Article

Pirate Assemblage

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Abstract: This essay "Pirate Assemblage" explores two related questions. The first is how we read and appreciate the literary form of pirate literature such as Alexander Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (1678) and Charles Johnson's two-volume *General History of the Pyrates* (volume one 1724, volume two 1728). The second is what the answer to that first question suggests for how we regard pirate literature in relation to more canonical eighteenth-century literature and how this relation might revise our reading of that literature. My answer to the first question explores the concept of "assemblage" for reading and appreciating pirate literature, and my answer to the second question that eighteenth-century literature read in relation to this "pirate assemblage" suggests new ways of reading canonical texts such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) that were written soon after the first volume of *The General History of Pyrates*. In doing so, my essay responds to the large body of scholarly literature on pirates that has focused on the question of identity—race, class, gender, and sexuality—and the question of whether or not such literature was transgressive. In my essay, by closely reading the unique literary form of pirate literature and utilizing Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of "assemblage" and "minor literature," I argue that pirate literature, rather than representing transgressive identities, instead progressively produces new economic and social connections that deterritorializes the economy, literary form, and language.

Keywords: pirate; privateer; eighteenth-century literature; transatlantic; assemblage; minor literature; Jonathan Swift; John Gay; Exquemelin; Charles Johnson; *General History of the Pyrates*

"The Unity Is Submarine"—Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1974, p. 64)

This essay explores two related questions. The first is how we read and appreciate the literary form of pirate literature such as Alexander Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America* (first published in 1678) and Charles Johnson's two-volume *General History of the Pyrates* (volume one published in 1724, volume two in 1728). The second is what the answer to that first question suggests for how we regard pirate literature in relation to more canonical eighteenth-century literature and how this relation might revise our reading of that literature. My answer to the first question explores the concept of "assemblage" for reading and appreciating pirate literature, and my answer to the second question that eighteenth-century literature read in relation to this "pirate assemblage" suggests new ways of reading canonical texts such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) that were written soon after the first volume of *The General History of Pyrates*. Other prominent scholars of pirate literature, such as Richard Frohock, have used the term "assemblage" to describe pirate literature as a mixture of writing genres but have not focused their analysis on the complex theoretical implications of that concept (Frohock 2012, pp. 2, 28, 156; Campbell 2011, p. 12). Moreover, *The General History of Pyrates* is one of the most often quoted texts in historical and literary scholarship on eighteenth-century piracy and its troubled relationship to state-sponsored privateering—not to mention, a source text for popular culture such as Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies. But, with the exception of one article by Richard Frohock, the peculiar literary form of the whole book (taken in its entirety rather than in parts) has not been analyzed (Frohock 2015).

An assemblage of different narratives, the *General History* includes some of the most iconic pirate stories such as the cross-dressing female pirates Anne Bonney and Mary Read

and a detailed account of the pirate "articles of confederation" (what Disney movies call the "pirates code") composed by Captain Bartholomew Roberts and others. In addition to the articles of confederation, also interwoven into to the *General History* are reproductions of trial documents alongside accounts of pirates performatively parodying the court, reproductions of letters from pirates and from governors, official treaties and warrants, natural histories of various exotic locations, and analysis of economic systems and the effects of new technologies. As such, the text does not merely represent other texts, historical figures, and cultural practices, but self-consciously links to them. Its second volume includes responses to the first volume, especially those that necessitate a significant revision of the narratives—most notably, debates about whether or not the governor of North Carolina had close financial ties to the notorious pirate Black-Beard. The first chapter of the second volume about a fictional Captain Misson appears to be a utopian rewriting of the first chapter of the first volume about the real Captain Avery. The book circulated in several revised editions within a complex print culture of newspaper accounts, religious sermons, and ballads that altogether formed a discourse that blended fact with fantasy to produce an image of piracy in response to the changing demands of colonial states and a mercantile empire. Hence, the question implied, but not yet comprehensively answered, by the observation that the generic form of the eighteenth-century pirate narrative is an "assemblage" is the question of how to read—and appreciate—such a strange, overflowing, and contumacious assemblage.

My argument is that thinking of pirate texts as an assemblage can productively move us through and beyond the question of identity that leads much of the scholarly conversation about the early eighteenth-century pirate narratives. For example, one of the most popular topics are the cross-dressing women who masqueraded as pirates and in doing so subverted hegemonic gender identities; scholars such as Jo Stanley and Erin Mackie have examined and debated whether or not such figures transgress the limits of social convention or function as a gendered *topos* for configuring national identity (Stanley 1995; Turley 1997/1998; Paravisini-Gebert 2001; Munro 2007; Mackie 2009; O'Driscoll 2012). Similarly, focusing on race and class, Christopher Hill, Marcus Rediker, and Peter Linebaugh have famously argued for the working-class economic motives of piracy and the richly cosmopolitan forms of political solidarity that transgress national, ethnic, racial, and gender divisions (Hill 1986; Rediker 1987; Linebaugh and Rediker 2001; Rediker 2004). Arguing against such characterizations of the politically transgressive and liberatory potential of piracy, David Armitage and others have pointed to the scarcity of such truly politically transformative moments within the much more pervasive context of violence, exploitation, racism, and rape (Armitage 2001; Frohock 2014). Also contesting Rediker and Linebaugh, Mark G. Hanna has analyzed the historical and political circumstances surrounding shifts in identity from state-sponsored "privateers" to outlaw "pirates" when privateers no longer served the interests of mercantile empires, most famously during the so-called Golden Age of Piracy after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 (Hanna 2015). Attempting to resolve the debate, Victoria Barnette-Woods has recently pointed out that such scholarly arguments may depend on which pirate story one is reading (even within the same book such as the *General History of Pyrates*), since some stories lend themselves to the characterization of privateers as chauvinistic agents of empire, while other stories might lend themselves to a reading of pirates as racially mixed protagonists of counter culture (Barnette-Woods 2021). Some of this debate slides problematically between what was typical (i.e., the historically generalized aggregate of pirate practices) and what was inspirational (i.e., the exceptional, the imaginary, and the connective); however, Peter Reed's analysis of the "theatrical under-classes" productively reveals the interconnections between actual criminals (their presence) and literary criminality (their representation) in which the bourgeois fantasy of charismatically transgressive "rogue performances" does not contain the multiplicity of social and political effects of literary events (Reed 2009).

