this operation was much too large to be satisfied by the amount of treasure they obtained, and noting that most of Panama's treasure had been carried by the Spanish fugitives. Reyning defended the Admiral, but most of his men were of a different persuasion. When they noticed Morgan sailing away, Reyning's crew immediately wanted to give chase, but with a display of force their captain restrained them.

Unfortunately, whether he really swindled them or not, Morgan's conduct destroyed the buccaneers' most important asset: their sense of brotherhood. This breakdown in community spirit, along with ongoing political developments on Jamaica, probably accounts for the conduct of Reyning and other buccaneers during the next months. Most of the Brethren never returned to Jamaica — the ones who did were no longer prepared to trust Henry Morgan (who was beginning his rise to knighthood and official position, and would soon be celebrated at the court of Charles II). Reyning and his crew sailed along the coast to the Bay of Cina, dropping anchor at Toloua. There

hunger assailed them. Horses were taken from the village and slaughtered. Reyning invited the prisoners he took from the village to join the banquet, but they declined. But Morgan, whose ships had entered the same bay after Reyning arrived, gratefully accepted the flesh sent to him. After the feast Reyning continued along the coast, searching mainly for provisions, before finally deciding to cruise to the island of Palma. Then two Spanish ships hove into sight, the *Santa Cruz*, which carried thirty guns, and a smaller coastal vessel. They had been sent to chase buccaneers, and Reyning, who was much weaker than them, sought protection with Morgan. The Admiral had no intention of fighting for no gain, having no wish to lose the treasure he had, and when night fell Reyning's ships set sail for Jamaica, going their separate way.

When he anchored at Montego Bay, Reyning encountered his past. Lying at anchor in the bay was the *White Lamb*, a merchantman from Zealand captained by Jan Marke, who immediately assumed that Reyning was a Spaniard and made ready for battle. When, however, Reyning hoisted English colors, Marke struck a boat and visited the buccaneer. After the troublesome Panama expedition it seems that Reyning had become fed up with the loose roving way of life and was beginning to long for his wife and child in Flushing. Perhaps the disappointments surrounding the division of the booty, and Morgan's conduct which had severed the Brethren's sense of fraternity, had their effects on the Dutchman? To Reyning's great surprise, his brother-in-law was aboard the *White Lamb* carrying a letter from Mrs. Reyning. Reyning asked Marke to take him home, and agreed upon a price. And to celebrate the encounter, Reyning got permission from Marke to take his brother-in-law ashore.

There the buccaneers decided to give the brother of their captain's wife a joyful welcome in buccaneer manner, which meant opening barrels of brandy and getting everyone drunk. Marke, who by now had a clear picture of Reyning's new life in the West Indies, sailed quietly from the bay before the festivities got out of hand. By the time the drunken buccaneers noticed anything, Marke was on his way and Reyning's dream of reunion with his wife had to wait five years to become a reality. The brother-in-law presumably had to stay behind with the pirates, although Van der Sterre does not inform us about this.

TROUBLE ON JAMAICA

Reyning now sailed for Port Royal, where he found the situation a far cry from a usual buccaneer home-coming. The disregard in which Morgan and his friend Governor Modyford had held the policy instructions from London were backfiring upon them and the whole Brotherhood. We have remarked that Morgan's division of the loot at San Lorenzo put the Brotherhood in a severe crisis, losing the Admiral his credit with most of the Brethren. As a further consequence of the sack of Panama, Jamaica ceased to be a base of operations for the Brotherhood.

Already, on the 21st of July 1670, a new treaty had been signed in Madrid between the Spanish and English governments, which would become the basis for English–Spanish relations in the West Indies for the rest of the century. Peace in the West Indies had been provided for and most of England's demands for the region were satisfied. The new English colonies, including Jamaica, were recognized by Spain in return

for an end to all hostilities and the recall of all privateering commissions. There were no provisions for mutual trade, but there was a "wood and water" clause in the treaty, allowing English ships in distress to call at Spanish ports for supplies and repairs. It was assumed by the English (incorrectly, as it turned out) that this meant that English ships were also allowed to trade in the Spain's American ports.

The English government now had less need for a private Brotherhood of sea-sharks to intimidate the Spaniards. For the Brethren, of course, Spain remained the enemy that provided the most loot. It was no wonder, then, that when news of the treaty became general in the West Indies most of the Brethren chose not to return to Jamaica. Not until July 1671 were the regulations of the treaty published in the Indies, although we can be quite sure that Modyford and Morgan had known them before the sack of Panama. In July, a new Governor arrived on Jamaica with orders to implement new policy. Sir Thomas Lynch soon realized that the presence of privateers continued to be a vital element in the defense of Jamaica. He had, however, to placate Spanish anger over the sack of Panama. In November, Morgan was formally arrested, although he was not actually detained, and in April 1672 he was sent to London to account for his actions. He arrived in the midst of the Third Anglo-Dutch War, and was more celebrated as a heroic figure than he was castigated for his crimes. He befriended a young rake, the Duke of Albemarle, who was an influential figure at court, and in November 1674 he returned to Jamaica, together with the new Governor Lord Vaughan, as *Sir* Henry Morgan, Deputy Governor of Jamaica. Morgan would spend his last years playing an important role in internal Jamaican politics

and drinking himself to death as a leader of the Tory faction.

The Brotherhood, however, was done with him in 1671. The new English policy ended the issuing of privateering commissions. Buccaneers were still present in Port Royal, but the great days of the Brotherhood there were over. For a more congenial climate they now turned to other ports. Tortuga was foremost, where privateering commissions were still to be obtained. On arriving on Jamaica in the spring of 1675, Lord Vaughan tried to take strong action against the remaining buccaneers, ordering Morgan to arrest some of his old comrades in 1676 — an order the Deputy Governor reluctantly followed. But Vaughan was mistaken in believing that Morgan's influence on the Brethren was of such magnitude that they would stop their roving at his insistence. Vaughan's conditioning to hierarchical society did not prepare him for the independents following the Custom of the Coast. Buccaneers would continue to sail from Jamaica throughout the next decade, without official sanction. The Brethren remaining on Jamaica continued, now and then, to join their flibustier comrades from Tortuga, despite the fact that in 1677 it became a felony for Englishmen to serve under French officers. But Vaughan had time on his side. Port Royal was never again as congenial for the Brethren as it had been before 1670.

Earle estimates that at most only a fifth of the buccaneers who sacked Panama ever returned to Jamaica (1981, 246). Many others returned to roaming, visiting Tortuga, attempting some minor piracy, searching for food as always. Reyning decided to try out life on Jamaica. He had been one of the few with illusions about Morgan, and may also still have had them about Jamaica. Or perhaps he simply longed for a more

respectable life, an urge that is suggested by his hope of reunion with his wife. If he did long for respectability, then he was at once sorely disappointed in Port Royal.

Reyning and Lecat seem to have left Jamaica for Panama with two ships: the *Seviliaen* and one they chartered specially for the expedition. Reyning returned to Port Royal on the chartered vessel, the *Seviliaen* still being at sea. Unfortunately, the loot he brought back from Panama was not sufficient to pay the charter costs. Reyning pleaded with the ship's owners to wait for their money until the *Seviliaen* arrived, but they took him to court. Vrijman has unearthed from the Calendar of State Papers in London the notes of the Council of Jamaica for 12 December 1671. In them Morgan testifies about the conduct of "Captain Jan Erasmus," who he had helped to a horse (did he mean a ship?). The notes indicate that Reyning was sent out by Governor Modyford (before Sir Thomas Lynch took over for him, that is before July) to persuade all privateers to return to their ports, especially Lecat and the crew of the *Seviliaen* — Reyning may thus have been considered the person with the most influence on his countryman (Van der Sterre 1937, 124–25).

Reyning thus sailed out in service of the new English policy to persuade the Brethren to end their activities. In accepting this task he may only have wanted to extricate himself from his difficult situation on Jamaica and the lawsuit brought against him by the ship's owners. But he may also have recognized that there were no future prospects for him at Port Royal now that Jamaican buccaneering was in crisis. He showed a great deal of opportunism (or flexibility) in fending for himself. I believe that from the moment he sailed from San Lorenzo, he started to sever his relationships with the Brotherhood, at least psy-

chologically. Joining the Brotherhood had been a logical move in 1668, but his activities during 1671 and 1672 suggest that by then he had had enough.

He did manage to find the *Seviliaen*, which was lying at anchor at the Cayman Islands. But instead of returning to Jamaica, he rejoined his old shipmates and undertook a cruise into Spanish waters, plundering a corral in the neighborhood of Havana to take on provisions. When news reached the *Seviliaen* that three Spanish armadillos had sailed from Havana to chase him, Reyning sailed to the coast of Campeche, where he met a small armadillo guarding that coast. The Spanish vessel was out on a pirate-hunt, but the roles were reversed when Reyning boarded and took the Spaniard. Fourteen Spaniards were quickly killed and when the commander was hit in the chest by a musket ball he and most of his men cleared the deck. The few men who continued the fight were easily overwhelmed, and Lecat now took command of the armadillo.

THE END OF A PIRATE

After the sack of Panama, Reyning and Lecat were not the only members of the Brotherhood operating along the coastline of Central America from Campeche to present-day Nicaragua and Honduras. Earle suggests that the biggest single concentration of Brethren was to be found here. Instead of privateering, many of them had turned to illegally cutting wood of the logwood tree (*Haematoxylon campeachianum*). Logwood produces a red stain which was in demand in the colonies for its use in cloth dyeing. Over the next forty years, the Central American logwood-cutters preserved many aspects of the

Custom of the Coast, though one does gather that cutting and moving the logwood was far more physically demanding than privateering. And they alternated their wood-cutting with plundering Spanish ships. Dampier lived and worked with them from 1676 to 1678, and said that they were "the most Industrious sort … yet thought it a dry Business to toil at Cutting Wood." They enjoyed hunting more, and buccaneering most of all. Sometimes they organized their wood cutting the same way that the buccaneers on Santo Domingo had organized their cattle hunts: forming small bands, agreeing to cut a hundred tons of wood and working five days of the week before spending their weekends hunting on the savanna. Sometimes they raided Indian villages for plunder and women. When ships came by they joined the sailors for drinking marathons that lasted three or four days. "And though afterwards many sober Men came into the Bay to cut Wood, yet by degrees the old Standards [i.e. the Custom of the Coast] so debauched them that they could never settle themselves under any Civil Government." (Dampier 1906 [II], 156.)

Bromley notes (1985, 315):

> A visitor in 1714–15 noted that they [the logwood-cutters] were hard drinkers and very quarrelsome, but that neighbors lived in common, under two elected governors and a short compendium of laws "very severe against thefts and Encroachments." Forty years earlier, Dampier noticed there how "every Man is left to his choice to carry what he pleaseth, and commonly agree very well about it. And on Saturdays [the religious rest-day] they hunted."

