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Robbers of the Sea Piracy in Proclamations and Pamphlets, 1558-1675

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Abstract

The article considers two printed sources that informed English readers about the early modern crime of piracy: the royal proclamation and the pamphlet. It contends that proclamations on piracy have been an overlooked genre among scholars theorizing maritime crime, and that reading a pamphlet on piracy was an experience mediated by intimate knowledge of royal proclamations. These pamphlets, in turn, capitalize on this knowledge within their pages. It does not so much consider piracy itself, but rather mediates the effects of obtaining information about the crime through these two disparate, although complementary, mediums.

Keywords: *Maritime Law, Piracy, Popular Print, Royal Proclamations and Royal Authority*

1. Introduction

‘When wee see a Ship alter her course’, colonial governor John Smith advised young mariners in 1627, ‘and useth all the meanes she can to fetch you up, you are the chase, and hee the chaser. In giving chase or chasing, or to escape being chased, there is required an infinite judgement and experience, for there is no rule for it; but the shortest way to fetch up your chase is the best’ (1970, 72-73). Smith’s instructions reflect a reality of life at sea for an early Stuart sailor: their vessels remained vulnerable not only to tempest and shipwreck but also to attacks from pirates and privateers, attacks that often led to international rancor and financial disaster. And yet in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, far more people encountered piracy on the printed page or the London stage than on the high seas.

Piracy sells. The maritime crime apparently fascinated the early modern English public. Shakespeare’s *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*,

which contains a nautical ensemble of mariners, fishermen, and pirates, proved one of the most popular plays performed during his lifetime. Other plays of the period, such as Heywood and Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea* (Heywood and Rowley 1655)¹ and Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk: Or The Tragical Lives and Deaths of the Two Famous Pirates, Ward and Dansiker* (1612), capitalized on the allure of the robbers of the sea: these works dramatized the lives and deaths of real English pirates.² The exploits of sea marauders were also captured in popular media such as pamphlets and ballads. The court proceedings of at least one pirate and his accomplices were even printed for wider distribution in *An Exact Narrative of the Tryals of the Pyrates* (Anonymous 1675?). While the fictional pirates of the London stage were not constrained by historical truth, these popular accounts purported to convey accurate narratives of piratical exploits. These various accounts position sea robbers, alternately, as fearless rebels, abhorrent traitors, insatiable thieves, and repentant sinners. But another printed medium concerning piracy permeated early modern England: the royal proclamation. Between 1519 and 1610, the government issued twenty-seven royal proclamations concerning piracy. These royal communiqués represent a major conduit of information about piracy, one that should not be divorced from discussions of the popular accounts.

This article considers these two main types of messaging which informed the public of piracy. Previous scholarship on royal proclamations addressing piracy focuses mainly on their content; it does not engage proclamation as a specific genre, nor the implications of a reading public that obtained knowledge about the maritime offense through an official royal medium.³ As a result, the physical manifestation of the proclamation constitutes a major component of this analysis, and at the center of my argument lies a fundamental premise: *how* early modern readers acquired information about piracy shaped conceptions of the crime to a comparable degree as did *what* information they encountered. Additionally, I look at how seventeenth-century accounts of sea marauding that targeted a popular audience were informed by printed royal proclamations. My article contends that these proclamations represent both the earliest and the most ubiquitous printed accounts of piracy in early modern England, and thus provide a useful lens through which to theorize about the popular accounts. I begin with a brief exposition of Tudor and early Stuart piracy, using Henry Mainwaring as my anchor: Mainwaring's biography and writings construct a valuable alembic in which to distill the early modern crime. I then turn to the genres of the printed royal proclamation and the popular account and consider, broadly, how these variant instruments conveyed information about piracy to the early modern reading public. In the final section, I conduct two case studies that examine the intersection of the royal proclamation and the popular account. In the first, I inspect the case of English pirate John Ward, whom James targeted by name in a royal proclamation in early 1609, and who became the subject of three printed pamphlets later that year. In the second, I explore the 1639 account of Elizabethan pirates Clinton and Atkinson, *A True Relation, of the Lives and Deaths of two most Famous English Pyrats* (Heywood 1639). The royal proclamation, depicted in both print and image, plays a key role in the pamphlet. These case studies demonstrate the fecundity of staging a dialogue between the popular account and the royal proclamation.

¹ 1655 is the date of publication, but the play was probably written between 1607 and 1609, or between 1619 and 1626.

² These portrayals were not entirely accurate, however, as the case of John Ward, considered below, illustrates. The author would like to thank Joseph Black, Robert Sullivan, and two anonymous readers who offered feedback on an earlier version of this article.

³ For example, Claire Jowitt, in her otherwise excellent study *The Culture of Piracy* (2010), references several proclamations touching piracy, but does not consider the effect of their physical presentation on the viewer.

2. *Henry Mainwaring and the Crime of Piracy*

Pirate-turned-pirate-policer Henry Mainwaring opens a useful aperture onto early modern piracy.⁴ His biography challenges some assumptions about the crime in the early Stuart period, and he stands as proof that a pirate occupied a transitory identity, one that could easily pass from lawfulness to criminality and back again. Mainwaring, born in 1587 and educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and the Middle Temple (although apparently never called to the bar), was appointed by Lord High Admiral Charles Howard in 1610 to police piracy in the Bristol Channel. For reasons that still evade historians, Mainwaring took up piracy by 1613: operating under the guise of a privateer, a murky, politically unstable category, he began to attack Spanish ships on the Barbary Coast.⁵ The year 1614 found Mainwaring in Newfoundland, a fertile piratical breeding ground, where he secured new recruits; and, freshly outfitted and manned, he returned to Barbary. In the meantime, his extra-judicial exploits had provoked the ire of French and Spanish authorities – Mainwaring was, by most accounts, an effective pirate – and they lodged complaints against him in London. This diplomatic nuisance prompted James to dispatch an English fleet to North Africa to urge Mainwaring to surrender. The vexatious mariner returned to England in late 1615, where he entered into negotiations with the king and agreed to stop attacking foreign ships; he would, instead, become a hunter of pirates. The signed agreement is dated June 9, 1616.⁶

Mainwaring's evasion of serious consequences, while due in part to his willingness to surrender, also reveals the ambiguous attitude that English law adopted toward the crime of piracy. During the Middle Ages, robbery at sea had been a civil, but not criminal, offense. That is, those merchants and mariners who were attacked by pirates and who sought justice requested only monetary restitution, not the punishment of the offending pirates. Legal historian R.G. Marsden observed that during the period piracy was 'triable in the king's courts, but it seems never to have been a felony at common law' (1907, 475). In 1294 Sir William Leyburn was appointed the first Lord Admiral of England's admiralty, and piracy came to be tried in the admiralty court, which proceeded according to the civil law of the Continent rather than the common law of England. This shift proved unsatisfactory. A statute issued during the reign of Henry VIII addressed the court's insouciant attitude toward piracy: 28 Henry 8, c. 15, 'An Act for Punishment of Pirates and Robbers of the Sea', states, 'Where Traitours Pirotres Theves Robbers Murtherers and Confederatours uppon the See, many tymes escape unpunysshed because the triall of their offences hath heretofore ben ordered judged and determynd before the Adymirall or his Lyeutenante or Comissary, after the course of the civile Lawes' (*Statutes of the Realm*, vol. III, 671). Because he deemed the Admiral's policing of pirates to be insufficient, Henry used the statute to create a common law tribunal in which to try the crime of piracy.⁷ This marked a turning point in England's treatment of pirates: the number of pirates executed rose sharply during the second half of the century.