Deconstructing such binary oppositions as privateer-pirate, male-female, white-black, and capitalist-laborer, as well as representation-presence, the scholarly interest has focused

on the transgressive potential for pirate literature to destabilize those binaries, reveal ideological and structural contradictions within hegemonic culture, and offer the reader a trope for imaginatively critiquing the socially constructed nature of such identities within a mercantile economy. For instance, observing the contradiction between how pirates are feared and hated at the same time they are celebrated and romanticized, Hans Turley has coined the term "piratical subject" to indicate the "merging of the legally defined pirate—*hostis human generis* or *homo economicus*—and the culturally revered pirate, a hyper masculine, transgressive, desiring subject" (Turley 1999, p. 7). The operative concept in so many of these scholarly conversations is *transgression*, and, as many of the scholars have noted, the literary representations of such transgressions may reinscribe the very binaries that they feign to transgress. Although Turley is right to point to the dialectic of opposing attitudes towards pirates that are often simultaneously present within the same text, the academic focus on the binaries may obscure other points of connection and movement.

Responding to the debate about whether or not pirates were politically and culturally "transgressive," and working through the problematic binaries listed above, my own argument foregrounds how a pirate assemblage produces a "progression" of connections that proliferates along a segmented series of cultural sites and that deterritorializes identity by connecting the subject to other productive, as well as destructive, potentialities. Therefore, what I am suggesting is a radically different way of reading pirate narratives that deterritorializes the text from both its ideological function (e.g., gender identity, national identity, etc.) and its author function (e.g., the coherence of the text's authority and its author's argument.) My aim for this essay is to theorize and expand upon the concept "assemblage" to observe how the narrative form of pirate literature produces connections to a multiplicity of geographic locations, political subject positions, objects of desire, economic networks, and lines of flight. In Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "minor literature" that they develop through a reading of Franz Kafka, their chapter titled "What is an Assemblage?" is part of a broader argument that "the minor no longer designates the specific literatures [literature by minorities] but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature".[1] Already well-studied is how "minor" literature such as pirate literature, travel narratives, and secret histories impacted the transformation of narrative form, notably two of the most canonical examples of "major" literature, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), that were directly inspired by pirate stories, but such literary periodizations and historicizations of the novel do not reveal the richness of pirate literature's peculiar form in relation to the fraught political economies that such form purports to address (McKeon 2002; Cohen 1993). Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of "assemblage" (an imperfect translation of *agencement* from the French, whose meaning is somewhat similar to "arrangement" in English) raises questions not only about the generic nature of the text but also its narratological and social relations to technology, economy, leisure, and imagination—its attachments to and detachments from a social and material world. In other words, we can think of a pirate assemblage as the progressive movement from "territorialized" social structures through deterritorialization and reterritorialization. As Alexander Weheliye has recently characterized Deleuze and Guattari theory of assemblage in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, "assemblages are inherently productive, entering into polyvalent becomings to produce and give expression to previously nonexistent realities, thoughts, bodies, affects, spaces, actions, ideas, and so on" (Weheliye 2014, p. 46).

The narrative form of such deterritorialization of meaning is, perhaps, indicated by the author of *The General History of Pyrates* in his preface where he explains how one should read the book: "If there are some Incidents and Turns in their Stories, which may give them a little the Air of a Novel, they are not invented or contrived for that Purpose, it is a Kind of Reading this Author is but little acquainted with, but as he himself was exceedingly diverted with them, when they were related to him, he thought they might have the same Effect upon the Reader".[2] The key feature of a pirate narrative, as a "narrative" (in contrast to other pirate texts such as trial documents, confessionals, broadsides, and ballads) is the

series of narrow escapes, daring attacks, absurd foibles, and ironic plot turns that cannot be subsumed to a moral argument about the identity of pirates. Rather, the structure of the pirate narrative serves—but is not reducible to—the explicit argument of the author that, "Privateers in Time of War are a Nursery for Pyrates against a Peace" (p. 4). The book's recommended policy for dealing with piracy is an economic one that criticizes the moral argument as irrelevant and instead focuses on the issue of labor, showing how war increases the supply of sailors who then find themselves unemployed when the war is over. This calculus of supply and demand anticipates Adam Smith's analysis of labor value in the *Wealth of Nations* by a half-century. In other words, "when an honest Livelihood is not easily had, they run into one so like their own" (p. 4). Although one could read this passage about how legal activity can "run into" illegal activity as a savvy deconstruction of the pirate-privateer binary (which how it is typically read), I suggest that also present in the text is the notion that piracy is just one segment on a series of economic relations in which one activity might "run into" another—each segment of economic activity connected along a series of relations.

The plot of pirate stories maps out this series of economic relations, showing how legal enterprises might depend on illegal ones or how complex relations of debt and insurance underpin or motivate decision-making about a ship's governance. Obviously important to the plot and the building of suspense for the reader (i.e., the invention of "novelty" as the author of the *General History* puts it) is the indeterminacy of whether the pirate will escape, die, or be tried and hung, but even more important than the outcome is the attempt (since often the outcome is known already, as the story is based on a trial already well publicized.) The stories in the *General History* are full of ironic reversals of fortune such as when the men who fought against the pirate Blackbeard end up becoming pirates themselves (p. 85), or when pirates who were once friends become enemies (p. 137), or when two groups of pirates accidentally begin fighting each other because of mistaken identity (p. 299). The most exemplary pirate in the book and the pirate that perhaps most illustrates the author's own hypothesis about piracy and pirate narratives is Captain Bartholomew Roberts, whose chapter is three times longer than any other and includes authentic documentation of the trial of his crew. For the *General History*, Roberts is the paradigmatic figure. Supporting the author's thesis about the structure of pirate narratives and the desire for alterity, Roberts claims he was drawn to piracy out of a "Love of Novelty and Change" (p. 244). Likewise, supporting the author's hypothesis about the economics of piracy, Roberts claims, "in an honest Service . . . there is thin Commons, low Wages, and hard Labour; in this [piracy], Plenty and Satiety, Pleasure and Ease, Liberty and Power; and who would not balance Creditor on this Side, when all the Hazard that is run for it, at worst, is only a sower Look or two at choaking" (p. 244). Roberts's argument explicitly links the idea of novelty with a political overturning of an unfair condition. The ubiquitous refrain in all of these stories is one of cosmic irony: how the tables have turned! Important to note is that such turning of tables does not consistently follow a moral design that condemns or vindicates the pirate. Rather, precisely because the novelty of the narrative turns on how the action is performed or pulled off, rather than on the identity of the actor or the politics of the action, these turns serve as connectors to a series of many possible (and exciting) relations along a complex economic circuit.