The Spaniards were not pleased about the development of

these illegal autonomous zones in their territory. Pirate vessels sailed the coast. Hundreds of woodcutters were settling themselves, while the whole Spanish population on the Yucatan peninsula numbered only 1,300 households (Marley 1992, 51). Nor did the English know if they should take action against the logwood-cutters or not. The English man-of-war *Assistance*, which had carried Sir Thomas Lynch to Jamaica, sailed the waters near Campeche with the same instructions that Reyning had been given: to order all privateers back to Jamaica. On meeting the *Seviliaen*, the *Assistance* sent out her pinnace, and to avoid being forced back to Port Royal, Reyning ordered all the English members of his crew below deck — the *Assistance* had no authority over Dutch or French sailors. To be extra safe, he refused the men on the sloop permission to come aboard the *Seviliaen*. They read their proclamation from the sloop, ordering Reyning to follow the *Assistance* back to Jamaica. The Dutchman then calmly directed his ships closer inshore, where the water was too shallow for the English man-of-war to follow them.

Not very convincingly, Reyning told Van der Sterre that he had been willing to return to Jamaica (because a general amnesty was at hand), but that his English crewmen wanted to continue privateering without a commission. What does seem to be clear, however, is that Reyning and Lecat saw little future in a life of piracy pure and simple. Discussions among the crewmen on board had stalemated, with the result that a Dutch crew member named Symens, together with the Englishmen and two or three Frenchmen, decided to take over the ship. (Reyning claimed that it was their intention to take him ashore and bind him to a tree, letting him perish from mosquito

bites.) Reyning heard about Symens' plan from a French informer when he was hunting on shore, and immediately returned to his ship. The usual indiscipline of the Brethren had by then already confused the plan. While Reyning had been away the mutineers had taken a Spanish barque laden with wine, socks, and shoes, and had settled to enjoy the wine in Reyning's cabin. When he asked what was happening, they told him that they would speak to him when they had time.

Reyning immediately gathered the Dutch and French buccaneers who were not involved in the plot and led them against his opponents with the war cry "Viva Orange." He combined this alliance and Dutch anti-Spanish slogan with a promise to his Spanish prisoners that if they helped him he would join the service of the King of Spain. The mutineers were too befuddled with drink to put up much resistance — a few sprang overboard, but were hauled back in again. In the best traditions of the buccaneers, Reyning challenged Symens to a duel to settle the dispute, but his skill at weapon-play was so respected that Symens declined. The following day the mutineers were marooned on a small island called Triste, with a little salted flesh and water to sustain them. There they were found in January 1672 by the English man-of-war *Lilly* and taken back to Jamaica, where they testified against their former captain, sanctimoniously claiming that they had been marooned because they had tried to stop Reyning's piracy.

Reyning and Lecat no longer needed to be restrained from piracy. Since they saw no further prospects with the Brotherhood, they opportunistically offered their services to the Lieutenant-Governor of Campeche against the Brethren. Over the next year they acted as coast guard near the Laguna de

Terminos, capturing the logwood-cutters' vessels and taking them to Spanish ports for prize-money. Less than a year after taking part in the sack of Panama they were on good terms with the Spaniards, going so far as to begin catechism lessons with a Catholic priest — something Van der Sterre does not mention but the Spanish archives do (*cf.* Marley 1992, 51).

On learning about the Second Anglo-Dutch War in 1672, Reyning returned to the Dutch colony of Curaçao and got himself a Dutch privateering commission. For the rest of his life he fought with the Dutch forces, first in their struggle with the English, later against the French in the West Indies, and still later in European seas, becoming a frigate captain in 1676 (after at last seeing his wife again). From 1687 to 1688 he commanded a slave ship (meeting Van der Sterre in this capacity), and in 1689 he became a commander in the Dutch navy, eventually being given a permanent commission as *captain ordinaris* in 1694. (Most captains were only commissioned for the duration of an expedition.) On the 2nd of February 1697, while escorting a convoy of Dutch merchantmen to Spain, his ship foundered on the rocks in the Bay of Biscay and Reyning and four hundred of his men were drowned.

For our purposes, however, his life ended in 1671, when he ceased to be a pirate. His life to that point is an example of how the Brotherhood could take a sailor with no prospects and offer him new opportunities, roving on the account in a life that was continuously adventurous and dangerous. Every sailor's life was dangerous in those days; only the Brotherhood offered something more than danger. In return for lost respectability, the Brethren gained autonomy and fraternity.

As Reyning returned to "straight" society and preyed upon

his former Brethren on the Campeche coast, the Brotherhood was entering a new period of prosperity:

> On the night of 31 March 1672, the citizens of Campeche awakened to a huge conflagration lighting up the sky, which revealed shadowy forms lurking in the harbor. These proved to be the pirate flotilla of Lawrence Cornelis van Graff [De Graaf], a Dutch flibustier known to the Spanish simply as "Lorencillo." He had snuck in under cover of darkness and burned [a new built] frigate on her stocks, along with all the painstakingly gathered wood. The next morning he intercepted a rich prize arriving from Veracruz with merchandise and 120,000 pesos in silver; and in a final gesture of contempt he set fire to the village of Champotón before disappearing over the horizon (Marley 1992, 53).

After 1674, a new generation of buccaneers and flibustiers arose, with new leaders no less dangerous or successful than Henry Morgan had been, men such as De Graaf and Grammont. It was not now so much the English as the French who employed the Brethren to further their struggle for expansion in the West Indies, although they too were soon forced to make allowances for common decency. In 1683, buccaneering became illegal on Tortuga (until the next year, privateering commissions were still available from the Danish colony on the island of St. Thomas, but this was discontinued in 1684), but the Brethren continued roving on the account (Exquemelin 1972, 12). The swan song of the Brotherhood did not come until 1697, when they participated in the French navy's attack on Cartagena.

The unique niche that the Brethren created for themselves in seventeenth-century colonial society was doomed to end when the different nations — the English, French, Dutch, and Spanish — established a modus vivendi in the West Indies and began building societies on the model of the home countries. When merchant capitalism grew more settled in the Caribbean, pirates became a kind of aberration, a reminder of the earlier times of original accumulation that was no longer welcome. Their anarchic code had no place in the new colonies. They were still sometimes used as privateers, as was the case during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13), but by then there were no longer veterans from the European wars among them. They had become sailors who flourished on the sea, and did not undertake any massive land raids. And after 1713 they had no place in the West Indies. The new colonial powers no longer needed them to frighten the Spaniards. They became outlaws, pure and simple. Still, the old ideals of the Brotherhood stayed alive, as is witnessed by the ongoing creation of new pirate haunts — on Madagascar in the 1690s, at New Providence in the Bahamas until 1717, and on Galveston Island near the Louisiana coast as late as 1816. The recurring dream of Libertalia, that upside-down pirate world, lived on.

That it was not of any great Signification who was dignify'd with Title; for really and in Truth, all good Governments had the supream Power lodged with the Community, who might doubtless depute and revoke as suited Interest or Humour. We are the Original of this Claim... and should a Captain be so saury as to exceed Prescription at any Time, why damn with him! it will be a Caution after he is dead to his Successors, of what fatal Consequence any sort of assuming may be.

DEVIL'S ANARCHY: THE POLITICS OF PIRACY

Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heaven
— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

HIERARCHY VERSUS ANARCHY I: THE FALL OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE COAST

THE DIMINISHING ROLE OF the sea rovers in the establishment of Western European colonies in the Americas after the decades of the 1670s and 1680s had no effect on their most fundamental characteristics: their defiance and refusal to accommodate to the social and political relationships of hierarchical society. But the position of the Brotherhood of the Coast was reduced in strength. This is shown by the adventures of the last Brethren who held to their buccaneering ways: the French flibustiers.

The relationship of the flibustiers to the French armadas, sent by Louis XIV to the West Indies as instruments in his struggle for world dominance, exemplify the contradictory position of the Brethren in colonial society. On the one hand, the Brotherhood served as the chaotic attractor for all anarchic and unruly elements in the Caribbean. On the other hand, the

Brethren could live in peace on Jamaica (until 1671) and Tortuga, because of the importance of their roles as watchdogs against the Spaniards and accumulators and redistributors of Spanish wealth. With changing political relations in the West Indies, when France became the major opponent of the Protestant nations and Spain allied with England and the Dutch Republic in the European wars of the 1670s, 1680s, and 1690s, the buccaneers of Jamaica were curtailed in their activities by the English government. In 1681, Henry Morgan, then temporarily acting as Governor of Jamaica, went so far as to order his troops to attack the sloop of the Dutch buccaneer Jacob Evertsen, who had arrived off the coast of Port Royal with a prize. The Dutchman was killed in the ensuing battle, the survivors of his crew were hanged, and Morgan asserted his new respectability (Marley 1994, 139–40).

But for the French the Brethren still had a useful role to play, although even on French Tortuga privateering was officially banned in 1684. Within the chaos created by the French struggle for armed supremacy, the Brotherhood flourished under its leaders of the 1670s and 1680s: the Chevalier de Grammont and "Lorencillo" de Graaf. Labat, who lived in the Caribbean from 1693 to 1705, came to the conclusion that nearly all the settlers in the French parts of Sainte-Domingue (present-day Haiti) were actually flibustiers. During the short periods of peace, those who had no land and could get no privateering commission continued their careers as pirates. Captain Daniel, with whom Labat sailed (1970, 221–23, 232–55), turned pirate after the Peace of Ryswyck in 1697 and became a legally commissioned flibustier again after the War of the Spanish Succession started in 1701.

In the context of the politics of French monarchic absolutism, the anarchic Brotherhood could only have a pragmatic function. French noblemen had little affinity for the proletarians and the few dropped-out aristocrats who filled the Brotherhood's ranks. They were, however, tolerated when they were needed, as was the case when the French admiral Jean comte d'Estrées commanded two expeditions sent by Louis XIV to the West Indies in the years 1676–79. In December 1677, on his second expedition, D'Estrées took the Dutch stronghold on the island of Tobago. (One of the Dutch ships in the battle was commanded by Jan Erasmus Reyning, who was one of the few Dutchmen to survive when a volley from the French guns hit the powder magazine of the Dutch fort and blew up the stronghold. Reyning and ten companions escaped in a small boat and, after a difficult voyage of ten days, succeeded in reaching the Dutch island of Aruba.)