⁴ Biographical information about Mainwaring is taken from Manwaring and Perrin 1920, 1-34.

⁵ Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins are perhaps the most well-known of the early modern privateers. For a discussion of Elizabethan privateering, see Rodger 1998, 190-203 and 272-296. For a discussion of Stuart privateering, see Hanna 2015, 102-143.

⁶ While some English pirates like Mainwaring returned to England from the Barbary Coast, others, such as John Ward, did not. Pirates who converted to Islam were said to have 'turned Turk' (a common saying we find also in the title of Dabotne's 1612 play), and the Crown regarded them as traitors. Their conversion precluded the possibility of a royal pardon.

⁷ For more on the treatment of piracy at common law and its evolution across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Rubin 1998, 43-70.

While Mainwaring's privileged background makes him an outlier among many other pirates of the early Stuart period, it also illustrates that men who resorted to the maritime crime did not fit into a neat socioeconomic box. The pool of potential pirates included any individual with a working knowledge of life at sea. Historian John Appleby notes that 'For many recruits, turning to piracy appears to have been an improvised, urgent response to economic and social conditions, fuelled by grievances over employment, pay and working conditions' (2012, 279). Men such as the infamous John Ward, who originally worked as a fisherman, were certainly drawn from this demographic. More broadly, it would be impossible to ascertain the motivations of the several thousand English pirates at work during the early Stuart period – Appleby speculates that given the high-risk nature of their line of work, men aboard pirate ships witnessed a high turnover rate, which in turn has led to an underestimation of their numbers – but it seems reasonable to assume most acted out of discontent as well as cupidity. In the case of Mainwaring, the pirate's motivation seems less clear and is not explicitly addressed in his treatise. But within the popular accounts, as we shall see, the interest in the pirate transcends his skirmishes on the high seas: it also attempts to understand the pirate himself, what made him take up marauding, what kept him menacing the high seas, what prevented him from embarking on Mainwaring's reconciliatory route and returning, repentant, to England.

Because he remained loyal to the Crown, and because he surrendered without incident, Mainwaring avoided charges in the High Court of Admiralty. Many other pirates, both English and foreign, did not. If successfully captured, returned to England, and convicted, these men were transported via cart to Wapping Dock where they faced a punishment decidedly apt in its framing of maritime justice. In his *Chronicles* (1586), Raphael Holinshed includes a contemporary description of the grim fate awaiting guilty parties:

Pirats and robbers by sea are condemned in the court of the admeraltie, and hanged on the shore at lowe water marke, where they are left till three tides haue ouerwashed them. Finallie, such as hauing wals and banks néere vnto the sea, and doo suffer the same to decaie (after conuenient admonition) whereby the water entereth and drowneth vp the countrie, are by a certeine ancient custome apprehended, condemned, and staked in the breach, where they remaine for euer as parcell of the foundation of the new wall that is to be made vpon them ... (1965, 313)

In popular accounts of piracy, the moments before execution provided the pirate a chance to repent; and if these accounts are to be believed, some did. But certain pirates, such as George Cusack, proved so diabolical, their cruelty lying so far outside the boundaries of accepted human conduct – even on the lawless high seas – that scaffold repentance did not figure into their narratives.

Mainwaring's good fortune of avoiding a one-way trip to Wapping Dock did not escape him, and in a gesture meant to express appreciation for his pardon he presented a manuscript to King James, 'Discourse on Pirates', in 1618. This treatise offers a particularly useful window into the world of early Stuart piracy, one not tainted by the heavy-handed moralizing or sensationalizing of the popular accounts nor the clinical detachment of the royal proclamation. When Mainwaring addresses his own foray into piracy, he adopts a prudently supplicative tone: 'I am so far from justifying my own errors, that I can scarce afford them those reasonable excuses, which might be perhaps allowable in any other man' (1920, vol. II, 9). He then notes that he fell into piracy 'not purposely but by mischance' (*ibid.*), and gives a short overview of his activities between 1613 and 1615. But he does not dwell unnecessarily on this period, and quickly shifts his attention to the suppression of piratical activity. Mainwaring claims that obtaining new recruits off the coasts of England and Ireland proved nearly effortless because 'the common sort of seamen are so generally necessitous and discontented' (14). Mainwaring's

main intention here is not to humanize the pirate, but to view men connected with the crime as rational agents; suggesting that piracy, as a result, required a rational approach to its suppression. The remainder of the treatise focuses on the tactics, proclivities, and motivations of the early Stuart pirate. Mainwaring asserts that the prevention of piracy remains more important than its suppression, and that those who neglect this aspect do so at their own peril.

Although it enjoyed a healthy circulation in manuscript, Mainwaring did not compose 'Discourse on Pirates' for a wider audience.⁸ Accordingly, its narrow ambit assures that it remains a pragmatic text: while adopting the prescriptive tenor of a royal proclamation, it was not a government document that carried legal authority; and while recounting the misadventures of a notorious pirate – Mainwaring himself – it does not succumb to the sensation or scandal of the popular accounts. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, it did not circulate in print. But Mainwaring's treatise and biography challenge the two-dimensional image of the pirate as villain or antihero. They inject nascent sociological awareness by highlighting how the crime had larger economic and societal causes: infrequently did piracy result from the questionable proclivities of a few venal seamen.

This is the political world in which the royal proclamations and popular accounts of piracy appeared, and Mainwaring's professional trajectory helps us conjure up this world. His treatise stages robbery at sea as most often a crime of opportunity committed by discontented, ill-treated, and desperate men. While Mainwaring was in no position to underscore the excitement of maritime depredation, a main feature of the popular account, his 'Discourse on Pirates' remains a useful resource for understanding the early modern crime.