For example, we may revisit the iconic story of the two cross-dressing pirates Mary Read and Anne Bonny, which did more to make *The General History of Pyrates* a commercial success than any of the other stories in it, both in the eighteenth century and still today. Since the trial in 1720 in which the two notorious women were condemned for piracy was well publicized, it subsequently inspired other retellings and ballads. It is only natural that the scholarly focus has been on the destabilization of gender norms since that is what the story in the *General History* focuses on—the main thrust of the narrative being how a woman became a pirate and how her gender is (repeatedly and thus recursively) discovered. Anne Bonney was the daughter of an illegitimate union who willfully turned against traditions and expectations of chastity to run away from home with a sailor to the Bahamas and,

soon after arriving there, left him for the notorious pirate Captain "Calico Jack" Rackam. She became the most daring and aggressive member of Rackam's pirate crew. In contrast, her friend Mary Read is presented as the victim of circumstance, whose mother dressed her like a boy from birth in order to hide her own infidelity from her mother-in-law by pretending that her daughter from an illicit affair was her legitimate son, whose death at a very young age she kept secret. Mary Read's history as a soldier, sailor, and then finally pirate is essentially a series of events where she reveals her true identity to different men after falling in love with them, usually by "shewing her Breasts, which were very white" (p. 157). Her romantic character and devotion to love leads her to perform acts of chivalry, most famously one instance when she took on the male role in order to protect one of her lovers by successfully fighting a dual with another pirate. Scholarly analysis typically observes how the pair of women form a bad girl-good girl duality—the violent Bonney who abandons one man for another is contrasted with the tragic-yet-courageous Read whose lovers die sad, untimely deaths. Noting the inherent instability of gender that is signified by that duality and discerning a homology between anxieties about gender identity and national identity, Lizbeth Parvisini-Gerbert has argued that the "shifting of the boundaries between their male activities and female essences . . . [were] ideal canvasses on which to deploy the constant shifting of national and geographic boundaries that typify the Caribbean history in the early decades of the eighteenth century" (Paravisini-Gebert 2001, p. 60). Similarly, historian Marcus Rediker has emphasized how cross-dressing was a means of economic opportunity for women in an otherwise oppressive social context (Rediker 2004, pp. 103–6). However, taking the opposite view, other scholars such as Sally O'Driscoll have examined the narrative's attention to their bodies and the ways in which their ambiguous gender identity makes them available to men, and therefore, O'Driscoll argues, the narrative conservatively contains and displaces any transgression of gender norms (O'Driscoll 2012, p. 360).

Reconsidering this scholarly debate about whether this version of their story is transgressive or conservative of hegemonic gender identities (as well as national identities), my suggestion is that we instead look to how plot of the story progressively leads the reader through a series of surprising turns, connections, and disconnections. After all, the version of Mary Read and Anne Bonney's life stories in *The General History of Pyrates* is not a historically accurate account of their lives, but rather a highly embellished account that in some instances resembles popular theater. The narrator in fact alerts us to the account's literariness and its many turns—both its turns of plot and its turns of phrase—in its introduction to the chapter:

> Now we are to begin a History full of surprising Turns and Adventures; I mean, that of *Mary Read* and *Anne Bonny*, alias Bonn, which were the true Names of these two Pyrates; the odd Incidents of their rambling Lives are such that some may be tempted to think the whole Story no better than a Novel or Romance: but since it is supported by many thousand witnesses . . . the Truth of it can be no more contested than that there were such Men in the World . . . (p. 153)

Just as the narrator promised in the introduction to the entire book, the narrative suspense is not about *whether* their identity will be revealed or *whether* their identity is good or bad but rather *how* it will be revealed—the "turns" in the narrative—as Mary Read always "found a Way of letting [the man] discover her Sex without appearing that it was done by design" (p. 154). Hence, the narrative leads the reader through various twists and turns that unravel a complex set of social relations.

For example, completely unremarked upon in the scholarly literature is the rather surprising fact that more than three fourths of the story about Bonny is actually not about her at all, but rather about her mother, a serving maid who had an affair with her master. And the story of her mother is focuses on the comical story of how three silver spoons eventually revealed the infidelity of the husband. The story begins when the town's tanner, who is courting a serving maid, decides to steal the spoons. She demands that he give them back, but he instead hides them in her bed. When her mistress returns from a long

trip, she discovers the spoons in the maid's bed and, wondering why the maid would not have noticed spoons there, concludes that the maid has been sleeping elsewhere and begins to suspect that the maid is having an affair with her husband. The mistress decides to sleep in the maid's bed that night, and when the husband comes home and sneaks into the maid's room to have sex with her, an amusing instance of dramatic irony is the result—he unknowingly in the dark has sex with his own wife, leading to an unexpected pregnancy. To get her revenge, the mistress accuses the maid of stealing the spoons. Shortly after the maid is imprisoned, she gives birth to Anne Bonney. Eventually, after several more twists and turns in the plot, her master decides to leave his wife, who has since had an affair of her own, and live with his serving maid, hence becoming a father to Anne until she is old enough to run away and become a pirate. After all of this elaborate build up, the account of Bonney's activity as a pirate is summarized in one all-too-brief page.

In one sense, the story is a sexual farce that displaces Bonney's life as a pirate onto a farcical tale of disintegrating domesticity, and as such can be read as further evidence in support of O'Driscol's argument about the sexualization of female criminality. It also serves as evidence of the pirate text itself being an "assemblage" of genres, mixing fact and fiction, layering stock theatrical plots of marital infidelity on top of newspaper stories of real female pirates. But the story does other things as well, since the three spoons function as a narratological connecting device along a circuit of desire, jealousy, and economic status. Each ironic plot twist that connects one segment of society (tanner, maid, gentleman, sailor) to another further leads the heroine towards a life of piracy. This trouble on the home-front is analogous to the larger economic argument of the book that piracy is created because of problems with domestic policy towards labor. We might read the "turns" in the plot about the missing silver spoons as part of the author's larger argument about the economic connections between legitimate and illegitimate business.

Although it is quite understandable that most scholarly attention focuses either on the transgressive potential of cross-dressing pirate women or on the excessive expressions of masculinity and a brutal rape culture, such attention overshadows other forms of productive connections. There are many other roles that women play in pirate literature in general and in the *General History* in particular. In his book *Women and English Piracy, 1540–1720: Partners and Victims of Crime*, John Appleby demonstrates how the business of piracy required "networks of support that formed a partly concealed economy" which included "a varied pattern of interdependency between pirates and women" (including African and Native American women) not only as wives, mothers, servants, prostitutes, and lovers but also as inn-keepers, business partners, translators, intermediaries, and distributors of stolen goods, as well as consumers of those goods (Appleby 2013, p. 5). In some cases, piracy opened up business opportunities for widows and single women who could earn a living redistributing pirated goods to retail markets. In the *General History*, the pirates' connection with women is not merely sexual, but also economic. For example, after taking a prize ship, Captain Roberts takes his "booty" to a slave factory off the coast of Surinam, where they "found the civilest Reception imaginable not only from the Governor and Factory, but their Wives, who exchanged Wares and drove a considerable Trade with them" (p. 205). Moreover, pirates maintained correspondence with family members through what Robert C. Ritchie in his study of British piracy has called a "web of obligation" (Ritchie 1986, p. 123). This web of obligation was more than just epistolary networks and professional comradery. It included financial relationships to family members and business partners as well as complex relations of debt. One New York merchant, Frederick Philipse, became wealthy conducting a perfectly legal trade, selling much needed supplies (rope, sails, food, gunpowder) to pirates in Madagascar (Ritchie 1986, pp. 113–15). Some privateers and pirates took out loans to support their families while they were on voyage in expectation of a return on the investment (profits from plunder), and small-time investors of either gender might secretly bankroll pirate voyages for a share of the booty.