After the conquest of Tobago, D'Estrées prepared an attack on Curaçao. For this purpose he recruited the help of Reyning's former comrades, the Brethren of the Coast. When the French fleet set sail from Martinique on 7 May 1678, the eighteen French men-of-war were reinforced by more than a dozen flibustier vessels carrying almost 2,000 Brethren — as great a force as any in the history of the Brotherhood. But the comte d'Estrées was a proud and haughty French aristocrat who had no use for the advice of low-born privateers. He has been described as a "brave man and a bad leader." In the fleet that sailed for Curaçao two worlds came together that were each other's opposite in both social and political senses. French hierarchy and aristocracy-of-the-blood contradicted flibustier anarchy — anarchy not only in the negative sense of the

absense of (non-functional) hierarchy and authority, but also in the positive sense of a fluid principle of organization (on anarchy in this sense, see Ward 1982). The outcome of this unworkable collaboration proved disastrous in the silliest possible way. D'Estrées decided upon a course that kept the fleet closely parallel to the coastline of the Spanish Main, despite warnings from his local pilots (flibustiers?) that these waters were dangerously shallow. The buccaneer historian Marley writes (1994, 136–39):

> At nine o' clock on the evening of 11 May, one of the Admiral's flibustier consorts suddenly began firing musket shots, followed immediately by a gun, signalling that the fleet was sailing onto the reefs surrounding the Aves Islands group. This warning came too late, though, as seven ships of the line, three transports, and three corsair vessels ran aground and were destroyed, including d'Estrées's own flagship Terrible, with a total loss of 500 lives. His forces thrown away, the admiral had no choice but to retire toward Saint Domingue with the survivors, further embittered to see flibustiers openly scavenging among the wreckage of the fleet.

The disaster heralded the end for the d'Estrées expedition, eventually forcing his return to France. However, the admiral of the Brethren, Grammont, led his men onward. Not against the strong Dutch positions on Curaçao, but against a richer and more promising target: Maracaibo on the Spanish Main.

In 1678, the laugh was on French authoritarianism, but the situation was reversed in the Brethren's last great campaign, the attack on Spanish Cartagena in 1697. It was a combined oper-

ation by the French navy and the flibustiers, and a number of incidents indicate the decline in the Brotherhood's fortunes, practically signalling its demise. Hierarchical society had gained physical and psychological space in the West Indies, to the disadvantage of anarchy. In this last year of the Nine Years' War, Louis XIV fitted out a fleet of ten ships of the line, four frigates, and several transport ships carrying a total of 2,800 soldiers. Command was given to Bernard Jean Louis de Saint-Jean, Baron de Pointis. In fact, the whole expedition was no more than a privateering raid financed by private interests, who looked forward to sharing the profits with the King's Exchequer. The assistance of experts in this kind of raid on the Spanish Main seemed necessary, so Jean-Baptiste Ducasse, Governor of Tortuga and Sainte-Domingue, was ordered to raise an auxiliary continent of flibustiers. From the moment the Baron de Pointis arrived with his fleet at the designated meeting point of Petit-Goâve, early March 1697, the worlds of hierarchy and anarchy clashed. ("Two societies, two conceptions of justice, collaborated and collided." Bromley 1985, 301)

In the eyes of the aristocrat Pointis, the humble flibustiers must follow orders and accept a secondary role. In his report of the expedition (Pointis 1698, 22–23) he later wrote that the fierceness of the flibustiers had obliged those who had wanted to make use of them to treat them with all kinds of flattery. But, he added, that was not his character. "I explained myself plainly, & told them that they would find in me a *Chef* to lead them, not a companion in their fortune" (Pointis 1698, 22–23). To Pointis the flibustiers were "Vagabonds," rounded up in France and deported to the colonies (ibid., 20–21). They were rabble, *canaille*. There could be no equality with such as them. Like

D'Estrées, Pointis was brave, but vain (Charlevoix 1733 [IV], 97). But the flibustiers were used to their own traditions — they expected mutual discussion, agreement upon goals, strategy, and tactics, and a fair distribution of the plunder. Although many of them had answered the call to assemble at Petit-Goâve to join the expedition, Pointis took too long to arrive. When the Baron finally reached the rendezvous point he was infuriated to find that only a few hundred flibustiers remained, the rest having gone on to other pursuits. The situation worsened when, the next day, a French naval officer arrested a flibustier for unruly behavior. This unheard-of conduct (the arrest) spawned a riot in which two or three men were killed before Ducasse could calm down the situation. Finally, the officer responsible for the incident had to be placed under arrest to placate the flibustiers. But another confrontation immediately arose over the questions of command and the distribution of plunder.

Significantly, in their decline the Brethren lacked admirals of the calibre of Mansfield, Morgan, Grammont, or De Graaf. Grammont had disappeared with his ship in a storm in 1686, never to be seen again. De Graaf was still alive, and had played an important role in 1695 in his capacity as *lieutenant du Roi*, leading his flibustiers in the defense of Sainte-Domingue against an Anglo-Spanish invasion. But his refusal at that time to fight a pitched battle against vastly superior numbers and his preference for guerrilla tactics had led the authorities to send him to France to face a court-martial. Although he was completely exonerated at his trial, De Graaf did not return to Sainte-Domingue before the end of the war. Later, in 1698, he would try to found a new free zone by joining a French expedition to Louisiana and establishing a new colony at what is

now Biloxi, Mississippi. Then he joined the expedition that would result in the settlement of Mobile, Alabama, but he died in 1704, before reaching the new site (Marley 1994, 116–17).

Lacking capable leaders of their own the Brethren had assembled at the request of Ducasse, and they chose him as their admiral for the expedition to Cartagena. But Pointis refused to give him an important position on his war council, only partially compromising by making him captain of the *Pontchartrain.* From that "official" position Ducasse directed an auxiliary force of 170 soldiers from Santo Domingo, 110 volunteers, 180 free blacks, and 650 flibustiers, slightly more than 1,100 men on eight vessels. About the distribution of the plunder Pointis remained vague. After much pressure he finally promised that the flibustiers would share equally with the crew of the royal fleet. Without realizing the agreement's real implications, the flibustiers accepted.

When the actual attack on Cartagena started on 13 April more friction arose between Pointis and the flibustiers. In the military realm the dividing gap between hierarchy and anarchy was as wide as it was politically and socially. Two radically different fighting organizations struggled to interact: European military discipline, maintained with draconian measures by officers and non-coms, against the looser organization of the flibustiers. This gap is especially evident at Cartagena because by 1697 the Brethren's ranks no longer included many veterans of the European wars, as they had after the conquest of Jamaica in 1655. When the Spanish fort that protected the entrance to the harbor began firing the flibustiers scattered and spread out, while the disciplined troops held their lines as "sitting ducks" for the enemy fire — not for the flibustiers the sacrifice of the

physical body to orders from above. This behavior led the bewildered and enraged Pointis to physically attack some of the pirates with his cudgel, accusing them of cowardice. (Like many military commanders of the era, the Baron carried both a cane for his own troups and a sword for the enemy.)

Different ideas on military discipline again became an issue when the French forces succeeded in capturing the entrance fort at Bocachica on 16 April and advanced to Fort Santa Cruz, which had been abandoned by the Spaniards. Pointis ordered his own main force to continue to Cartagena directly by land, while the flibustiers were told to circle around the Spanish positions by water to seize the high ground behind the city. The flibustiers hesitated to obey. Ducasse had been wounded and put temporarily out of action (Marley 1997, 124), and his place had been taken by Joseph d'Honon de Galliflet, "a relative newcomer to Santo Domingo who was not well known to the rank-and-file." D'Honon was angered when his men refused to obey Pointis's orders. He tried to force one of them to board a boat and was summarily thrown into the water. Pointis immediately ordered his musketeers to arrest the culprit, bound him and blindfolded him, and put him before a firing squad. In order to ingratiate himself with the Brethren, D'Honon succeeded in obtaining the man's release, and in the midst of the confusion the flibustiers agreed to follow D'Honon and occupy the high ground — from which the Spaniards had already fled.

The flibustiers, once again under command of the recuperated Ducasse, did play an active role in the final assault on Cartagena on 2 May. And from this point on Pointis purposely defrauded them in a way that highlights their lack of adequate

leadership. (One cannot imagine Morgan, Grammont, or De Graaf accepting similar treatment.) While the town was in the process of surrendering, Ducasse and his men, together with a few hundred regular soldiers, were sent to block a Spanish relief force — a force that Pontis knew did not exist. When the flibustiers returned they found the city's gates closed, and they were kept outside the walls in the devastated suburb of Getsemani while the French army plundered the city, extorting valuables worth eight million French crowns from the few Spaniards who had not fled. When this booty was divided at the end of May the flibustiers received only 40,000 crowns, which was a share equal to the one received by the crew of the French ships. The bulk of the plunder went to Louis XIV, the private financers of the expedition, and Pointis himself.

The Baron had kept his word, the plunder was taken aboard his ships, and the flibustiers had no recourse. Once again frustration turned into violence as the flibustiers forced their way into the city on 30 May, ignoring Ducasse's pleas for restraint. While the French fleet set sail the Brethren

> rounded-up every Spaniard they could find, herding these into the principal church and sprinkling them with gunpowder, which they threatened to ignite unless an additional five million crowns were produced forthwith. This was clearly impossible, but through brutal tortures and extortion the buccaneers succeeded in raising a thousand crowns per man, before weighing [anchor] on 3 June. (Marley 1997, 125)

A thousand crowns per man gave a grand total of slightly more than 600,000 crowns. This, plus the 40,000 crowns

Pointis had condescended to give them, paled in comparison to what they had expected to receive: one-fourth of the total plunder, two million crowns of the eight million total Pointis obtained during the sack of the city. Lack of adequate leadership, combined with a reduced dependance of the French navy on its auxiliaries, had enabled Pointis to defraud the Brotherhood.

What happened next was catastrophic. An Anglo-Dutch fleet under command of John Neville arrived too late to rescue Cartagena. They encountered Pointis's fleet and attacked. Although outnumbered, Pointis succeeded in shaking off Neville on 10 June, but when the Englishman came in sight of Ducasse's flibustiers fleet off Sambay on 25 June the flibustiers proved no match for the powerful Anglo-Dutch fleet.

> [T]he British quickly overtook [the] *Gracieuse* and the 50-gun *Christe* ... as well as driving Capitaine Charles's *Saint Louis* hard aground. He and his crew managed to escape ashore, only to be hunted down and captured by the local Spaniards, who put them to work as convict labourers in rebuilding Cartagena's shattered defences. (ibid.)

The flibustier fleet scattered, and a fourth ship, the *Cerf Volant*, was driven on the rocks off the coast of Santo Domingo — only half of the vessels that set out safely reached their home ports. (Primary sources on the raid of Cartagena include Pointis's own report from 1698 and Charlevoix's history, 1733 [IV] 92-169; modern accounts can be found in Crouse 1966, 212–45, and Marley 1997, 123–26.)

The Cartagena disaster dealt a severe blow to the Brotherhood. Its impact was doubled in 1700, when a grand-

son of Louis XIV inherited the Spanish crown as Philip V. His accession led to the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), in which France and Spain allied against a coalition of England, the Dutch Republic, Austria, Portugal, Prussia, and Hanover. No longer were the Brethren encouraged to attack Spanish possessions from their bases in Sainte-Domingue. De Graaf had already left in search of a new wilderness in North America, and Ducasse, who according to Labat (1970, 159) had acquired great wealth during the sack of Cartagena and other raids, had been promoted to admiral in the *Spanish* navy and was welcomed in this new function in Cartagena in 1702. When Labat visited Tortuga in 1701 he found it almost abandoned (ibid., 150). The powerful English and Dutch fleets no longer had any use for buccaneer auxiliaries. The Brethren in Sainte-Domingue continued to serve as auxiliaries of the French armed forces during the War of the Spanish Succession. Lemoyne d'Iberville's force included 1,100 buccaneers during his attack on the English island of Nevis in 1706. But the Brethren's role as an independent force was finished (Crouse 1954, 254–64; 1966, 291–310). According to Charlevoix (1733 [IV], 215–16), after 1713 there were no more buccaneers and flibustiers in Sainte-Domingue, only planters. The tradition of the Brotherhood lived on, but its inheritors reverted to guerilla tactics, preying on the sea routes of the West Indies, Africa, and the Arabian and Indian coasts. Pirates no longer had the strength to undertake massive land raids.