3. *Proclamations and Popular Accounts: Pinnaces of Piracy*

The printing, circulation, and networks of early modern English news have attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention.⁹ Unfortunately, the material history of the printed royal proclamation has not: these official government documents, ubiquitous in the landscape of Tudor and Stuart England, have long been neglected by historians, including historians of the book. Christopher Kyle, who has recently done much work to remedy this scholarly oversight, notes that 'Proclamations must be one of the most overlooked categories of printed material in the field of early modern history' (2015, 771).¹⁰ This is unfortunate because proclamations cannot be truly understood if divorced from their physical form. The royal proclamation stretches back far before the arrival of Gutenberg's press on English shores: they appeared in incipient form during the Anglo-Saxon period.¹¹ In the thirteenth century, sheriffs had been charged with proclaiming, and this happened in two ways: '[The sheriff] caused them to be read in the county court, or he caused them to be proclaimed generally in public places' (Morris 1968, 218). During the fifteenth century proclamations began to be displayed publicly, and in 1539 this protocol became permanent through the Statute of Proclamations (31 Hen. VIII c. 8):

⁸ In the early twentieth century, Manwaring and Perrin (1920) identified nine extant manuscript copies of the treatise.

⁹ See, for example, Raymond 1996; Wiltenburg 2004 and Pettegree 2014.

¹⁰ My own thinking about royal proclamations in early modern England has been largely shaped by Kyle's scholarship, and in particular his unpublished conference paper 'Engaging the Public: The Performative Visibility of Proclamations in Early Modern England' (31 March 2017, Chicago, Illinois) and his unpublished keynote address 'Contested Politics on Papered Walls: The Visual Landscape of Early Modern England' (13 October 2018, Amherst, Massachusetts).

¹¹ See, for example, Robertson 1974, 140-153.

Furthermore be it enacted by the auctoritie of this present parliament, that ... every Sherief [must] ... cause the said proclamacions to be fixed and sett upp openly upon places convenient in every suche towne place or village, upon payne and penaltie of suche some and somes of money or imprisonment of bodye as shalbe conteyned in the saide proclamacion or proclamacions. (*Statutes of the Realm*, vol. III, 726)¹²

Proclamations continued to be issued across the sixteenth century: although estimates vary, largely because historians have not always agreed on what, exactly, constitutes a royal proclamation, Frederic Youngs estimates that a total of 446 were dispersed during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. The Stuart proclamations have attracted less attention from historians, but their regular issue continued throughout the seventeenth century, including during the Interregnum.

How did Tudor and Stuart royal proclamations appear to early modern viewers? Indeed, their appearance constitutes one of the main channels through which we can understand them: unlike books of the period, proclamations did not lend themselves to marginalia or other extant evidence of readership. In addition, they were not typically collected by private individuals or added to personal libraries.¹³ But, despite these evidentiary constraints, we do have access to the proclamations themselves; and from their physical form we can, gingerly, extrapolate the experience of reading the early modern royal document, as well as speculate about possible effects of this experience on the viewer.

The early modern period witnessed an increasing uniformity in the physical appearance of the royal proclamation. In the early Tudor period proclamations were produced on parchment and handwritten. By the reign of Elizabeth, proclamations appeared as one, two, or three folio sheets printed on a single side.¹⁴ The top contained the words 'By the King (or Queen)' centered and in a noticeably larger font than the rest of the document. They sometimes contained a title, but other times did not. The proclamation ends with 'God Save the King (or Queen)' also centered, and beneath this, we find information about the proclamation's printing. Their fonts alternate between Gothic and Roman; Gothic persisted in the printing of proclamations until the end of the Stuart period. In light of the political upheaval of Mary's reign, it should not surprise us that about half of her proclamations appeared only in manuscript: matters of great exigency precluded the use of print. By the reign of Elizabeth, however, almost all royal proclamations were printed: Youngs notes that this had become so regular 'that one local official expressed uncertainty about receiving one which was not in print' (1976, 9). The general presentation of the proclamation changed little across the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles I and II. The promulgation of proclamations also followed a set formula of 'printing, sealing, distribution, and proclamation' (18), but to the average person, only the act of proclaiming (and the proclamation's subsequent public display) had direct bearing on their experience of it.¹⁵

Tudor and Stuart proclamations addressed a wide host of social, military, legal, economic, and religious topics. In the first ten years of James I's reign, for example, he issued a proclamation

¹² For an overview of the political function of Yorkist and early Tudor proclamations in fifteenth-century England, see Doig 1998. For a study of Henrician proclamations, see Heinze 1969.

¹³ In 1550, the King's printer published an anthology of Edward VI's proclamations issued between 1547 and 1550 (*All such proclamacions, as haue been sette furthe by the Kynges Maiestie*). In 1618, London notary Humphrey Dyson produced several collections of Elizabethan proclamations. See Jackson 1947.

¹⁴ For a technical investigation of how proclamations were produced by the King's Printers in early Stuart England, see Rees and Wakely 2009, 121-124 and 140-143.

¹⁵ Kyle (2015) provides an excellent overview of the pomp that surrounded the actual proclaiming; see 774-776.

specifying what flags British ships should fly at sea (n. 64),¹⁶ another ordering Jesuits and seminarians to quit the realm (n. 66), another forbidding the production of starch (n. 86), and another prohibiting unauthorized persons from transporting mail (n. 99). Several Elizabethan proclamations occupy themselves with dress; a lengthy proclamation dated 15 June 1574 sought to enforce statutes of apparel. It states, in part, 'None shall wear spurs, swords, rapiers, daggers, skeans, woodknives, or hangers, buckles of girdles, gilt, silvered, and damasked: except knights and barons' sons, and others of higher degree or place, and gentlemen in ordinary office attendant upon the Queen's majesty's person' (Hughes and Larkin 1969, vol. II, 384). Various maritime issues are addressed in both Tudor and Stuart proclamations, including the wages of shipwrights, fraud by ship owners, shipwreck, anchorage, and fishing, among many others. Given piracy's impact on domestic and international affairs, it is not surprising to find it a frequent topic of the period's proclamations.