We can surmise that readers in the eighteenth century were sensitive to this alternative economic system (a mixture of investors, retailers, family members, and sexual partners as

well as an outlaw brotherhood) considering that it is the premise behind John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and its sequel *Polly* (1729) (Gay 2013). Arguably the most successful dramatic work of the eighteenth century, whose peculiar assemblage of musical and narrative elements spawned many imitations and adaptations, *Beggar's Opera* was also considered a formal anomaly at the time of its production, and it has proven difficult for literary criticism to explain (Schultz 1923; Reed 2009, pp. 28–39).It is about the iconic gentleman criminal Captain Macheath, who secretly weds the young Polly Peachum, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, who operate a store that sells stolen goods. In its sequel *Polly*, Macheath has escaped his punishment as a convict laborer in the West Indies by disguising himself in black-face as an African pirate, but the dramatic action is mostly centered on Polly who has travelled to the Indies in search of her husband and through various twists and turns ends up cross-dressing as a man and eventually becoming a member of Macheath's piratical crew without realizing who he is. Polly's story is generally believed to have been inspired by the accounts of Bonney and Read that were published just a few years before (Canfield 2001; Dryden 2001). As Peter Reed has suggested, the blackface performance of Macheath as the pirate Morano arguably responds to the "emergent transracial cohorts" in the eighteenth-century and "stage a version of what Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker call the 'hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic'" (Reed 2009, p. 111; Linebaugh and Rediker 2001). Both plays dramatize the assemblage of an alternative economic system's connection with hegemonic commerce. The Peachum family's complicated business is with both the criminal underworld and law enforcement, as the name signifies that Mr. Peachum "peaches" (or impeaches, betrays to the police) the very same criminals with whom he does business. After Macheath marries his daughter, Peachum arranges to have him arrested in hopes of acquiring his wealth. The play is often read allegorically as a satire on the corruption of London society, as the criminal characters repeatedly compare their behavior to that of lawyers, statesmen, and even priests (McIntosh 1974; Piper 1988). The play in fact begins in Peachum's house with him making exactly that comparison between the legal-illegal duality of his profession to that of a lawyer (act I, scene i). Likewise, in *Polly*, Mrs. Trapes compares her profession of betraying and prostituting young girls to what politicians do to entire countries (I, iv), and the West Indian planter Ducat compares all women to pirates in that both women and pirates "are at war with the world" (I, viii).

But in my view, more significant than such metaphorical similitude, the Peachum family occupies a crucial position between legal and illegal markets—fencing stolen wares, trafficking in information, providing legal representation for criminals, etc.—which is what makes the plot so effective and dynamic. In a pivotal scene, the madam Mrs. Trapes enters Peachum's shop to purchase stolen clothing for her prostitutes and unwittingly reveals the location of Macheath, which in turn leads to his arrest (III, vi). Thus, rather than simply assert a metaphorical identity between lawyer and crook, the play maps out a metonymic relation among them, connecting one segment of society to another. Even after Macheath and Peachum are made enemies over Polly, Macheath nevertheless still recognizes such connectivity when he tells his gang that "business cannot go on without him ... [Peachum] is a necessary Agent to us" (II, ii). The effectiveness of the satire is not in the spurious metaphorical assertions that lawyers are like crooks, but in the gradual unveiling of what Deleuze and Guattari call a "machinic assemblage of desire" [*agencement*]—how one character is a "necessary agent" for another's desire, each a cog in the social machinery, and how the lawyer and the police depend upon the criminal. As Polly sings, "all friendship is a mutual debt" (*Polly* III, xii). Hence, in sense, if we think of normal commerce as functioning through a positive "web of obligation" (including not only investment, debt, and speculation but also family, friendship, and sex), then *Beggar's Opera* is the dark inverse of that web, where every interpersonal connection is detached or deterritorialized from its social obligation through ironic turns in the plot and conflicting desires.

In *Beggar's Opera* and *Polly*, the character Polly, who is both an object of desire and herself a desiring subject, symbolizes the social forms of connectivity that commerce depends upon but are also at odds with the commercial incentive structure. As such her character knots together two different and contradictory strands of desire—sexual and economic—which at first glance seem to be in conflict but may actually be different segments on a series of relations. The sequel *Polly* further deterritorializes this complex web of obligation, but its formal structure is quite different from *Beggar's Opera*. The formal structure of *Beggar's Opera* is a triangulation of territories—(1) the tavern that is the home base of criminals and prostitutes, (2) the Newgate prison, and (3) Peachum's house which is the liminal space between the other two—the in-between space that connects and disconnects the desiring subjects (deterritorializes and reterritorializes). In contrast, in *Polly*, the characters are dislocated in the Caribbean; instead of a triangulation of space, there is a progression. Act one takes place in the house of a wealthy West-India-born planter Mr. Ducat, whose signifies his wealth and who wants to buy and have sex with the recently impoverished Polly. In act two, in order to escape, Polly cross-dresses as a man and travels through a liminal no-man's land, where she encounters pirates and "Indians". In this outlaw space of exile, different nomadic characters who are outside the social order meet, connect, and disconnect through various turns in the plot. Finally, after the war between the pirates and the colonists where the colonists are assisted by the Indians, act three takes place in the Indian's camp where justice is done, and Macheath (still in blackface) is executed. As if to further assure its audience that Indians would be motivated to assist their colonizers, the play concludes with the Indian prince proposing marriage to Polly. The play tropes the Indian prince as a "noble savage," the only honest and truly brave character in the play, whose true character is contrasted with the false pirate-like identities of everyone else. In the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, each act of the play moves us progressively through territorialization (act one), deterritorialization (act two), and reterritorialization (act three) where the concluding reterritorialization (i.e., the moral resolution) is an inherently hybrid, mixed space and where the image of racial difference is a sign of political relations (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 379).