The Golden Age of Piracy, as historians have designated the years after the War of the Spanish Succession, would revive the older pirate tradition that Compaen had known. In the struggle for dominance in the seventeenth century, the

Brotherhood had played its role in the grey border zone between sanctioned privateering and outright piracy. In the Golden Age its successors were relegated to a black zone, outlawed by all nations; though they still remained a chaotic focal point for unruliness and social rebellion.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY

Piracy's Golden Age is intimately connected with the economic vicissitudes of the British Empire, which became the dominating maritime power during the War of the Spanish Succession. The end of this war meant demobilization for large numbers of Anglo-American seamen. The Royal Navy, for example, had 49,860 men enlisted in 1713, but had reduced that number to 13,475 by 1715 (Rediker 1987, 281). Together with a trade slump that started in 1715 and lasted well into the 1730s, the glut of experienced seamen led to greater competition for seafaring jobs, which meant worsening labor conditions, stricter discipline on the ships, and wage cuts. These developments clashed with prevailing notions of a "moral," "ethically just" economy (in the sense E. P. Thompson developed) among maritime proletarians, and disrupted their class solidarity against shipowners and officers. (On the concept of a seafaring Atlantic working class, see Linebaugh and Rediker, 1993 and 2000.)

The developments did, however, foster a rebellious spirit among seamen which bore fruit in piracy. Popular stories about the exploits of the Brethren of the Coast formalized public images of an upside down world in which seamen were no longer powerless subjects shackled to wage labor, but creators

of their own utopias — preferably on sunny tropical islands. Anglo-American pirates from the 1690s, such as Henry Avery (or Every) and Captain Kidd, personified these utopian fantasies. Although the real Avery and Kidd were a far cry from their public images, they were real pirates who succeeded in creating, for longer or shorter durations, their personal utopias. The real life Kidd was forced into a rather sorrowful piracy by his own men, and was hanged in 1699 when he lost his political backers — but the myth of his buried treasure lives on. The real life Avery engineered a successful mutiny in 1694 while serving as first mate on the 46-gun English privateer *Charles II*, and led his shipmates out roving on the account. The *Charles II* was renamed the *Fancy*, and Avery's men were described by a contemporary observer (Ritchie 1986, 86) as "true Cocks of the Game, and old Sportsmen." The *Fancy* set course for the throat of the Red Sea to prey on the rich fleet from India carrying Muslims to Mocha in Arabia, whence pilgrims continued their haj overland to Mecca. Indian merchants often accompanied the pilgrims to trade clothes and spices for Arabian coffee and gold and returned with handsome profits.

Avery, lying in wait for the fleet on its return journey, was soon joined by other pirate vessels who had the same idea and joined forces with him. In September of 1695 Avery and his men realized every pirate's dream by capturing two rich prizes; one of the captured ships was the richest and largest of the whole fleet, and reputedly carried a Moghul princess on board. In the popular accounts she was said to be the daughter of the Great Moghul, the ruler of the Moghul Empire in India. When Avery's men divided their loot each full share realized a profit of 1,000 pounds sterling. Having made their fortune, the

pirates sailed the *Fancy* to India to catch the northeast monsoon back to the Americas. While some of them decided to stay in the East, others steered their course to Providence Island in the West Indies, where they paid the corrupt English Governor handsomely for his protection. (He did not come cheap, accepting possession of the *Fancy* as part of the bargain.) Some of the pirates then went to Carolina, and about a hundred others took passage to England. Of the latter, six were eventually arrested in 1696 — one was discovered when a maid in a tavern discovered more than 1,000 pounds sterling sewn into the lining of his cloak. The six were hanged, but Avery and the others remained free and disappeared from history.

Although Captain Charles Johnson's 1724 biography of Avery stated that the pirate died in poverty in England, having been defrauded of his profits by some receivers of the plunder, the play *The Successful Pyrate* (which seems to have been written by another Charles Johnson and was first performed in 1713) presented the image of Avery as king of a pirate colony on Madagascar: a Royal Outlaw, ruler of a race of Vagabonds, the Outcasts of the Earth. This image of the successful pirate who carved out his own destiny was further promoted by Daniel Defoe's *King of the Pirates* (1720), which the historian Cordingly believes to have been based on interviews with Avery (Cordingly 1995, 33). Self-determination, adventure, riches, the tropical sun, and an exotic Moghul princess proved an alluring mixture for the average seaman. (On Avery, see Ritchie 1986, 85–89; Baer 1994; Cordingly, 1995, 33–36; and Marley, 1997, 119.)

Notwithstanding the Avery myth, there was a real "king of the pirates" — not on Madagascar, but on the small nearby islet

of Saint-Marie. Adam Baldridge was a buccaneer involved in a homicide who fled from Jamaica and settled on Saint-Marie in 1691. According to legend, he built a fortress with forty guns on the island: in reality (Ritchie 1986, 112) it was a "ramshackle affair ... [consisting of] a few houses, a low palisade, and a couple of cannons." Despite the rainy tropical climate, Saint-Marie became a favorite pirate haunt. Baldridge gave the pirates reasonable prices for their loot, resupplied them and sometimes even extended them credit, and arranged return passage for those of them who wanted to return to their homes. He sold the goods he bought to receivers in New York — his main receiver of goods was the New York merchant Frederick Philipse, who in return provided clothing, liquor, naval supplies, arms, and ammunition. Philipse sent supply ships to Baldridge, receiving them back with full cargoes of slaves, spices, drugs, and exotic textiles, and with retiring sea-rovers who each paid a hundred pieces-of-eight plus the cost of food for the passage. The slaves Philipse sold in America; the goods he passed on to his agents in Europe.

On Saint-Marie pirates relaxed and reoutfitted themselves. Baldridge's settlement had one considerable advantage over similar settlements on Madagascar: it was less vulnerable to native attack. Though an attack by Madagascar natives responding to Baldridge's slave trading eventually forced him to flee Saint-Marie in 1697, even after his abrupt departure the settlement remained active and little changed (Ritchie 1986, 112–16). A similar but shorter-lived settlement was created in 1720 by another Jamaican sea rover named John Plantain at Ranter's Bay on Madagascar, just north of Saint-Marie (Marley 1997, 143–44); Plantain's location gives rise to speculations

about Ranter influences on the pirate brotherhoods.

For a minority of eighteenth-century seamen, dreams of an upside down pirate utopia combined with active pirate traditions to become shortlived reality. These were the men, Marcus Rediker claims, who "created an imperial crisis with their relentless and successful attacks upon merchants' property and international commerce between 1716 and 1726" (1987, 254). Rediker estimates that at their zenith, between 1716 and 1723, the pirates on the account numbered between 4,500 and 5,500, with a maximum of 2,400 of them active at any one time. By 1723, increased surveillance on the sea routes by the Royal Navy was severely limiting their freedom of operations, a propaganda offensive by professional writers and clergymen had blackened their reputation, and their numbers had dwindled to a mere two hundred. Only a handful were left by 1726 (ibid., 285). Between 1716 and 1718, however, the pirate brotherhood was numerically as strong as the old Brotherhood of the Coast had been. Like their predecessors, the pirates of the eighteenth century met each other again and again, on ships and in safe ports, working together and drifting apart again. They had their "lairs" — at New Providence in the Bahamas (until 1718), in North Carolina (Blackbeard), on Santa Lucia in the West Indies (Black Bart Roberts), and in Sierra Leone and on Madagascar in Africa — border areas of civilization. Rediker's work has shown that 3,600 pirates from the period 1716–1726 can be fitted to two main lines of genealogical descent. One line started at New Providence, the pirate rendezvous point in the Bahamas (ibid., 267), which suggests an unbroken genealogical descent from the Brotherhood of the Coast. The second line Rediker traces back to the short-lived

alliance of the English pirates George Lowther and Edward Low in 1722. Pirate activities from this line were effectively ended in 1726.

Corresponding elements from the accounts of Compaen, Reyning, and the pirates of the Golden Age lead me to believe that we can, for the period between 1625 and 1725, speak of an unbroken social tradition of piracy with clear forms of organization, a repertoire of behavior, and a developed code of ethics. Elder and more experienced crew members transmitted pirate traditions and customs to newcomers. Elder pirates who had sailed under famous captains were held in respect. In 1723, the pirates of Captain John Phillips took a prize and found John Rose Archer among the captive sailors. Archer had been one of Blackbeard's pirates (Blackbeard was killed in 1718), and he was at once chosen as the pirates' new quartermaster (Johnson 1998, 315). An examination of the main aspects of the politics of the pirates who sailed under the Jolly Roger, as the pirate flag was known as early as 1702, shows something of the continuity of pirate traditions.

THE OLD, OR JOLLY, ROGER

Writing on piracy is writing about images, images that burned neurological patterns in our brains during the childhoods of most of us. This hermetic "action at a distance" has its most powerful symbol in the pirates' flag. The white skull and crossbones on a black background is the form we are most familiar with, but there were many variations. As Rediker summarizes (Rediker 1987, 279–80):

The most common symbol was the human skull, or

> "death's head," sometimes isolated but more frequently the most prominent feature of an entire skeleton. Other recurring items were a weapon — cutlass, sword, or dart — and an hour glass.
>
> The flag was intended to terrify the pirates' prey, but its triad of interlocking symbols — death, violence, limited time — simultaneously pointed to meaningful parts of the seaman's experience and eloquently bespoke the pirates' own consciousness of themselves as preyed upon in turn ... as pirates — and some believed, only as pirates — these men were able to fight back beneath the somber colours of "King Death" against those ... who waved banners of authority.

One theory of the origin of the name Jolly Roger is that it was an anglicized form of the French "Jolie rouge," the pleasing blood-red flag. However, the original name was not Jolly Roger, but Old Roger, as has been found in the transcripts of the trial of John Quelch and his crew in Boston in 1702 (Cordingly 1995, 142). The transcripts read: "The pirates ... flying as a flag the Old Roger which was ornamented by an anatomy with an hourglass in one hand, and a dart in the heart with three drops of blood proceeding from it in the other." And *Old Roger* was a nickname for the Devil. Between 1700 and 1720, Old Roger became the characteristic symbol of pirate culture: significantly (Johnson 1998, 272), when Captain Worley and his men went roving on the account in 1718, they "made a black ensign, with a white death's head in the middle of it, and other colours suitable to it. They all signed articles, and bound themselves under a solemn oath, to take no quarter, but to stand by one

another to the last man, which was rashly fulfilled a little afterwards."