The royal proclamation functioned as more than a receptacle of information, however. It also represented a tangible manifestation of royal authority sent out across the realm and displayed publicly a direct line of communication between the monarch and his or her subjects. As a conduit of exchange, the proclamation required clear language, uniform appearance, and timely dissemination. These features have led Kyle to conclude that 'Viewing proclamations ... entails the recognition that effective communication and effective government were one and the same' (2015, 774). The formulaic gestalt of the proclamations established a sense of expectation on the part of the viewer, and Youngs argues that this formula helped to solidify the document's authority. One did not have to read the document to acknowledge it as a signifier of royal authority, although reading certainly represented the final link in its chain of authority; a Jacobean proclamation condemning piracy declares: '[We] strictly command all and every our Officers and loving Subjects, that immediately after the sight of this present Proclamation, they and every of them do make diligent search and inquirie in all places ... for the said persons [pirates]' (Larkin and Hughes 1973, 98-99). Additionally, because the proclamations' content was, necessarily, mediated by its form, the information within enjoyed both an inherent authenticity and gravity. Even matters that readers may have deemed personally irrelevant were elevated to a position of royal import; and all proclaimed material could ostensibly be trusted – depending in part, of course, on one's opinion of the issuing monarch.

Sir Julius Caesar, who served as judge of the High Court of Admiralty between 1584 and 1605, understood the communicatory potential of proclamations. He planned an admiralty circuit in 1591 designed to mimic the assizes of the common law courts. The circuit was prompted by Caesar's frustration at the eschewing of royal authority on the coasts, particularly in the southern and western counties: the indifferent attitude of local authorities allowed piracy to thrive, and he figured the presence of a royal official would help curb the problem. In practice, however, the circuit proved a failure and a disappointment to Caesar. Historian L.M. Hill points to several culprits, including local residents' reluctance to testify against men who provided them financial windfall; the unwillingness of local officials to submit to Caesar's demands; and the Lord Admiral's own if distant involvement in acts of privateering and piracy. After Caesar returned to London, he began to plan another circuit. As part of his preparations, he drafted a proclamation:

The first suggestion that Caesar made in terms of future circuits was that a proclamation should be made in the port towns a month before the court was scheduled to sit. The proclamation would warn

¹⁶ Here and elsewhere, numbers of Jacobean proclamations are taken from Larkin and Hughes 1973.

all parties who were to be summoned that if they did not appear they would be sought out and forced to go before the circuit judge. The sheriff was to read the proclamation in order to avoid the weak link in the chain of Admiralty authority: the local officials from water bailiffs to vice-admirals. (1971, 13)

In effect, Caesar recognized that the royal proclamation provided an effective weapon against the crime of piracy. It carried royal authority to the outskirts of the realm – those places where piracy flourished – and reasserted the force of the High Court of Admiralty.

According to Robert Steele, the first record of proclamations concerning piracy dates from the reign of Henry VI in the fifteenth century. Proclamations on the subject remained sporadic until the reign of Elizabeth I, when the diplomatic ill-effects of English piracy increased. These proclamations on piracy tend to emphasize certain aspects of the crime. In the first place, they frequently point to its exacerbation of diplomatic precariousness. Elizabeth issued a proclamation in 1602 that avers ‘all such piracies and depredations [are] crimes most hateful to her mind and scandalous to her peaceable government’; she adds that she has issued the proclamation ‘for the better continuance of amity with all other princes and states not enemies to her majesty’ (Hughes and Larkin 1969, vol. III, 238). The proclamations also point to the communal aspect of piracy; an Elizabethan proclamation of 1591, for example, commands parties who may have purchased pirated goods to report, within ten days, to the proper authorities ‘with the several prices what they paid and the names of whom the same was bought, or tokens, deciphering the person and persons as near as they can remember, and the day, time, and place where and when the same was bought, exchanged, or received’ (n. 100). Reflecting the dominant legal attitude toward piracy, the proclamations mostly ignore interpersonal violence inflicted by pirates. Legal historian D.P. O’Connell notes, ‘Because freebooters have traditionally committed depredation for acquisitive purposes, and violence against persons has been ancillary to that goal, the law has been preoccupied with the aspect of theft in piracy’ (1984, 967). Falling in line with this ethos, the proclamations emphasize economic and political, but not bodily, injury. Taken as the sum of their parts, the proclamations reveal a necessarily clinical rendering of sea marauding. But with the intent of informing rather than entertaining, they nonetheless might have piqued a reader’s interest and created a niche for more substantive or detailed information about the crime.

For the early modern reader, printed news pamphlets offered a possible occupant of this niche. These popular accounts fall under the broader genre of early modern news. Henry Ettinghausen labels this genre the ‘single event newsletters’ (2016, 261), a pan-European phenomenon that brought news of domestic and international events to the reading public.¹⁷ These single event newsletters tended to the lurid and fantastical: in his groundbreaking study of the genre, M.A. Shaaber described the range of their content as ‘the doings of the court; murders and other crimes; miracles, prodigies, and wonders; monstrous births and strange beasts; witchcraft; the plague; acts of God, such as flood and fire, and the weather; and sporting events’ (1966, 138). Clearly public palates craved the macabre. According to Tessa Watt, ‘Stories of crime were a source of gruesome entertainment and collective disapprobation’ (1991, 108); and ‘Ballads and pamphlets describing executions were numerous and immensely popular’ (109). Accounts of infamous pirates fit neatly into this genre: they involve far-off, often exotic locales; tempestuous renderings of life on the high seas; detailed accounts of the robbing of ships; and the capture and execution of loathsome

¹⁷ Strictly speaking, *A True Relation, of the Lives and Deaths of the two most Famous English Pyrates* (1639) would not fall under the heading of single event newsletters, as Purser and Clinton had been dead fifty-six years by the time of its publication. And yet it adopts the conventions of the accounts of John Ward (Barker 1609) and George Cusack (Anonymous 1674 and 1675?), which were published while their subjects were either still alive or recently executed.

criminals. Given the content of these single event newsletters, as well as their low price, scholars once assumed that they were enjoyed only among the lower classes. Watt, however, challenges this claim and argues that instead they would be more accurately conceived of as the forerunner of the modern newspaper. An early Stuart barrister could have conceivably, for instance, represented his clients at Common Pleas by day and read of the shocking crimes of Danseker and Ward by night.