However, beyond simply applying such theoretical terms to the three-act structure of a play, we can further analyze this hybrid, mixed space and the dynamic of territorialization through Deleuze and Guattari's explication of a "machinic assemblage of desire". This psychoanalytic concept suggests that running through the forms of sociality (both at work and at play) are technologies of production and modes of representation that constitute such "assemblages" is desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p. 81). Desire, in both its individual and collective formations, functions like a cog in the socio-economic machine; even the desire to escape or retaliate against that machinery (i.e., by becoming pirate) might be actually immanent to its structure (i.e., in this case, a mercantile structure of a far-flung enterprising, speculative economy of risk, debt, military conflict, sexual exchange, slavery, and colonial conquest.) The ironic tone and plot structure that we find in pirate literature in some ways reveals that contradictory truth that the desire to run away from a politicized economy may be an integral component of that economy that, in turn, might create alternative modes of existence (within but not a part of the economy) or even lead to a political transformation of different segments of the overall structure. In other words, although the characters in *Beggar's Opera* and *Polly* repeatedly remark that sexual desire is a metaphor for economic desire, the plot and the characters are not in fact reducible to that structure of metaphoric condensation; rather they are dynamic elements of the same assemblage—sometimes contrapuntal, other times in sync, but always connections on a segmented series of relations.

I have taken a detour from *A General History of Pyrates* through the theater of John Gay not because I would consider *Polly* to be an example of pirate literature and not simply because it was clearly influenced by it. Rather, my aim is to illustrate a very important difference between the two and how, in a manner of speaking, John Gay's "major literature" is some ways a detour from—or reterritorialization of—piratical "minor literature". As

such, Gay's drama gives formal unity through the romantic figure of Polly to a piratical form that is essentially a polyvalent non-unity. To put it another way, Gay's three-act structure reduces the polyvalent potential of pirate literature to a singular narrative vector, and, in this intertextual relation, Polly is the figurative cathexis (in Freudian terms) that reterritorializes a deterritorializing machinic assemblage of desire (i.e., a multiplicity of libidinal, technological, and political relations.) In it, the ironic turns in the plot are produced by each character's desire that leads them to alternative forms of connectivity, which Gay's play gleefully maps out for us, and which the play's repeated attempts at moral judgement (such being the explicit goals of satire) utterly fail to contain. In their analysis of minor literature and its literary assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari pose a duality—in addition to the "machine assemblage of desire," there is the "collective assemblage of enunciation". The concept "collective assemblage of enunciation" does not simply foreground the ways that a text might be a hybrid of genres or have been composed by multiple authors who may or may not be named as such; it also suggests ways in which various writings are a cultural product given shape and substance by multiple actors, technologies, and social formations, including those whose presence may present an "asygnifying" (not representable) cultural practice whose crisis of meaning is what impacts narrative form.

Hence, although *A General History of the Pyrates* and the theater of John Gay both share many of the same plot turns (e.g., cross-dressing pirates, legal commerce part of the same assemblage, or *agencement*, as illegal commerce, etc.), pirate literature resists any condensation of meaning onto a moral or political point because its literary form is polyvalent. We can see how the ironic turns of plot and the polyvalent potential of the collective assemblage of enunciation resists being reduced to a moral point in one of the most foundational pirate texts for this time period: Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*. Al-hough this book in many ways is an exposé of the dreadful deeds that Henry Morgan carried out in the name of England, readers find themselves caught up in the action. When Morgan plots his narrow escape, the pleasure of the text is that he escapes, despite the overall moral condemnation of Morgan that the text would seem to be arguing. This becomes most clear when the center of action shifts from the English pirates' point of view to the Spanish point of view. When we (the reader) are in the midst of the action of the English, we anticipate the success of the pirates, but when we are in the midst of the action of the Spanish, we anticipate the success of the Spanish empire. The problematic contradiction between the action of the story and its supposed message seems to have been observed by the editor of the first English translation, William Crooke, who deliberately deleted the part of the narrative that centers on the action of the Spanish (Exquemelin 1969, p. 126). In other words, in the original text, the plot turns did not follow a consistent moral pattern, but rather progressed through a series of connections, territorializations, and deterritorializations. But the editor desired a pattern that would emphasize English patriotism so he deleted the turns of plot that would lead the reader through a detour elsewhere. Thinking of the story in terms of the different lines of connectivity opened up by the turns of plot might help us explain the very different renditions of Exquemelin's story that Richard Frohock has so thoroughly analyzed in his monograph *Buccaneers and Privateers*. The first English publisher of the story, Crooke, appears quite deaf to the anti-English moral of the narrative and insists that the story is a patriotic celebration of Morgan; in contrast, another publisher, Philip Ayers, recognizes the narrative's condemnation of Morgan and argues against it, and yet another publisher, Thomas Malthus, creates a mock-heroic narrative that satirizes England's colonial activity (Frohock 2012, pp. 52–57). Although Frohock is certainly right to foreground the different political agendas and rhetorical strategies of the three editors, my argument is that the very piratical form of the narrative turns—the duality of its "collective assemblage of enunciation" and its "machinic assemblage of desire"—produces such multiple translations of the same narrative.

Hence, if we think of such turns less in terms of the transgressive identities or political ideologies that they encode, but in the opportunities they open up (in other words, in terms

of what a body can do, rather than in terms of what a body is), we see a rhizomatic politics at work in which alternative modes of life emerge out of the assemblage of a mercantile empire. For example, often observed is the somewhat transgressive representation of multiethnic solidarities and interracial marriage that we find in pirate narratives in contrast to most other literature from this period. Pirates were not just a motley crew, but could also spawn a multi-racial "motley generation of children and grand-children" as the author of the *General History* reports occurred in Madagascar (p. 61). Repeated also is critique of the political economy and the suggestion that the supposedly legitimate commerce was scarcely different from illegitimate pirating along with the sharp observation that legal and illegal commerce secretly depended upon each other. According to historians Anne Pérotin-Dumon and Mark G. Hanna, the rather itinerant, random, and improvised connections and hybrid forms of sociality that we see described in *A General History* might be symptomatic of the political shift from the sponsorship of private ventures by nascent states to the consolidation of empires and imperial authority over trade in which colonial governments had to renegotiate the limits of their complicity with the pirates (Perotin-Dumon 2001, pp. 40, 47; Hanna 2015, pp. 382–83). When nations altered their trade agreements, such as that between the East India Company and the Mogul Aurangzeb, a legitimate privateer might find his legal status changed to illegitimate pirate mid-voyage (Ritchie 1986, p. 159; Hanna 2015, pp. 420–21).