The Old, or Jolly, Roger points us to older, almost atavistic strains in our Christian culture. The flag invokes a world not unlike that of *Paradise Lost*, where Satan leads a rebellion against Christian hierarchy. Ranters' Bay as the location for a pirate settlement? Milton puts the Ranter phrase, "Heaven and Hell are only states of mind," in the mouth of Satan himself, and there were likely some Ranters among Morgan's buccaneers. Furthermore, the Admiral had a witch as adviser — witches being, as everybody knew, in close communion with the Devil. (The infamous witch hunts in Salem took place in 1692.) And wasn't the Schoolmaster of Oostzaan, when publishing his biography of Compaen, afraid of being accused of lighting a candle for the Devil?

Peter Lamborn Wilson has suggested that conversion to Islam was one way early seventeenth-century pirates rebelled against society. In a society where all social relationships are laden with religious ideology, heresy and apostacy are both political choices and modes of social rebellion. Sailing under Old Roger was clearly a step against dominant Christian ideology, and hence against repressive political and social structures. Compaen threw the Bible and all his books of prayer overboard. Sailing for Old Roger was effectively choosing for the Devil against God, a symbolic break with hierarchical society (represented for Compaen by the corrupt merchant oligarchy of the Dutch Republic, and for the flibustiers by such arrogant and devious French aristocrats as D'Estrées and Pointis). Unconsciously it was a turn to an older, pre-Christian religion, the religion of nomads and hunters.

Anticlericalism and skepticism were rife among the pirates (see Rediker 1987, 177–78.) Their general view was well expressed by Captain Charles Bellamy (Defoe 1972, 587) when he dismissed those "who allow Superiors to kick them about Deck at Pleasure; and pin their Faith upon a Pimp of a Parson; a Squab, who neither practises nor believes what he puts upon the chuckle-headed fools he preaches to." Here, Bellamy combines a critique on the preachers' hypocrisy with a clear view of their social function as ideologues of established order.

Once again, we must not generalize. When Labat said Mass at Cap François in Sainte-Domingue (Labat 1970, 148)

> [the people present] spoke to each other much louder than I preached, continually introducing the name of God in their conversation in a manner I could not tolerate. I warned them to stop talking three or four times as gently as I could, but as this did no good, I was obliged to complain to some officers, who compelled them to keep quiet.
>
> After Mass a good man told me that I must be more tolerant with the people on the coast if I intended to live with them.

But when the French pirate Daniel had a captured curé say Mass on his barque (ibid., 222.):

> One of the pirates adopted an offensive attitude during the Elevation, and on being rebuked by the captain, he replied insolently with a horrible oath. Daniel promptly drew his pistol and shot him through the head and swore by God that he would do the same to anyone else who showed disrespect to the "Sainte

> Sacrifice".... quite an effective method, as one perceives, to prevent the poor fellow repeating his offense.

For some pirates there is talk of explicit covenants with the Devil. The crew of Edward Teach, the infamous Blackbeard, who was active as a pirate from 1716 until he was killed in battle in 1718, reported (Johnson 1998, 61):

> Once upon a cruise... they had a man on board more than their crew, such a one was seen several days amongst them, sometimes below, and sometimes upon deck, yet no man in the ship could give an account of who he was, or from whence he came, but that he disappeared a little before they were cast away in their great ship; but it seems, they verily believed it was the Devil.

And Blackbeard's contemporary, Lewis, was once unsuccessfully chasing a vessel (Defoe 1972, 597–98) and ran "up the Shrouds to the Man-Top, tore off a Handful of Hair and throwing it into the Air, used this Expression; Good Devil take this till I come: And, it was observed, that he came afterwards faster up with the Chase." The day of Lewis's death, the Devil appeared to him and "told him in the great Cabin, he should be murdered that Night."

A NOTE ON CAPTAIN JOHNSON

Since an important part of the material on which this essay is based has as its source Johnson's famous pirate biographies, it is necessary to justify that material's reliability. The first edi-

tion of Captain Charles Johnson's book was published in 1724 in London under the title *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates and also Their Policies, Discipline and Government, From their Rise and Settlement in the Island of Providence, in 1717, to the present Year 1724 etc.*, by the bookseller Charles Rivington. Expanded editions followed in 1725 and 1726. Johnson's history of the pirates of the Golden Age is a colorful one. Together with Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America*, it is the main source for one image of the pirate. Present day historians, such as Rediker and Cordingly, are now in general agreement that the majority of Johnson's data are valid. For instance, the accounts of Bartholomew Roberts, Blackbeard, Major Stede Bonnet and Calico Jack Rackam have been confirmed by meticulous archival research. One especially important contribution to the research was Manuel Schonhorn's 1972-edition of Johnson. Schonhorn, however, accepted the then-current theory that Johnson was a pseudonym of Daniel Defoe, a theory that still pops up in some pirate histories. In recent historiography this theory has been discredited (see Cordingly's introduction to his 1998 edition of Johnson). According to Rediker (letter to Cordingly 4 March 1998, cit. in Johnson 1998, 365 note 12), "Defoe was ... after all, a landlubber.... The knowledge of ships, technology, ports, specific places and maritime people and perhaps especially traditions in *A General History* seems to me to be greater — deeper, more detailed — than any of the writing about the sea that appears in Defoe's other books...." This again raises the exciting question: Who was Johnson? His intimate knowledge of maritime terminology and pirate lore suggests that he may himself have been a member of the

Brotherhood — at the very least he knew some of them well. His book oscillates between moralistic preaching against the way of the pirate in the vein of the Schoolmaster of Oostzaan (boosting sales with atrocity tales), and, especially marked in the later expanded editions and most obvious in the chapters on Misson and Bellamy, a political consciousness sympathetic to the followers of Old Roger.

Even if Johnson was a pirate, we must not accept all of his tales at face value. The notable chapter on Misson, which is pivotal in any analysis of pirate policies, has not been substantiated by later research (as other chapters have), and it sometimes contradicts what *has* been established about some of the events and persons described. In this essay I have not accepted any of Johnson's statements that are not supported by later research. I have, however, accepted his renderings of political, ideological, and ethical statements and his descriptions of pirate activities as a body of pirate lore, which might have manifested in the ways described, and may represent some actual statements and activities of the pirates concerned. In this I am in general agreement with the position taken by such important contemporary pirate experts as Rediker, Marley, and Cordingly. Furthermore, I am prepared to suggest that the proven validity of other chapters allows us to view the chapter on Misson as a kind of fictional re-creation of events that did take place in real time.

HIERARCHY VERSUS ANARCHY II: DEMOCRATIC PIRATES?

During the attack on Cartagena in 1697, anarchy conflicted with hierarchy within the French forces — and God won out

over the Devil. Nonetheless, the first principle of the politics of piracy under the Jolly Roger had not changed since the days of Compaen: it remained the refusal to accept non-functional authority. In general, pirate captains only had a recognized authority when their crew were fighting and chasing prey, apart from whatever influence they could (or could not) exert on the decision-making process by the strength of their personalities (and their skilled weapons play). The importance of their influence was not automatically guaranteed, as was the case for ship's captains in normal, hierarchical society. The same view held for the pirates of the Golden Age — one did not become a pirate, with all its attendant risks, to exchange one lord for another. Johnson (1998, 107) writes of the pirates of Charles Vane: "The Captain's Power is absolute and uncontroulable [*sic*], by their own Laws, *viz.* in *fighting, chasing, or being chased*; in all other Matters whatsoever, he is governed by a Majority." Rediker (1987, 261ff.) notes that aboard the pirate ships the distribution of space and privileges of hierarchical society were redrawn. Not only did pirates freely elect and depose their captains, sometimes the elected captain did not get a cabin, or even a bed, for himself. Even a strong captain like Bartholomew Roberts had trouble with his men, and the respect in which Blackbeard was held by his men was rather exceptional — as were his methods of enforcing respect. Israel Hands, master on Blackbeard's ship, told Johnson (1998, 59):

> One night drinking in his cabin, with Hands, the pilot, and another man, Blackbeard without any provocation privately draws out a small pair of pistols and cocks them under the table … he blew out the candle, and crossing his hands, discharged them at his

> company; Hands, the master, was shot through the knee and lamed for life; the other pistol did no execution. Being asked the meaning of this, he only answered, by damning them, that if he did not now and then kill one of them, they would forget who he was.

Nonetheless, even Blackbeard, when blockading the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, in May 1718, wouldn't make a move in his negotiations with the city government or in the treatment of prisoners without consulting a general council of his crew (Lee 1974, 41–42).

Bartholomew Roberts, one of the most successful of all the pirate captains, succeeded Howell Davis in 1720, after Davis was killed in a trap laid for him by the Portuguese. Toward the end of his career, Davis and his most important lieutenants seem to have lost some of their egalitarian character. According to Johnson (1998, 160) they "held certain Privileges, which the common Pyrates [*sic*] were debarred from, as walking the Quarter Deck, using the great Cabin, going ashore at Pleasure, and treating with foreign powers, that is, with the Captains of Ships they made Prize of...." After his death, Davis's crew apparently reacted to this behavior by electing a relative newcomer to the captaincy: Bartholomew Roberts had only been cruising with the pirates for a few months. In electing him, the pirates made their traditions explicit:

> That 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 [*sic*] Power lodged with the Community, who might doubtless depute and revoke as suited Interest or

> Humour. We are the Original of this Claim … and should a Captain be so saury [*sic*] as to exceed Prescription at any Time [as Davis had at the end of his career], why damn with him! it will be a Caution after he is dead to his Successors, of what fatal Consequence any sort of assuming may be. (ibid., 161–62)

The articles which these "gentlemen of fortune" (as Roberts came to call his men) subsequently drew up are worth quoting at some length, being representative of the articles of many other crews (ibid., 180–81):

> I. Every Man has a Vote in Affairs of Moment; has equal Title to the fresh Provisions, or strong Liquor, at any Time seized, and may use them at Pleasure, unless a Scarcity make it necessary, for the Good of all, to vote a Retrenchment.
>
> II. Every Man to be called fairly in Turn, by List, on board Prizes, because (over and above their proper share) they were on Occasions allowed a Shift of Cloaths [sic]; But if they defrauded the Company to the Value of a Dollar … MAROONING was their Punishment …
>
> III. No Person to Game at Cards or Dice for Money. [An activity that was liable to cause dissension.]
>
> IV. The Lights & Candles to be put out at eight o'Clock at Night. If any of the Crew, after that Hour, still remained inclined for Drinking, they were to do it on the open Deck.

V. To Keep their Piece, Pistols, & Cutlass clean, & fit for Service.

VI. No Boy or Woman to be allow'd amongst them. If any Man were found seducing any of the latter Sex, and carried her to Sea, he was to suffer Death.