Legal scholar Jonathan Gutoff has researched fictional representations of piracy from the 1680s to the twentieth century focussing on film and television. He argues that earlier depictions manifest an understanding of the relationship between piracy and maritime law, and that this understanding decreased with time; in other words, depictions of piracy moved from the legal-dramatic to the strictly dramatic.¹⁸ Gutoff's study begins in 1684 with Alexander Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America* (which itself was a translation from the Dutch: *De Americaensche Zee-Roovers* had first appeared in Amsterdam in 1678). While Gutoff attends mostly to fictional depictions, his larger point about the legal aspects of piracy can be applied to the popular accounts. Indeed, the concern with maritime justice builds a bridge between proclamation and pamphlet, and nowhere is this bridge more navigable than in the popular accounts of Irish pirate George Cusack. About ten years before *The Buccaneers of America*, the crimes, capture, and conviction of Cusack had occasioned three popular accounts infused with legal sophistication: *An Exact Narrative of the Tryals of the Pirates* (Anonymous 1675?); *News from Sea, Or, The Taking of the Cruel Pirate* (Anonymous 1674); and *The Grand Pyrate: Or, the Life and Death of Capt. George Cusack The Great Sea-Robber* (Anonymous 1676). These three accounts contain elements of the earlier pamphlets considered in the next section and function as an instructive microcosm of the popular account. These accounts imbue their retelling of Cusack's case with authority: the confection of religious, dramatic, and legal rhetoric offers the reader a multidimensional portrait of the pirate. A full sixty-six years had passed between the retellings of Ward and Danseker's exploits and the capture and death of George Cusack, but certain elements in the pamphlets on piracy remained constant throughout most of the seventeenth century.

The Grand Pyrate opens with a cursory nod to Cusack's early life: he was born in East-Meath, Ireland, to a Roman Catholic family. His parents wanted him to undertake the life of a friar, but he found 'the wildness of his youth not agreeing with a Religious Life' (Anonymous 1676, A2v). A brief stint as a private soldier in Flanders awakened in Cusack a distaste for authority and he discovered 'the severity of that Discipline not agreeing with his looser temper' (*ibid.*). At this point he placed himself in the service of several privateers. This movement from legitimate occupation to a life of crime occurs across the popular accounts, although it deviates from Mainwaring's assessment. While the latter points to ill treatment, low wages, and general discontentment as the forces that drive men to piracy, the former centers the pirate's temperament, deviant and truculent, as his impetus for thieving. The pirate himself, and not his circumstances, occasions his subsequent marauding. As a result, the popular accounts construct a cult of personality early. The reality of life at sea, with all its unpleasantries and exploitations, recedes into the background to deliver the pirate a starring role.

On a series of ensuing adventures, Cusack attacks ships and acquires prizes, and rises through the ranks of piratical hierarchy. These parts of the popular accounts teem with particulars: details of the pirates' crimes tantalize the reader while propelling the narrative forward. The growing audacity of their attacks satiates the craving for baseness. Cusack's story contains a particularly

¹⁸ Gutoff concludes that this lack of legal nuance does not hinder the entertainment value of pirate narratives and adds amusingly: 'After all, few people – even among this journal's readership – want to go to the movies, rent a video, or turn on their television and be instructed in maritime law' (2000, 648).

poignant example: the pirate and his co-conspirators mutiny the *Hopewell*, a ship bound for Virginia. After taking command of the vessel, Cusack's men ransack the crew's possessions and divide the valuables equally. As he attempts to destroy evidence of the mutiny in the ship's cabin, Cusack 'could not be perswaded to save a great large Bible that constantly lay upon the great Cabbin Table from the mercy of the Waves' (A4r). When his accomplices attempt to salvage the book, Cusack exclaims, 'You Cowards, what do you think to go to Heaven, and do such Actions as these? No, I will make you Officers in Hell under me' (A4r). With these imprecations, Cusack lifts the Bible from the table and hurls it into the sea: 'Go thou thy way Divinity, what have we to do with thee' (A4v). This transgression positions him as a maniacal agent of hell; and his symbolic gesture, a later iteration of the pirates who 'turned Turk' and renounced Christianity, magnifies Cusack's villainy to near-caricature. Richard Frohock posits that 'when Cusack casts the Bible into the sea, he doubly repudiates God's divine laws because he returns the creative, divine Word back to the original oceanic deep out of which God decreed the creation of the heavens and the earth' (2007, 267). Frohock concludes this act parallels Satan's rebellion in *Paradise Lost*.

But his shocking antics form only half of Cusack's tale. Like the other accounts of piracy, *The Grand Pyrate* tempers its sensationalism with evidentiary supplements. At the end of the first part, it prints a series of affidavits presented at Cusack's trial. These inclusions act as evidence of Cusack's misdeeds: testimony from those directly affected bolsters the credibility of the narrative. The author also includes alleged excerpts from the pirate's own journal and a letter from one Richard Wharton to George Nevil concerning Cusack's activity in the Plymouth colony. Epistolary supplements can also be found in the pamphlet on John Ward. *The Grand Pyrate* counters its lack of royal authority with these additions to the narrative: the pamphlets not only strive to tell a story, but to give readers the real truth, as it happened, not muddled by maritime metaphors or contrived cliffhangers. In addition, *The Grand Pyrate* (Anonymous 1676) closes with a reprint of the earlier *An Exact Narrative of the Tryals of the Pyrates* (Anonymous 1675?). This judicial appendage, presented with the somber gravity of legal proceedings, carries a weight akin to the printed proclamation. Both documents bear an inherent authority, one that reinforces the power of the king to maintain his peace in the face of sea marauding and depredation.

When accounting for their differences, we find the proclamations on piracy concerned with the act itself, as well as its economic and diplomatic consequences. Conversely, the popular accounts revolve around the figure of the pirate, his character, his motivations, his ultimate end. But, in spite of their incongruencies, the proclamations and popular accounts on piracy converge at several critical points: they were both printed, but they were not created as lasting objects; they both purported to convey information in an objective, unbiased fashion; and they helped inform the early modern reading public about the crime of piracy. But beyond their obvious divergence – proclamations expressed a royal directive; pamphlets told a story – certain aspects of the two mediums share a theoretical underpinning.

Broadly speaking, proclamations may be considered prescriptive and descriptive popular accounts: that is, the popular accounts depict crimes already committed, while the proclamations provide admonishments against crimes emergent on the horizon. While this framework proves useful in a cursory sense, closer inspection betrays the nuance inherent in the conveyance of piracy. The proclamations cautioning potential sea robbers almost always begin with a contextual paragraph that explains the motives for the decree. For example, a proclamation of 21 July 1561 opens:

The Queen's Majesty, hearing by report of some of the subjects of her good brother the King of Spain that, notwithstanding both the severity of justice divers times extended by her majesty against sundry pirates with pains of death, and also her often arming of certain vessels to the seas for the apprehension of such offenders [haunt] the seas for to take and seize the subjects and ships of the King of Portugal ... (Hughes and Larkin 1969, vol. II, 171)

Brief expository declarations such as this, which open many proclamations, create a descriptive narrative framework. They tell a story that necessitates the remainder of the proclamation. But at the conclusion of the tale, the shift from descriptive to prescriptive occurs: after outlining the ills of robbery at sea, the king or queen prescribes a series of remedies to address the problem. The description services the prescription by adding context to justify royal intervention.