Examples of such trade networks abound. The author of *A General History* comments that the fisheries accidentally support pirates because the poorly paid laborers look for ways to supplement their income during the off-season when they are not working (p. 347). The governor of North Carolina is embroiled in a scandal as to whether he was willingly complicit with Blackbeard's piracy. In the first volume published in 1724, it suggests that the governor supported Blackbeard, but in the second volume published in 1728, new information added in an appendix exonerates the governor (p. 92). The pirate Captain Roberts asserts that pirates were secretly welcomed by colonial governments as suppliers of much-needed commodities and/or slaves (p. 203). Part of this "machinic assemblage" of the economy includes the scientific observations about much-needed food resources on land; Roberts acquires much-needed supplies from a pirate settlement on the coast of Sierra Leone where the pirates have integrated into the African community (p. 226). Pirates sometimes incorporated into their crew the enslaved Africans whom they acquired from a captured vessel (p. 174), and a pirate ship might even be captained by an African or mulatto (p. 298), but other times the pirates participated in the slave trade (p. 371), and when their own food supplies were low, they got rid of the slaves acquired in battle as quickly as possible (p. 357).[3] Historian Robert Ritchie has recounted the true case of a slave from Martinique, Abraham Samuel, who eventually became King Samuel or "Tolinor Rex" ruling his own colony of pirates on Madagascar after marrying a local woman. Possibly her social status in the indigenous community improved because of this opportune marriage (Ritchie 1986, p. 84). The point of *A General History* is not only that such disorder was the state of the new world order, but also that the attachment and detachment of pirates to and from different sites and relations—a segmented series of relations through which the form and object of desire is transformed as it circulates.

Although the so-called "Golden Age of Piracy" is often associated with the Caribbean, as pirates such as Henry Morgan remain part of the national mythologies of Jamaica and the Bahamas, *A General History* foregrounds the relations of the Caribbean to other sites, from New York (the home base of Captain Kidd) to North Carolina (base of Black-Beard) to Madagascar (base of Avery) to the west Africa and England. The scholarship of Edouard Glissant and Edward Kamau Brathwaite, in very different ways, formulate the concept of "creolization" to challenge and disrupt binaries of black/white and master/slave to see a "process . . . of movement and interruption" (Brathwaite 1974, p. 63). Glissant explicitly acknowledges his affiliation with Deleuze and Guattari in his theory of relation, whereas Brathwaite, writing some years before Deleuze and Guattari's work was translated into English, formulates his theory of creolization and his study of eighteenth-century slavery

in the wake of Pan-Africanist anti-colonialist struggles (Brathwaite 1971; Glissant 1997). In their theory, the term "creolization" and "creole" carry different meanings. As Ralph Bauer and Antonio Mazzotti have explained, "creole" was the term used in the eighteenth-century to denote white Europeans born in the Americas, but "creolization" in contemporary usage refers to the complex and sometimes unconscious negotiation of racial and social hierarchies in an Atlantic economy out of which emerged a distinctly "modern" subjectivity (Bauer and Mazzotti 2009). Hence, the pirate assemblage is a creole text in that it gathers together the contradictory constituent elements, subject positions, and collective enunciation of the "creole complex" that put in question the purity of the nation state. In *Creole America*, Sean X. Goudie further traces the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean by situating Brathwaite's dialectic of creolizing and anti-creolizing energies in the context of something he names "paracolonialism" in which an emergent nation state benefits from an on-going client relationship with the colonies of another empire and which is structurally an essential and often hidden part of national development (Goudie 2006). Although his study begins at the end of the eighteenth century, we can see that a century earlier, piracy was already an integral component of an emerging "paracolonial" relationship between North America and the Caribbean.

The politics of such creole identities and multiethnic pirate solidarities is therefore complex. Alexander G. Weheliye, in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* has critiqued Deleuze and Guattari for making hybridity and the "intermingling of bodies" appear to sometimes be a biological fact or state of nature and other times merely a technological "machinic" effect. For Weheliye, quoting Dorothy Roberts, "race is not a biological category that has been politically charged. It is a political category that has been disguised as a biological one" (Weheliye 2014, p. 51). But precisely how it is "political" is the question Weheliye opens up. For example, we may reconsider Jonathan Swift's famous summation of the piratical nature of the mercantile empire that concludes *Gulliver's Travels* (first published in 1726, between the two volumes of *A General History of Pyrates*):

> A Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither; at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast; they go on Shore to rob and plunder; they see an harmless People, are entertained with Kindness, they give the Country a new Name, they take formal Possession of it for the King, they set up a rotten Plank or a Stone for a Memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the Natives, bring away a Couple more by Force for a Sample, return home, and get their Pardon. Here commences a new Dominion acquired with a title by Divine Right. Ships are sent with the first Opportunity; the Natives driven out or destroyed, their Princes tortured to discover their Gold: a free License given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust; the Earth reeking with the Blood of its Inhabitants: And this execrable Crew of Butchers employed in so pious an Expedition, is a modern Colony sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous People. (Swift 1961, p. 258)

In a reading of that passage, Clement Hawes has argued that Swift's indictment of imperialism is unequivocal, and Swift would appear to be making the explicit point that a racializing assemblage—that includes Europe's racist belief in its own humanistic civilization—emerged out of acts of piratical political violence (Hawes 1991, p. 207). However, Weheliye argues via Deleuze and Guattari that the "racializing assemblage" may be born out of political violence but is not reducible to it. What Swift's reduction of imperialism (and its intimate connection to piracy) to such a satirical point neglects is what Weheliye calls "the existence of alternative modes of life alongside the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human" (Weheliye 2014, p. 2). In his complicated theorization of the flesh (*viscus*) as an alternative to "the legal idiom of personhood as property" codified by *habeas corpus* (p. 44), Weheliye argues that, "habeas viscus . . . networks bodies, forces, velocities, intensities, institutions, interests, ideologies, and desires in racializing assemblages, which are simultaneously territorializing

and deterritorializing" (p. 12). In this way, the unique form of *A General History of Pyrates* seems to differ from works such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Polly* in that it persists in opening up different potentialities along a progressive series of segments and relations, but if we take all of these works together in relation to each other, we can read them together as "minor literature"—all parts of a "pirate assemblage".

Already discussed in this paper is the progressive relations among different bodies, but also important to the "pirate assemblage" are relations to ideologies of state, new technologies, and print culture. The ideologies of state play a central role in pirate literature. To emphasize, as I have above, the machinic assemblage of desire and the contingencies of survival does not mean that pirate narratives are not also articulated in relation to ideologies of nation-building and the practices of enlightenment reason. For instance, in the *General History*, founder of the utopian pirate colony Libertalia, Captain Misson, preaches the universal equality and freedom of all human beings, the arbitrariness of cultural difference, and the unjustness of slavery. Captain Misson's speeches are even more forceful critiques of the racializing impulse and wanton destruction of imperialism than Swift's in *Gulliver's Travels* and anticipate abolitionist rhetoric by several decades. However, the fable of Captain Misson is the exception, not the rule, and rather than being transgressive, what pirates usually are is opportunistic as they attach themselves to local economies and cultures. Throughout the many pirate narratives included in the book, attitudes towards Africans and Asians shift throughout the narrative, sometimes dismissive of primitive cultures, sometimes admiring, sometimes a partnership among equals, and other times a sexualized relation of almost orgiastic privilege.