VII. To Desert the Ship, or their Quarters in Battle, was punished with Death or Marooning.

VIII. No striking one another on Board, but every Man's Quarrels to be ended on Shore, at Sword and Pistol Thus: The Quarter-Master of the Ship, when the Parties will not come to any Reconciliation, accompanies them on Shore with what assistance he thinks proper, & turns the Disputants Back to Back, at so many Paces Distance. At the Word of Command, they turn and fire immediately, (or else the Piece is knocked out of their Hands). If both miss, they come to their Cutlasses, and then he is declared Victor who draws the first Blood.

IX. No Man to talk of breaking up their Way of Living, till each had shared 1000 pounds. If in order to this, any Man should lose a Limb, or become a Cripple in their Service, he was to have 800 Dollars, out of the public Stock, and for lesser Hurts, proportionably.

X. The Captain and Quarter-Master to receive two Shares of a Prize; the Master, Boatswain, & gunner, one Share and a half and other Officers, [mates, the carpenter, the surgeon], one and a Quarter.

XI. The Musicians to have Rest on the Sabbath Day,

but the other six Days & Nights, none without special Favor.

Articles from other pirate crews mentioned by Johnson show pretty much the same picture. In 1721, Lowther's pirates (ibid., 278) agreed that the use of a weapon against comrades on board the ship or any prize, cowardice in battle, not delivering plunder to the quartermaster for general distribution, gambling for money, or defrauding a comrade, would be punished as "the Captain and Majority shall think fit." In the distribution of the plunder the captain got two shares, the master one and a half, and other officers one and a quarter. For the loss of a limb one was given 150 pounds, "and [can] remain with the Company as long as he shall think fit." Lowther's crew also agreed to give "good Quarters [*sic*]" when called for by their prizes. The men of John Phillips (ibid., 314–15) agreed in 1723 to give one and a half shares of the plunder to the captain and one and a quarter shares to other officers. Deserters were to be punished by marooning; theft from comrades by marooning or death; physical attacks against comrades by forty lashes on the bare back; smoking or lighting a candle in the hold without a cap or a lantern by forty lashes; poor maintenance of weapons by the loss of a share and other punishment "as the Captain and Majority shall think fit"; and meddling with a woman without her consent by death. Loss of a joint or a limb was recompensed with between 400 and 800 pieces-of-eight.

On merchantmen and men-of-war, the quartermaster had supervision over the daily work tasks. On pirates, the position of quartermaster was as important as that of captain. His most important responsibility lay in settling disputes (see point VIII of the articles), and distributing the food, drink, and plunder

(cf. Rediker 1987, 263). Johnson (Defoe 1972, 422–23) tells his readers "that on board the *West-Indies* Privateers and Free Booters, the Quarter-Master's Opinion is like the Muftis among the *Turks*; the Captain can undertake nothing which the Quarter-Master does not approve. We may say, the Quarter-Master is an humble Imitation of the *Roman* Tribune of the People; he speaks for, and looks after the Interest of the Crew." But general decisions were made by councils where all were present. Discipline, "though 'discipline' is perhaps a misnomer for a system of rules that left large ranges of behavior uncontrolled" (Rediker 1987, 265), was regulated by the articles. As in the days of Compaen, duelling was the last resort if disputes could not be settled, and death or marooning were reserved for transgressors too incorrigible for even pirates to tolerate.

After his election to the captaincy and the signing of the articles, Bartholemew Roberts soon learned that when his pirates were not actually pursuing prizes or fighting they had no intention of obeying many of his orders (Johnson 1998, 194–95).

> Captain Roberts having been insulted by one of the drunken crew ... in the heat of his passion killed the fellow on the spot, which was resented by a great many others, but particularly one Jones.... He cursed Roberts, and said "he ought to be served so himself." Roberts hearing Jones's invective, ran to him with a sword, and ran him into the body; who notwithstanding his wound, seized the captain, threw him over a gun, and beat him handsomely. This adventure put the whole company in an uproar, and some taking part with the captain, and others against him, there

> had like to have ensued a general battle with one another.... However, the tumult was at length appeased by the mediation of the quartermaster, and as the majority of the company were of an opinion that the dignity of the captain ought to be supported on board; that it was a post of honor, and therefore the person whom they thought fit to confer it on should not be violated by any single member. Wherefore they sentenced Jones to undergo two lashes from every one of the company, for his misdemeanour, which was executed upon him as soon as he was well of his wound.

The organization of the pirates was non-hierarchical and anarchic, but not in the sense of gentle consent. Customs and strength of personality were the main ingredients that shaped the social interaction on board the pirate vessels; as was the case on Compaen's flotilla, rather than democracy a mixture of anarchy and tyranny held sway. There was not, nor could there be, one pirate law book. But neither was the organization of the pirates total chaos — anyone with any sailing experience can imagine the discipline it took to sail a seventeenth or eighteenth-century ship. Roberts and his crew went on to become the most successful pirates of their time, taking four hundred prizes before Roberts was killed and his flotilla of three ships was captured by the Royal Navy in February 1722. Roberts had the necessary capacity to function as captain in an anarchic organization of violent men. He was "superior for knowledge and boldness (pistol proof as they call it) and can make those fear, who do not love him" (ibid., 183).

ANARCHY VERSUS DEMOCRACY

Regardless of how pistol-proof, bold, terrifying, or beloved a pirate captain might be, all hierarchy and authoritarianism were constantly questioned by the Brethren. Their transmitted customs and the fleeting and evanescent character of their lives severely limited, and in the end nullified, any attempt by authority to assert itself. If pirate customs were not suited for expansion —there were limits, for example, to the effective size of Compaen's flotilla — they were superbly suited for maximizing the liberty of seamen; liberty, not only from hierarchical society at large, but also from authoritarian captains and busybody fellow pirates. The unruliness of pirates vis-à-vis their captains has been amply documented throughout these essays, and it is interesting to go one step further and speculate on the refusal of pirates to even accept the authority of a democratic organization of their own, which is one of the fine details in Johnson's chapter on Misson.

Thomas Tew, a pirate whose real existence has been documented beyond doubt, plays an important role in the Misson story. Tew transformed himself from Jamaican privateer to pirate in 1693, dropping anchor that same year at Baldridge's pirate utopia on Saint Marie. By then, he had already made his fortune by taking an immensely rich vessel belonging to the Great Moghul of India, as Avery would later do. In 1694, Tew returned as a rich man to Rhode Island, but unlike Avery he wasn't content to quietly settle down. After first buying a privateering commission from Benjamin Fletcher, the corrupt Governor of New York, he again went out on the account. Thanks to a thoroughly corrupt government, in those days

New York was a favorite pirate haunt, much as Port Royal had been earlier in the century, and as we have seen New York's merchants conducted a flourishing trade with the pirates based on Madagascar and Saint Marie (see especially Ritchie 1986, 36–39). Despite his legal status, Tew was killed in 1695 in a skirmish with a Moorish vessel while cruising in the Red Sea as a pirate (Marley 1997, 117–18; see also the annotations by Schonhorn on Tew in Defoe 1972).

These are the bare bones of the real-life story. How, we ask, did they morph to extend the glorious myth of Misson and Libertalia? The corresponding elements in the accounts of the exploits of Tew and Avery (the reputed "King of the Pirates" on Madagascar) together with Tew's recorded visit to Saint Marie may be the basis for Johnson's account of Tew's cooperation with Misson, the idealistic French pirate who founds the pirate utopia called Libertalia on Madagascar. But Tew was killed in 1695 and events in Johnson's chapter on Misson point to the later period of the War of the Spanish Succession.

No hard historical documentation has yet been found confirming the existence of Misson. Either as a comment on his own society or as a scriptural version of an oral account circulating among the Brethren, Johnson has juggled events and characters to create a pirate myth. He relates how Libertalia evolves. Contrary to Baldridge's practises, Misson and Tew liberate all slaves. In Libertalia all treasure, cattle, and land are held in common and there is no Government (Defoe 1972; Law 1991). However, at a certain moment private property and formal government are reintroduced to resolve some quarrels between the crews of Misson and Tew — echoing the real problems that arose distributing plunder when different pirate crews

worked together. Later the colony is attacked and destroyed by Madagascar natives, another real problem for pirate settlements.

At the moment of its destruction Libertalia is a democratic constitutional community — a radically revolutionary society in the context of early eighteenth-century society, harking back to the radical traditions of the English Revolution and looking forward to the great revolutions at the end of the century — but still not radically libertarian enough for some of the pirates in the story. Even in the ultimate pirate utopia anarchy clashes with (democratic) hierarchy. The story unfolds like this: With the introduction of formal democracy in Libertalia a constitutive assembly is formed, each ten pirates choosing their own representative. "The first session lasted 10 days and passed many laws," Law remarks (1991, 25). A Lord Conservator with the title "Supreme Excellence" is chosen to head the state for three years — Misson, of course, and he appoints Tew as Admiral of the Fleet. Tew immediately sails in the *Victoire* to find some former crew members who have settled on Madagascar. He tries to persuade them to join Libertalia, but their spokesman, Tew's former quartermaster, refuses (Defoe 1972, 435), explaining "[t]hat they enjoyed all the Necessaries of Life; were free and independent of all the World; and it would be Madness again to subject themselves to any Government, which, however mild, still exerted Power." The only political organization these radicals will accept is the selection every three months of a Governor, chosen not by election but by lot from among those who have not yet served in the position. The Governor settles small disputes between those who can't come to an accord between themselves — a quartermaster on shore, in fact.

If we compare the chapter on Misson with what we have learned about the organization on board the pirate ships, the radically dissident pirates appear more typical of the politics of Old Roger than Libertalia's proto-democracy, with its Lockean original contract and movement towards the formation of a liberal state with private property and formal democracy to protect it. The anarchists who refuse to accept the democratic pirate utopia and have no use for laws of any kind may be the truest reflection of the pirate ethos.

JOIE DE VIVRE: AN ETERNAL FESTIVAL

The anarchic politics of Old Roger may have been liberating for the common seaman, but let us not forget the dark side of a pirate's life symbolized by the triad that appeared on his flag: death (skulls and skeletons), violence (cutlasses, swords, and darts), and the fleeting passage of time (hourglasses). How long did freedom last in an outlaw's world? Not only hunter, but hunted (by the navies of the world). Apart from the general dangers of life at sea and the vicissitudes of battle, Rediker estimates (1987, 283) that between 400 and 600 of the Anglo-American pirates, approximately ten percent of their total number, were executed in the decade between 1716 and 1726. On the open sea Bartholomew Roberts's motto, "a merry life and a short one," must have sounded stimulating and refreshing. To his men in prison outside the gates of Cape Coast Castle awaiting their execution in 1722, after he had been killed in battle, the motto probably had quite different implications.