In contrast, the prescriptive nature of the popular accounts assumes a less overt manifestation. The claim that royal proclamations prescribe some course of action to combat piracy requires no additional justification, but the instructive elements of the popular account prove more elusive. In the first place, the readers of the popular accounts were most likely not cavorting aboard pirate ships on the high seas, but rather seeking information about current events or respite from a mundane existence. Thus, these readers sought descriptions of piracy and its subsequent punishment, not legal arguments against embarking on a life of sea marauding. The popular accounts' concern with justice signals to the reader a moral exhortation. J.A. Sharpe has analyzed the popularity of both public executions and stories of gallows repentance during the early modern period, noting that 'gallows literature illustrates the way in which the civil and religious authorities designed the execution spectacle to articulate a particular set of values, inculcate a certain behavioral model and bolster a social order perceived as threatened' (1985, 148). Of the popular accounts I consider, the scene of the pirate's execution is sometimes factitious (as in the case of Ward) and sometimes deferred to a time outside the narrative scope (as in the case of Cusack). Nevertheless, these accounts remain interested in conveying the consequences of the crime to their readers. The positioning of the pirate outside accepted social mores serves as a warning to the pamphlets' audience to remain within a strict moral code. It prescribes, covertly, an appropriate way of behaving couched in intrigue and adventure. And sometimes the prescription is not so covert, as in the account of Clinton and Purser.

The proclamations and popular accounts complement each other even as they involve an inherent tension. To the early modern reading public seeking information about the crime of piracy, the cases of John Ward, Zymen Danseker, Clinton Atkinson, and Thomas Walton aptly demonstrate these complementary tensions.

4. Danseker and Ward, and Clinton and Purser: Two Piratical Case Studies

On 8 January 1609, James issued a lengthy proclamation against pirates. On its face it was rather formulaic: the king informed his subjects that he had been notified of 'manifolde complaints' regarding the 'many depredations and Piracies committed by lewd and ill-disposed persons, accustomed and habituated to spoile and rapine' (Larkin and Hughes 1973, 203). The proclamation continues in the anticipated fashion, explicating the diplomatic injury caused by piracy, reminding subjects of the punishment that awaits offending parties, and summarizing the preventive steps undertaken to thwart future transgressions. But this proclamation distances itself from the conventional formula in its two final paragraphs. It specifically mentions Captain John Ward and his accomplices, notorious pirates who were harassing ships in the Straits of Gibraltar, and provides a recounting of their nautical sins which begins: 'And whereas divers

great and enormous spoyles and Piracies have bene heretofore committed within the Straits of Gibraltar and other places by Captaine John Ward and his adherents, and other English pirates' (205). The inclusion of Ward's name and deeds speaks to the notoriety he enjoyed during his lifetime – Mainwaring also mentions Ward in his treatise – and this detail makes the proclamation a particularly interesting one for discussions of early Stuart piracy.

But the story of Ward does not end here. The year 1609 witnessed three separate popular accounts of Ward's crimes: Andrew Barker's *A true and certaine report* (1609), *Ward and Danseker, Two notorious Pyrates* (Nixon 1609b), and *Newes from Sea* (Nixon 1609a).¹⁹ The first of these, a purported accurate account, takes cathartic license: Barker incorporates details of the pirates' execution. His reporting amounts to fake news, however, as Larkin and Hughes note that Ward 'was arrested and, with others, indicted for piracy against Venetian ships in 1607 and 1608' and 'although 19 persons were executed for piracy at Wapping on 22 Dec 1609, Ward was not one of them' (1973, 205, n. 2). The fiction of Ward's execution persisted in Robert Daborne's play (1612).²⁰ (In point of fact, Ward was living an opulent life in Tunis in 1612.) These popular accounts act as a supplement to the proclamation of 8 January. They endow readers with the lurid details absent in the proclamation. For at least a percentage of readers, those who had read (or heard) the 8 January proclamation, the engagement with the pamphlets would have been mediated by this experience. The following case study speculates on some possible effects of this mediation.

The first account about Ward, *Newes from Sea, Of two notorious Pyrats* (Nixon 1609a), was probably written by Anthony Nixon (although published anonymously). Its popularity occasioned a second edition later that year. Historian Greg Bak observes that the second edition lent 'even greater prominence to Ward's name in the title: *Ward and Danseker, Two notorious Pyrates*' (2010, 172). This edition shares most of its content with *Newes from Sea*, excepting some prefatory material; additionally, the second edition contains slight variations in the placement of certain woodcuts. Andrew Barker also cashed in on Ward's burgeoning infamy: his *A true and certaine report* (Barker 1609) offers the most exhaustive contemporary account of the two pirates. For this case study I have chosen to concentrate on Nixon's *Ward and Danseker, Two notorious Pyrates* (Nixon 1609b; henceforth *Two Notorious Pyrates*).

Two notorious Pyrates presents its story in two parts. In the first, a brief biographical sketch informs the reader of Ward's voyage to piracy. 'This Ward', the author tells us, 'as base in Birth as bad condition, in the last, yeare of her late Maiesties raigne gave the first onset to his wicked intendements: his parentage was but meane, his estate lowe, and his hope lesse' (Nixon 1609b, A2r). While a fisherman working in Kent, Ward's 'pride at last would be confinde to no limits, nor any thing would serve him but the wide Ocean to walke in' (A2r). Like Cusack, Ward's turn to maritime crime stems from his moral shortcomings. On the wide ocean, Ward engages in various pillages and plunders, enriching himself, and acclimating himself to the life of the pirate; he eventually makes acquaintance with Dutch privateer Zymen Danseker. Ward's interiority is conveyed in rich, evocative language: 'his heart was on fire' (A2v), 'the edge of his courage was cleane taken away', 'his march was stil under the maske of vanity, and folly attended upon all his actions' (A3r). When his ship encounters a tempest in the Gulf of Venice, 'his Argosey was filled with waves, her tacklings, sails, and Anchors lost and the violent storme so dashed her bulks and brused her bottom, as she was made altogether unfit, and unable for resistance, and so was sunke, and cast away' (A4v). Danseker and Ward part ways, and Ward's existence becomes

¹⁹ A high-quality facsimile of *Newes from Sea* appears in Baer 2007.

²⁰ A critical edition of *A Christian Turned Turk* appears in Vitkus 2000, 148-239. Recent scholarly treatments of the play include Degenhardt 2010 and Vanwagoner 2019.

increasingly stately. The final chapter of the pamphlet's first part hints at Ward's opulent life in Tunis: twelve of his retinue guard him, 'alwaies standing at his cabin dore' (B3v). By this final chapter, Ward's depravity has come to destroy him much like the barnacles encrusting the hulls of his misappropriated galleons.