The most significant contrast to Misson's utopian pirate colony is Avery's pirate colony—both colonies located on Madagascar. In contrast to Misson's rhetoric of republican virtue and liberty as pirates fight the good fight in a war against a corrupt world, Avery's colony is compared to a Turkish harem, where the men can take as many of "the most beautiful of the Negro Women" as they liked as wives and eventually "grew wanton in Cruelty" and "abused their power like tyrants" (p. 59). Arguably, the noble-minded Captain Misson is the idealized alter-ego of the real pirate Avery, since many of the details of their careers and their settlements on Madagascar are parallel, and the account of Misson even alludes to confusion in the London newspapers about which of the two men was responsible for which deed (p. 431). In terms of the form of *A General History*, it is significant that Captain Misson's story is the first chapter of volume two and captain Avery's is the first chapter of volume one, as if to emphasize the parallelism between the two stories. The ribald sexual fantasy of Avery's adventures is rewritten as the principled political fantasy of Misson's, suggesting the subconscious link between sexual desire and political desire. Moreover, the collective assemblage of enunciation that we see here—a mix of generic conventions and literary styles, one story spinning off a similar yet different story—illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's point that a collective is not a singular unity or even a duality, but a multiplicity of relations whose resonances and dissonances with the "major" (or hegemonic) reconfigure the imagined coordinates of sociality.

Piracy depends also on technology and the relation of their bodies and desires to that technology. Reflecting on the importance of technology, the author of *A General History of the Pyrates* argues that there are three "famous Arts of modern use": navigation (or the use of the compass), guns, and print (p. 177). Considering historian Marcus Rediker's analysis of the technological apparatus of commerce in his book *The Slave Ship*, we might also add a fourth technology: the ship (Rediker 2007). If we characterize piracy and pirate narratives as a machine assemblage, then such technologies are key components in that assemblage. Unlike other travel narratives that generally have a determinate destination, pirates change course regularly, following their compass and information gathered from other ships and printed maps. Their movement in effect maps out the various coordinates of the emerging empire since they opportunistically go wherever works for them at the time, rather than pursuing a single vector or ideological agenda. Yet, they are buffeted by the forces of commerce and empire. Desperate acts of violence put pirates at war with

the world, requiring more guns and powder, and leading to more acts of violence, and consequently leading to a dependence on precisely the economic system they want to escape. Hence, the technology of the compass is especially central to the pirate story as a literal and metaphorical guide through the twists and turns of their adventure.

Print culture also figures largely in the lives of pirates; the commissions they receive as privateers or the commissions they forge and parody as pirates, the royal pardons distributed throughout the colonies, and also other stories about pirates (Hanna 2015, pp. 399–402). For example, in the *General History*, Blackbeard made use of the royal pardon to bully the governor of North Carolina and buy himself time (p. 75). Moreover, Frohock has demonstrated how sailors on one privateering voyage had read the account of another privateering voyage and became aware of how they would be mistreated by the captain, which inspired them to mutiny (Frohock 2012, p. 156). In the *General History*, some pirates published a petition to the King for their pardon, and notably the rhetoric of that petition turns on the fame of the dread pirate Roberts, whose infamous deeds were cited so as to evoke sympathy for any sailors who had been subjected to them (p. 290). In such print culture, the distinction between the literary representation and the actual criminal could blur; Peter Reed has demonstrated in *Rogue Performances* how both real criminals and bored, adventure-seeking wealthy people might imitate and appropriate the language of literary figures (Reed 2009, pp. 30, 41). Hence, print as a technology of knowledge dissemination and state machinery plays an important role in production of piracy as a political act as well as in the "collective assemblage of enunciation" that is pirate literature.

My argument's emphasis on the plot turns and machinic assemblage of desire is not to say that the narrative is not political. Rather, the narrative is politically pedagogical in how it teaches the reader how to interpret the other texts, including legal documents. Pirate narratives, like all literary texts, are self-conscious about the very act of reading them. For example, the central piece of *A General History of the Pyrates* is the chapter on Roberts, which is the longest chapter because, as the author explains in the preface, it is meant to be representative of the whole (p. 6). Here, the turns of the narrative enable a critical reading of the trial documents which are placed at the end of the narrative. At issue for the judges during the trial is whether the sailors voluntarily became pirates when they joined Roberts's crew or were forced to do so. The court is rather inconsistent in its verdict, but more importantly, the narrative that precedes the court documents reveals a more complicated picture of life at sea—"the circumstances of time when, place where, and manner how"—than what can be contained in the court's narrative (p. 249). The text imagines a scenario of justice performed at sea, where the instrument of justice has integrity and impartiality precisely because it lacks the corruption of justice (i.e., lawyers) that one finds on land. The *General History* observes: "If two persons were equally guilty of the same Fact, there was no convicting one, and bringing the other off, by any Quirk, or turn of Law" (p. 248). It then goes on to suggest that seamen can only be judged by other seamen, on account of the very language one might have for describing reality is different: "before a Man can have a right Idea of a Thing, he must know the Terms standing for that Thing: The Sea-Terms being a Language by itself, which no Lawyer can be supposed to understand, he must of Consequence want that discriminating Faculty, which should direct him to judge right of the Facts meant by those terms" (p. 248).[4]