The frantic enjoyment of life whenever possible was very much a part of *every* sailor's life during the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries. Subordinated to the strict regimentation and discipline (the "incarceration") of merchantmen and men-of-war, Linebaugh notes (1993, 131) that sailors would erupt in "revels and riots" in their periods of leave on shore; "Lords of Six Weeks and slaves of forty-six." Pirates were Lords of Fifty-two Weeks. The evanescence of their life only stimulated their licentiousness. The realization that time is passing spills from all pirate histories in a festival of *carpe diem*, as an uncontrollable desire to party. Compaen's men drank and whored whenever they got the chance, and it is no different in Johnson's pirate biographies. The buccaneers couldn't wait to squander their spoils in the taverns and brothels of Port Royal and Tortuga. Live for today, said the hourglass. In an environment of total insecurity — punctuated by the opposite extremes of hunger and excess, the rhythms of the sea, and the dangers of war and death — they had all embarked on a quest for an evil Grail. No one has described the pirate state of mind more poignantly than Blackbeard (Johnson 1998, 61–62) in the journal found after his death:

> Such a Day, Rum all out; — Our Company somewhat sober; — A Damned Confusion amongst us! — Rogues a-plotting; — great Talk of Separation. — So I looked sharp for a Prize: — such a Day took one, with a great deal of Liquor on board, so kept the Company hot, damned hot, then all Things went well again."

One could easily agree with George MacDonald Fraser (1996, 408) when, on account of this extract, he describes Blackbeard as "one of the most brilliant prose stylists of the Augustan Age.... Fifty-four words to paint as vivid a picture as any in the English language."

The favorite pirate drug was alcohol, especially rum, a liquid distilled from sugarcane products which are abundant in the Caribbean. The Dutch had their own nickname for this liquor: *kilduijvel*, cool devil. Water supplies were suspect throughout the region and rum was a hearty alternative, as well as being a great party-booster. People who did not join the drinking parties sometimes became suspect, as happens often at alcoholic social gatherings. Among Roberts's pirates "Sobriety brought a Man [in suspicion] of being in a Plot against the Commonwealth [the seaborne pirate republic]" (Johnson 1998, 191). The exceptional Roberts was himself an addicted tea-drinker, and would probably have escaped during his final battle with the Royal Navy had most of his men not been drunk.

In an atmosphere of total insecurity, with death and violence stalking the shadows, the pirates plunged into festival whenever possible. To paraphrase the Situationists' "Theses on the Paris Commune" (Knabb 1981, 314): the pirates had become masters of their own history, not so much on the level of "governmental" politics as on the level of their everyday life. "To live without dead time and to enjoy without restraints," as the rules of the revolutionary festival are defined in another Situationist text (ibid., 337), conforms easily to the ethos represented in the pirate histories: "Festivity is the very keynote of the life they announce." Witness this description of Captain North when he served as a privateer on Jamaica in 1695 (Defoe 1972, 512): "as he had got his Money lightly, so he spent it, making the Companions of his Dangers the Companions of his Diversions, or rather joyning [*sic*] himself with them, and following their Example, which all (who are acquainted with the

Way of Life of a successful Jamaica Privateer) know is not an Example of the greatest Sobriety and Oeconomy [*sic*]." The pirates of Captain Anstis spent nine months on a small island to the southwest of Cuba waiting for the answer to their request for a pardon (Johnson 1998, 264), and "passed their time here in dancing, and other diversions agreeable to these kind of folks." When Lowther and his men careened their ship on another small island (ibid., 283), they "staid some Time to take their Diversions, which consisted of 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."

Bartholomew Roberts explained this attitude to life as follows in a much-quoted passage (ibid., 213–14):

> D-n to him who ever lived to wear a Halter.... In an honest Service, says he, there is thin Commons, low Wages, and hard Labour [*sic*]; in this [piracy], Plenty and Satiety, Pleasure and Care, Liberty and Power; and who would not balance Creditors on this Side, when all the Hazard that is run for it, at worst, is only a sower [*sic*] Look or two at choaking [*sic*]. No, a merry Life and a short one, shall be my Motto.

His men couldn't have agreed more. Look again at their articles: Item XI specifies that the musicians can rest on the sabbath day, but must play day and night on the other days except with special permission — buccaneer leader Laurens de Graaf always carried violins and trumpets with him. Item I of Roberts's articles gives everyone free access to all the food and liquor on board, except when scarcity necessitated rationing.

When Roberts's two-ship flotilla dropped anchor at Old Celebes in October 1721 (Johnson 1998, 199), "they sat easy, and divided the Fruits of their dishonest Industry, and drank and drove Care away." Black Bart enjoyed being regaled on his deck (ibid. 214) "with music, drinking and the gaiety and diversions of his companions."

Now imagine Roberts before his final battle (ibid. 212),

> dressed in a rich crimson damask waistcoat 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 pairs of pistols hanging at the end of a silk sling slung over his shoulders (according to the fashion of the pirates).

At a time when seamen generally wore short blue jackets, checkered shirts, long canvas trousers or baggy breeches, red waistcoats, and scarves around their necks, pirates added all kinds of plundered silks, velvets, and brocades to their outfits — flouting the dress codes of European society, where luxury fabrics were only worn by the upper classes. Labat notes (1970, 239–40) that after capturing a caique, Captain Daniel's men "dressed themselves up in all kinds of fine clothes, and were a comical sight as they strutted about [Aves] Island in feathered hats, wigs, silk stockings, ribbons and other garments." When Compaen finally returned home to Holland his men were "richly and costly attired," and his arms were covered with gold jewelry. According to Senior (1976, 37), Compaen's contemporary, the English pirate Kit Oloard, dressed himself "in black velvet trousers and jackets, crimson silk socks, black felt hat, brown beard and shirt collar embroidered in black silk." Pirate captains wore flashy adaptations of the costumes of gentlemen

in a deliberate flouting of social dress codes that emphasized the pirates' penchant for enjoying the moment and taunting their social "betters."

It is interesting to observe comparable behavior among the English highwaymen, the other eighteenth-century threat to British order (Moore 1997, 257–58). The famous Dick Turpin ordered a new suit for his execution in 1739; and in 1774 John Rann, alias Sixteen-String Jack, appeared on his seventh and final trial "dressed in a new suit of pea-green clothes, his hat bound round with [16] silver strings, he wore a ruffled shirt, and his behavior evidenced the utmost unconcern" when sentenced to death. He spent his last Sunday in his cell with three prostitutes.

As evidenced by their dress, there may be more to the claims of some pirates to gentility. Avery, when going on the account, said (Ritchie 1986, 86): "I am a Man of Fortune, and must seek my Fortune." Roberts went one further (Johnson 1998, 172, 203) and referred to himself and his men as "Gentlemen of Fortune." The pretension of or aspiration to the status of gentleman, as distinct from the common herd, was common in eighteenth-century England (Porter 1990, 50). But among pirates and highwaymen it was something different from snobbishness. It functioned as a subtle form of social critique. The highwaymen in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1727) behave as courteously as gentlemen. Gay reversed the usual social distinctions by describing the politicians of his day, in slighly disguised forms, as the real robbers of society. In the popular imagination highwaymen were known as "Gentlemen of the Road." As Moore notes (1997, 133), "The accomplishments of the ideal highwayman were essentially those of a gen-

tleman: horsemanship, courage, the ability to handle weapons well, wit and eloquence with which to disarm his victims, a certain insouciance, a sense of honour." The claim to gentility was further a claim to a position of leisured enjoyment of life, instead of wage-slavery and poverty. According to Linebaugh (1993, 216), the ballad most frequently sung among highwaymen in 1728 included the words:

> We pass for the best of Gentlemen,
> When over a flowing Bowl,
> Our Hearts are at ease,
> We kiss who we please:
> On Death it is a Folly to think;...

A final element in Roberts's assumption of gentility was strategic and reminds us again of Compaen — covering an iron fist in a velvet glove. While preying upon a convoy of Portuguese merchantmen off the coast of Brazil (Johnson 1998, 172), Roberts came up to one of the Portuguese vessels and ordered her master to board his ship, where he

> saluted him 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; and if he directed them right, he should be restored to his ship without molestation, otherwise, he must expect immediate death.

Whether instinctively or consciously, the pirates embraced a counterculture contradictory to the Protestant ethic that was triumphing in England, emphasizing the religious duty of working hard and avoiding the sins of idleness and over-indulgence in pleasures of the flesh. The ethic of Old Roger, which

had been given public expression in the English Revolution by the Ranters, was the exact opposite of repressive Protestantism and, paradoxically, was more akin to the libertinism of aristocratic cavaliers — with the added element of egalitarianism. As Christopher Hill has noted (1972, 339):

> The Ranter ethic ... involved a real subversion of existing society and its values. The world exists for man, and all men are equal. There is no after-life: all that matters is here and now ... "Swearing i'th light gloriously," and "wanton kisses," may help to liberate us from the repressive ethic which our masters are trying to impose on us.

A BROTHERHOOD OF PIRATES

Alcohol was a binding element among the pirates, in their roles as drinking buddies, but could also create dissension. Unlike the prohibitions on gambling for money and taking women on board the ships, sobriety was not an option for the great majority of pirates. In 1719, off the coast of Gambia, Davis met with the vessels captained by La Bouze and Cocklyn, two pirate colleagues. After seven weeks of fraternization and collective action the three captains fell out in a drunkard's fight.

> When drinking on board Davis['s ship], they had like to have fallen together by the oars, the strong liquor stirring up a spirit of discord among them and they quarrelled, but Davis put an end to it, by this short speech: "... Since we met in love, let us part in love, for

I find that three of a trade can never agree." (Johnson 1998, 143)

Despite these kinds of quarrels, anarchic principles of organization were supplemented by a supranational sense of brotherhood among the pirates. Whenever Compaen met his brother pirates there was some fraternization, although this did not exclude bitter personal rivalries such as the one he had with the son of Simon the Dancer. Throughout the Brotherhood's history the feeling of fraternity remained a strong unifying element in pirate customs. All pirates knew themselves to be homeless and cut off from their countries of origin. When Admiral Schram asked Compaen for his nationality, the pirate answered: "From the Seas." A century later, the pirates in Johnson's history (Defoe 1972, 474, 493) gave the same answer. Meeting brother pirates suspended their sense of isolation. When Davis met La Bouze (Johnson 1998, 141–42), the French pirate at first attacked him, but when both ships hoisted the black colors, "The French man was not a little pleased at this happy mistake; they both hoisted out their boats, and the captains went to meet and congratulate one another." They agreed to sail down the coast together, and Davis "very courteously promised [La Bouze] the first ship he took, fit for his use, he would give him, as being willing to encourage a sailing brother." A similar sequence of events unfolded when the two new friends spied Cocklyn. When, towards Christmas of 1721, Lowther met Captain Low's pirates near the Grand Caymans (ibid. 283), he "received them as Friends." Without this sense of brotherhood it is hard to imagine how the pirate settlements established by Baldridge and Plantain could have come into existence or survived for long.