The pamphlet's second part diverges sharply from the adventure, lavishness, and escapism of the first. It prints a letter sent from the masters of the *Charity* and the *Pearl*, two ships taken by Ward on 6 April 1609. The letter narrates the loss to the ships' merchant owners in London; it is not unlike the letter printed in *The Grand Pyrate* (Anonymous 1676). While both parts of Danseker and Ward's story presuppose accuracy in their retelling, the inclusion of this letter adds another layer of authenticity: it supplies a first-hand account. Even though 'English authorities maintained decidedly tight regulatory control whenever possible of the domestic news market' (Barker 2014, 167), news pamphlets did not enjoy the authority of the royal proclamation, and their content had to authenticate itself more robustly. What better route to legitimacy than a firsthand account? The letter's inclusion completes the multidimensional depiction of its subject: *Two notorious Pyrates* pulls the reader in, first with the title – tales of notorious pirates seem worthy of perusal – and then with woodcuts and an exhilarating narrative. After the reader has passed through these bibliographic layers, they reach the letter of the masters: on one hand more subdued, perhaps less engaging than the others; on the other pragmatic, like James's proclamation, detailing the real economic fallout of piracy.

Two notorious Pyrates includes woodcuts that further substantiate its claims. This employment of illustration finds no parallel in the printed royal proclamations and thus offers a fruitful site of analysis for popular depictions of piracy.²¹ The title page of *Two notorious Pyrates* depicts two galleons facing each other: the one on the left flies the flag of England; the one on the right, a flag of an upward-facing crescent, a clear symbol of Barbary pirates. The ship on the right, in addition, shows two bodies hanging from the foreyard. On deck two men – presumably Ward and Danseker – are depicted in garb that includes the crescent on the ship's flag, a possible visual cue that the two men have 'turned Turk' and that Ward has committed treason. In the earlier *Newes from Sea* (which includes the same woodcut on its title page), the author explains the image to the reader: 'To content thee, I have here in (white & black inckle) hung him out to thee at Sea, who could better have wished to have seene him hang'd to death (in hemp) a shore' (Nixon 1609a, A4r). Because *Two notorious Pyrates* lacks this prefatory material, the woodcut produces narrative destabilization: a viewer would probably notice the two hanging men before the men on deck and may have initially identified them as Ward and Danseker. This would create an early sense of catharsis, since the 'Two notorious Pyrates' of the title have met justice. But closer inspection would reveal Ward and Danseker below, very much alive, and responsible for both the capture of the English vessel and the execution of two of its crew. Given its ambiguity, the woodcut portends the pamphlet's sophistication. Unlike the straightforward information about Ward contained in James' proclamation, *Two notorious Pyrates* will stage narrative tension and in turn will provide entertainment and diversion. Additionally, the depiction of the hanging men emphasizes Ward and Danseker's infliction of bodily harm, an aspect of piracy not emphasized in the proclamations. *Two notorious Pyrates* opens with a visual reminder of the pirates' interpersonal violence, adding human interest to its framing of the crime.

²¹ One early Stuart proclamation issued in 1605, 'A note of the Head-lands of England', contained an illustration, a map of England that delimited these headlands. But the categorization of this proclamation as a royal proclamation remains dubious: while it is included in Steele's bibliography, it is not included in Larkin and Hughes' anthology of early Stuart proclamations.

The pamphlet's additional woodcuts add to the authority of its account by providing visual evidence to supplement the pirates' tale. On A1v, we find two more woodcuts: the top shows 'Wards Skiffe when he was a Fisherman'; immediately below is shown 'The charity of London, of M. Megs twice taken'. The juxtaposition of the two vessels is striking: Ward's fishing boat, barely large enough to contain him and his partner, floats above an impressive galleon. Before the reader can engage the text itself, they are confronted with Ward's narrative via woodcut. Like the supplemental material found after Ward's narrative, these prefatory woodcuts further cement the pamphlet's credibility. They show the reader real things – Ward's skiff, Megs's galleon – to enhance not only its mission to amuse, but also to establish the account's reliability. *Two notorious Pyrates* closes with a list of ships taken by Danseker and Ward or their confederates; on the final page, without text, we see the image of a lone sailing vessel bearing the English flag. Ostensibly, this galleon was among those listed on the preceding page. However, beyond this speculation, the stately ship gliding undeterred through placid waters reinforces the burgeoning state of English naval dominance. In their final prescriptive act, the proclamations assert royal authority: no matter what maritime iniquity has occurred, the state holds the power to set things right. *Two notorious Pyrates'* concluding English galleon produces a similar effect: despite the transgressions of these two notorious pirates, English shipping and commerce will endure.

The crimes of Clinton Atkinson and Thomas Walton (known more commonly as Clinton and Purser) occurred about thirty years before those of Danseker and Ward, but a corresponding popular account did not appear until 1639.²² In the interim, Thomas Heywood's play *Fortune by Land and Sea* (1607-1609) dramatized the story of the pirates, and Heywood likely wrote the 1639 pamphlet *A True Relation, of the Lives and Deaths of the two most Famous English Pyrats* (Heywood 1639). Unlike *Two notorious Pyrates*, *A True Relation* opens with an overtly moralizing tone. The first chapter foregrounds the power of justice: 'Justice is a vertue that giveth no man any or the least priviledge to defraude another, of which he may call his owne' (A3r) and 'Juditiall is that which properly belongeth to the Bench, & is grounded upon Statutes & Lawes; instituted and made for the benefit and profit of the Common-weale, to the depression of vice, and the incouragement of vertue' (A3v). The second chapter does not abandon this didactic rhetoric and explicates why laws are made: they, the author assures us, impel one 'to live honestly, to hurt no man willingly; to render every man his owne carefully, and to extort from no man forcibly' (A3v-A4r). In the third chapter, the focus shifts to the opprobrium that results from moral depravity, an opprobrium that follows one's death. This observation serves as an appropriate prelude to Chapter 4, which offers a brief history of piracy from antiquity until the seventeenth century: marauders considered include Andrew Barton, a Scottish pirate of the early Tudor period (and the subject of a 1630 ballad, *A true relation of the life and death of Sir Andrew Barton*). Purser and Clinton finally tumble into this moral, legal, and historical farrago in Chapter 5.