VIOLENCE, CRUELTY, AND WOMEN

The Ranters' liberating ethics and the armed search for plunder created space for darker sides of the pirate project as well. They did not always treat their prisoners humanely. In the essay on Reyning I argued that most of the atrocities committed by the Brethren of the Coast against their prisoners were of an instrumental nature, except when frustration was rife (and this probably includes sexual frustration leading to violence against women). But we can't generalize about their behavior because there are the more humane examples of a De Graaf and a Reyning. From an ethical view the political sphere of Old Roger lay beyond the pale sphere of the British empire, "beyond good and evil."

How did this affect their victims and enemies? Again we cannot generalize. The image of the noble pirate is found as often as that of such psychopathic counterparts as Rock the Brazilian. In Johnson we find them side by side. In 1706, for instance, Thomas White's pirates took a ketch (a two-masted vessels with a large sail on the mainmast and a smaller one on the mizzen mast at the back of the vessel) captained by Benjamin Stacy:

> [T]hey took what Money he had, and what Goods and Provisions they wanted. Among the Money were 500 Dollars, a Silver Mug, and two Spoons belonging to a Couple of Children on board, and under the care of Stacy. The Children took on for their Loss, and the Captain asking the Reason of their Tears, was answer'd by Stacy, that the above Sum and Plate was all the Children had to bring them up.

> Captain White made a Speech to his Men, and told 'em it was cruel to rob the innocent Children; upon which, by unanimous Consent, all was restored to them again; besides, they made a Gathering among themselves, and made a Present to Stacy's Mates and other his inferior Officers, and about 120 Dollars to the Children; they then discharged Stacy and his Crew, and made the best of their Way outside the Red Sea. (Defoe 1972, 485)

This was not an isolated incident. In August of the same year, Captain Halsey took the *Essex* and 40,000 pounds sterling in ready money. But his quartermaster, Nathaniel North, prevented him from taking the personal belongings of the English passengers on board the *Essex*.

On the other hand, cruelty and violence could arise out of frustration, especially when prizes were taken only after fierce resistance. In January 1722, in the Bay of Honduras, Lowther fell upon Captain Edwards and his ship the *Greyhound* (Johnson 1998, 283–84):

> Lowther hoisted piratical colours, and fired a gun for the *Greyhound* to bring to, which he refusing, the *Happy Delivery* [the pirate's ship] edged down, and gave her a broadside which was returned by Captain Edwards very bravely, and the engagement held for an hour; but Captain Edwards, finding the pirate too strong for him, and fearing the consequence of too obstinate a resistance, against those lawless fellows, ordered his ensign to be struck. The pirates came aboard, and not only rifled the ship, but whipped, beat, and cut the men in a cruel manner, turned them

aboard their own ship, and then set fire to theirs.

Apart from frustration caused by resistance, the wish to take revenge on the "system," (the hierarchical maritime world) sometimes led to cruel punishments. When Captain Condent, one of the pirates who preferred to escape in 1718 from New Providence rather than take Woodes Rogers's pardon, captured the salt fleet near Mayo (Defoe 1972, 582), "he took upon him the Administration of Justice enquiring into the Manner of the Commander's Behavior to their Men, and those against whom complaints were made, he whip'ped and pickled [poured sea-water over the wounds]."

Some pirate captains, like Edward Low, were outright psychopaths. Johnson's biography of him is exceptional in the extent of mistreatments and murders of prisoners it chronicles, which leads me to conclude that this level of violence was out of bounds for most other pirates. "Of all the pyratical [*sic*] Crews that were ever heard of, none of the *English* Name came up to this, in Barbarity," Johnson writes chauvinistically (1998, 307). After capturing the *Wright* and Captain Carter in August 1722 (Johnson 1998, 295–96):

> because at first they [Carter and his men] showed inclinations to defend themselves, and what they had, the pirates cut and mangled them in a barbarous manner; particularly some Portugueze passengers, two of which being friars, they triced up at each arm of the foreyards but let them down again before they were quite dead, and this they repeated several times out of sport.
>
> Another Portugueze ... putting on a sorrowful countenance at what he saw acted, one of this vile

> crew attacked him upon the deck, saying, he did not like his looks, and thereupon gave him one blow across the belly with his cutlass, that cut out his bowels, and he fell down dead without speaking a word.

The action then becomes horribly comic:

> At the same time another of these rogues cutting at a prisoner, missed his mark, and Captain Low standing in his way, very opportunely received the strike upon his under jaw, which laid the teeth bare; upon this the surgeon was called, who immediately stitched up the wound, but Low finding fault with the operation, the surgeon being tolerably drunk, as it was customary for everybody to be, struck Low such a blow with his fist, that broke out all the stitches, and then bid him sew up his chops himself and be damned, so that Low made a very pitiful figure for some time after.

Low was exceptional. In most cases, brutality and magnanimity existed side by side in the same pirates, their whim deciding which would triumph. Roberts and his men at one point freed an English chaplain without taking any of his belongings (ibid., 199), "they bore so great a respect." Next, in the attack on the African port town of Whydah in January 1722, they allowed a group of slaves to burn to death (ibid., 204). Roberts had sent a boat with some of his men to capture a slave ship, transport the captive Negro slaves aboard their own vessel, and set the slave ship on fire, "but being in haste, and finding that unshackling them cost much time and labour, they actually set her on fire, with eighty of those poor wretches on board, chained two and two together, under the miserable

choice of perishing by fire or water."

Since they lived outside the bounds of what was normally defined as good and evil, pirates behaved as they liked within the confines of their own customs. They took the same attitude towards women. In general women were not welcome on board the ships, lest they cause dissension among the men. When Charles Vane and his pirates took the *Virginia* in 1718 and kept two women prisoners for their own enjoyment, Johnson asserts (Defoe 1972, 620) that the behavior is "contrary to the usual practice of Pyrates [*sic*], who generously sent them away lest they should occasion Contention." The pendulum constantly swings from one behavior to its opposite. Captain Anstis's men rape a woman in June 1721 (Johnson 1998, 261), while those of Captain Phillips agree (ibid., 315) in August 1723 in their articles: "If at any time you meet with a prudent Woman, that Man that offers to meddle with her, without her Consent, shall suffer present Death."

While noting the prohibition against women on board, Johnson also chronicles the lives of two women pirates. Mary Read joined the Brotherhood disguised as a man, while her friend Anne Bonny, girlfriend of Calico Jack Rackam, cruised with him on his voyages. When Read's true identity was found out she was accepted by the pirates because of her martial prowess and because she had a love affair with one of them. By claiming pregnancy both Read and Bonny escaped the gallows in 1720, after Rackam and his crew were taken prisoner. We conclude from Johnson's account (ibid., 121) that one main reason the two women were accepted by the Rackam gang was that they were tougher than the men themselves.

Some of the evidence against [Mary Read], upon her

> trial, [came from those of the accused] who were forced men, and had sailed with her, [and] deposed upon oath, that in times of action, no person amongst them was more resolute, or ready to board or undertake anything that was hazardous, as she and Anne Bonny; and particularly at the time they were attacked and taken [by an expedition sent by the Governor of Jamaica], when they came to close quarters, none kept the deck except Mary Read and Anne Bonny, and one more, upon which she, Mary Read, called to those under deck to come up and fight like men, and finding that they did not stir, fired their arms down the hold amongst them, killing one and wounding others.

The cowardice of her lover, Rackam, so disgusted Anne Bonny (ibid.,131) that before his execution she confided to him "that she was sorry to see him there [in prison], but if he had fought like a man, he need not have been hanged like a dog."

Marcus Rediker (1996b, 11-13) has pointed out that both these pirate women exemplify the strong women of the working classes, strong enough in both body and mind to overcome economic adversity and to pursue a life of adventure, disowning state authority in the process. But in the context of the pirate's world, a man's world par excellence, Bonny and Read remain exceptional in becoming masters of their own fate instead of passive recipients of either gallantry or violence.

CONCLUSIONS: THE POLITICS OF PIRACY

By rebelling against hierarchical society and choosing for Old Roger, a pirate entered the political spheres of anarchist

organization and festival, with death and violence ever present. Within these spheres the pirates created an upside-down world. This creation was not a purely whimsical process. Pirate histories from 1625 to 1725 show the continuity, embodied in certain traditions, of a shared pirate culture: modes of organization, methods of resolving disputes, preference for easy profits, tendencies toward violence when frustrated, a penchant for living for the day. In their codes of behaviour the pirates overstepped the limitations of the life of the common sailors. Their quartermasters were defenders of their interests; and on board the ships the pirates themselves ruled — some even found the liberty and resources to act as leisured gentlemen, albeit gentlemen of fortune. The pirates were clearly very conscious of their traditions, as is shown by their adaptation of common symbolic forms and their regard for elder representatives of their kind.

But there remains a clear ambiguity. Attempts to cast the pirates as role models for social liberation are too simplistic, if only because of the ethical problematic of their activities: particularly as regards the violence they directed not only against the "great" but also against more defenseless victims. This ambiguity cannot, and I think need not be resolved. We must attempt to understand pirates from the perspective of the violent world in which they lived, and consider the context of the incarcerated life of common sailors. As an incurable Romantic, I have found my sympathies in researching and writing these essays to lie with the historical embodiments of the superpirates of literature, with such captains as Laurens de Graaf and Bartholomew Roberts. But they, and their less attractive counterparts like Rock the Brazilian or Edward Low, lived under the

shadow of Old Roger, who brought not only liberation and pleasure, but also death and violence. Pirate history does not offer us a Hollywood picture where heroes triumph in the end. Neither does it offer the nightmarish chaos predicted by authorities and ideologues railing against lives outside their control. What pirate history does offer is, to quote Hakim Bey (1991, 88), "the turmoil of becoming & even 'failure'." This turmoil *was* the pirate utopia, not the way leading to it. To paraphrase Anne Bonny, it was better to have fought like a man, than to have lived like a dog.

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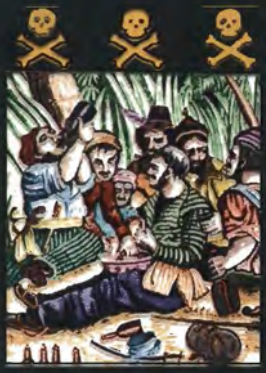

ANARRRCHKISTS! By rebelling against hierarchical society and living under the Jolly Roger, pirates created an upside-down world of anarchist organization and festival, with violence and death ever-present. This creation was not a purely whimsical process. In THE DEVIL'S ANARCHY, Stephen Snelders examines rare 17th-century Dutch pirate histories to show the continuity of a shared pirate culture, embodied in its modes of organization, methods of distributing booty and resolving disputes, and tendencies for high living. Focussing on the careers of Claes Compaen, a cunning, charismatic renegado who claimed to have stolen more than 350 vessels, and Jan Erasmus Reyning, who hit the seas at age 12 and became a buccaneer in the pirate jungles of Santo Domingo, Snelders paints a salty picture of the excesses, contradictions, and liberatory joys of pirate life.

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– From the introduction by Peter Lamborn Wilson

Stephen Snelders is a Dutch historian with a research focus on social transformation and resistance in the body as well as the mind. He is past editor of Pan Forum, a leading research journal of psychotropic studies.

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