The story of these Elizabethan pirates is a familiar one. After a brief nod to Danseker and Ward, we learn of Clinton and Purser's growing acquaintance, facilitated in part because they are both 'of haughty and ambitious spirits' (A8v). The narrative settles into the standard fare here; telling of the duo's nautical pillage and plunder, expanding audacity, and tempestuous

²² In the weeks following their 1583 execution, three pamphlets circulated that purported to tell of Clinton and Purser's gallows repentance. I have chosen not to include them in the present analysis, however: the later account of 1639 focuses on the pirates' crimes, not their conversion.

tribulations. The second part of *A True Relation* opens with the legal fallout of Purser and Clinton's misdeeds. Elizabeth, upon hearing complaints that the pair have caused the loss of many ships, dispatches a Vice Admiral to locate the pirates and offer them the Queen's pardon. Upon learning of the potential pardon, Purser and Clinton, along with their most trusted men, retire to their private cabin to deliberate. They ultimately reject the pardon, not because they do not appreciate Elizabeth's extension of grace, but rather because they fear the High Court of Admiralty: '[But] there was another feare and doubt to bee made, namely of the strict Court of the Admiralty, which seldome or never had any mercy of any who had transgressed in that nature' (B7v-B8r). Driven by this fear, the two men reject the pardon; in return, the Queen's council 'have present order that Proclamation should bee made through the kingdome [that] they should thenceforth bee held no better than enemies unto the State, and meere rebels and Traytors to their Queene and Country' (B8v). The scenario leads to a comic interlude in an otherwise solemn pamphlet, a 'pleasant accident', the author informs us, that 'I am loath to overpass, in the executing of these publications' (*ibid.*). By way of this pleasant accident, the reader encounters a royal proclamation on piracy.

After Elizabeth's condemnation, a pursuivant is dispatched into the realm to proclaim Clinton and Purser traitors.²³ Inclement weather causes him to catch a cold and succumb to laryngitis such 'that hee could bee scarcely heard to speake twice his lengthes distant from him' (B8^r), and he finds himself unable to convey the royal missive. He enlists a country fellow to aid him, and the two set out on market day in a coastal town to fulfill the Queen's directive. All appears well until the moment of proclaiming, when the Pursuivant reads the proclamation to the Country Fellow, who repeats it inaccurately. 'Purser and Clinton', the Pursuivant whispers; 'Who hath lost their Purses at the Clinke' (C1v), the Country Fellow repeats. The Pursuivant, understandably, grows vexed, but forges ahead: 'Who have lately robb'd divers of our ships' becomes 'Who have lately rob'd diverse shivers of our Chippes' (C1v) and 'flung the chiefest Merchants over board' becomes 'And flung the Merchants Cheeses over board' (C2r). After several similar errors, the Pursuivant exclaims, 'O intollerable', to which the Country Fellow dutifully replies: 'O intollerable' (C2v) In its furnishing of respite from the more serious details of Purser and Clinton, the episode takes advantage of readers' acquaintance with the papered posts of every English town.

Both text and image add authenticity to the scene's portrayal of the royal proclamation. The dialogue of the Pursuivant and the Country Fellow alternates between Gothic and Roman typefaces. On the surface, this allows the reader to easily distinguish between the two men's lines, an especially useful typographical aid given the episode's general befuddlement. But on a more abstract level, the oscillation mimics the appearance of the Stuart proclamation. As noted above, proclamations in the first decades of the seventeenth century alternated between Roman and Gothic typefaces. But of the extant proclamations from the 1630s, every one was printed in Gothic. It follows that readers of *A True Relation* would have associated Gothic font with the printed text on royal proclamations. In this scene, the lines of the Pursuivant appear in Gothic font; the Country Fellow's corresponding malaprops are printed in Roman. Consequently, the text preserves Gothic as the font of royal authority. Had the entire episode been printed in Gothic – like the rest of the pamphlet – then it would not have had this effect on the reader. It is the alternation of font type that reinforces the royal gravity of the proclamation condemning

²³ Heywood and Rowley's play *Fortune By Land and Sea* (1655) includes a corresponding scene (3.4). In the play, the Country Fellow has been replaced by a clown, see Doh 1980, 215-219.

Clinton and Purser: Roman signifies a dilution of the authority residing in the Gothic. The pamphlet thus demonstrates a clear acknowledgment of its readers' habitual encounters with royal proclamations.

A corresponding woodcut supplements the scene. In it, the two men are shown standing atop a horse-drawn cart. The Pursuivant is positioned behind the Country Fellow, who holds the proclamation; the Country Fellow, hat held reverently over his chest, solemnly repeats the royal decree. At the bottom and barely present in the frame stand eight subjects viewing the spectacle. The proclamation itself bears the primitive approximation of the royal seal. This small detail conveys to the viewer that the document in the Pursuivant's hand is, indeed, a royal proclamation, one imprinted with the stamp of legitimacy. This clever interplay between text and image is reinforced by the reduplication of the woodcut: it occurs in succession (C1r and C2r) so that the reader cannot encounter the text of the Queen's proclamation without viewing, if only in the periphery, this corresponding image. Consequently, the subtle presence of royal authority in an otherwise humorous interlude adds a layer of gravity to Clinton and Purser's story. And although Charles issued no known proclamations addressing piracy, proclamations themselves were still publicly displayed memorials of the King's sovereignty. The episode of the Pursuivant and the Country Fellow positions the proclamation as an unbroken line of royal authority stretching back to Elizabeth; and like the accounts of Danseker and Ward thirty years prior, it demonstrates that piracy represented a tangible thread that linked the crown's proclamatory authority with more popular forms of entertainment.

5. Conclusion

Both proclamations and popular accounts transported the ocean to the cities, churches, bookstalls, town crosses, and marketplaces of early modern England. They told of crimes that occurred beyond British territorial waters and often in watery expanses far afield: the Cantabrian Sea; the Mediterranean; the Straits of Gibraltar. The ocean represented a dangerous space, one teeming with tempests, sea monsters, the threat of shipwreck, and, of course, sea robbers poised for the attack. The vastness and inexhaustibility of the ocean, which featured prominently in Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius' defense of open seas, rendered it frightening, unknowable, 'incomprehensible, no less than the air' (Grotius 2004, 34). Even maps of the early modern period depict the mythological Neptune, poised as ruler of the seas, surrounded by fearsome creatures of the deep.

It was on this perilous plain that the early modern pirate committed his transgressions, and accounts of his crime remind us that even he remained at the mercy of a mercurial sea. The proclamations and popular accounts thus abound with an inherent drama, one that impels the viewer or reader to forge ahead until the end of the document, where justice returns, and order prevails. But as John Smith had reminded young mariners, a *chaser* never sailed too far behind, and the next pamphlet or royal proclamation on piracy lay just beyond the horizon. Throughout the early modern period, these mediums remained complementary pinnacles for the conveyance of information about maritime crime.

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