Language is in fact not simply a question of law, but is integral to the working of the narrative as well as to the lives of the pirates. Many critics have observed how pirates transgress or contest authoritative language by cursing or signifying. The narrative turns (the frequent and fast-paced turning of the tables) that are the essential feature of the pirate narrative are accompanied by the ironic use of the language of state to describe the conditions of the sea, an ironic use that always self-consciously undoes itself. The joke functions the same throughout the narrative—a word from the elevated discourse of state is used to describe the condition of pirates, producing both resonance (similarity) and dissonance (difference) that causes the word to vibrate with metaphorical and ironic meanings, but they also serve to signal the moment when the tables are about to turn (the

turning of phrase correlated to the turning of the plot.) In one case, a pirate encounters his former captain, who had been abusive and miserly with wages, and before torturing him to death, jokes, "Ah Captain Skinner, the only man I wished to see; I am much in your Debt and now I shall pay you all in your own coin" (p. 115). Usually, such ironically situated uses of language appear in the form of single-sentence quips. However, sometimes language games are quite elaborate. One lengthy example in the *General History* occurs after pages and pages of reproduced trial documents about one group of pirates which is followed by the story of another group of pirates that includes an elaborate mock trial where the pirates amuse themselves by role-playing in a way that reveals their capacity for critical reflection about their situation as well as a parodic critique of justice (pp. 292–94). Likewise, the pirates' articles of confederation not only mimic a ship's commission, but also reproduce a state in miniature. As Rediker has noted, the articles of confederation are remarkably consistent across nationality and circumstance, and for Rediker this speaks of the essentially democratic form of social organization and the utopian desire immanent within piracy. However, it does not simply invent a democratic republic on the ship; rather, the self-consciously parodic element of such articles also produces a self-conscious dissonance with the republican virtues and economic structures that the pirate repudiates. The *General History*'s emphasis on a unique *sea language*, what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "minor" language that has transformative effects on the major language, is an example of the unique "oceanic" epistemology described in Hester Blum's monograph *A View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum Sea Narratives* (Blum 2008; see also Blum 2010, 2013). This commentary on the language of the sea resonates with the rest of the narrative in which that language is repeatedly deployed.

To conclude, pirate literature can be viewed as a minor literature that developed as it reconfigured the coordinates of major literature. Its form can be analyzed as a collective assemblage of enunciation and a machine assemblage of desire. As such it deterritorializes the reading process by self-consciously teaching its readers to think critically about other texts; it deterritorializes the economy by foregrounding hidden and alternative forms of economic relation; and it deterritorializes language itself through its resonances and dissonances that vibrate alongside the narrative turns. It productively connects the reader to alternative modes of community and identity formation, but does not necessarily lead to a determinate ideology. Here I return to the debate among scholars summarized at the beginning of this essay about whether pirates are transgressive and ideologically revolutionary or in fact the opposite. Instead, in answer to this debate, I aimed to demonstrate that pirate literature maps out a series of relations, some destructive, some creative. Read in this way, pirate literature spurs a re-reading of canonical literature and other literature.

Beyond the scope of this essay, I might suggest that the concept of the "pirate assemblage" may also have implications for other scholarly conversations. For example, we can further elaborate and complicate our understanding of piratical language by using the scholarly tools of the "new economic criticism" which aims to avoid reductive accounts of literature as merely reflections of economic class structures and to instead foreground the textuality of economic practices such as insurance, speculation, labor management, and print culture.[5] As I hoped my own argument about pirate literature has demonstrated, not only were pirates connected to the complex networks of financial speculation and print culture, but so too were the institutions of finance connected to piracy. Although piracy is often represented in histories of the eighteenth century as being the antithesis of insurance companies, since piracy is one of the dangers for which ships need insurance, what my argument suggests is that we might re-think the relationship between insurance and piracy along a segmented series of relations which would include privateering vessels that were insured in anticipation of returns on investment gained by acts of piracy. Doing so engages in productive dialogue with scholarship such as Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* that explores the relationship between insurance and slavery in a manner that deconstructs legal and illegal forms of capitalization (Baucom 2005). Moreover, since ships engaged in such speculative enterprises typically had

a "no purchase, no pay" contract in which sailors received no wages but instead a "share" of the plunder, the very terms of the labor contract put sailors within an oppressive web of speculation and insurance that might provoke them to question that arrangement and opt for piracy. A pirate crew's "articles of confederation" were essentially a rewriting of their labor contract, a contract very much a part of a broader economic system of speculation, insurance, and debt. Pirate literature reconfigures the *topos* of the legal contract through which future returns are imagined via past precedent.

Moreover, the "pirate assemblage" offers insight to how we understand narrative voice in biographical and autobiographical accounts from the European colonies. For example, in *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709–1838*, Nicole Aljoe has radically challenged our understanding of slave narratives to foreground embedded accounts and co-authored narratives that, I might argue, are an example of the collective assemblage of enunciation that deterritorializes slave narratives from the author-function and the ideology-function (Aljoe 2012). The genre should not be reducible to notions of "authentic" autobiographies with a determinate ideological purpose, but rather open to multiplicity. If we also include pirate literature as a site of the experience of enslaved Africans, we open a more radical trajectory of that experience than that typically taught. Afterall, the enslaved person always has the potential to become a pirate in the right circumstances. Moreover, following Alexander Weheliye's use of Deleuze and Guattari to analyze a racializing assemblage, we might further test his argument where he also critiques Giorgio Agamben's theory of the legal term *homo sacer* which "names something like the originary 'political' relation, which is to say, bare life insofar as it operates in an inclusive exclusion as the referent of the sovereign decision" (Agamben 1998, p. 85). Hence, for Agamben, in western political thought, the foundation of the state begins problematically with a "state of exception" where the exercise of state violence outside the legal framework is paradoxically part of the legal framework—the state of exception being the "threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism" (Agamben 2005, p. 3; See also Agamben 1998, pp. 18–20). The slipperiness of the privateering/piracy binary could be cited as an illustration of Agamben's argument about the legal framework of the nation state, but pirate narratives and what I am calling the "pirate assemblage" greatly complicate Agamben's theory by focusing on human activities that are differently part of and apart from the state formation. Weheliye contends that Agamben's focus on the concentration camp during Nazi Germany as his paradigmatic example of the "state of exception" and *homo sacer* not only misses entirely the history of slavery and colonial conquest and the role they played in Europe's economic development, but also misses the ways in which slavery and conquest functions in order to reduce "bare life" to a technology of the flesh, an assemblage of relations in which alternative forms of humanity and sociality emerge, resist, and develop (Weheliye 2014, pp. 37, 83).

Notes

[1] Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 18); See also Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 88). For their theorization of a "progression" along a segmented series rather than a transgression of binary oppositions, see (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p. 67; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp. 210–31).

[2] (Defoe 1999, p. 6). All further references to this book will be parenthetical. There has been considerable debate about the real author of this text. The book was published under the name Captain Charles Johnson, and most scholars use that name. The editor of the text currently in print and available for classroom use contends in his introduction that the actual author is Daniel Defoe, which is why I have cited his name in this note, but P. N Furbanks and W.R. Owens have successfully challenged that attribution in (Furbank and Owens 1988).

3   See also Barnette-Woods (2021) on the various possibilities in the relations among privateers, pirates, and enslaved Africans.

4   Frohock interprets the narrative of this trial to be in support of the colonial governors and part of a satire condemning pirates in Frohock (2015, pp. 474, 477). But I would argue against this reading because the narrative also clearly questions the governor's decision to sentence to death several possibly innocent men who may have just been caught in the wrong place at the wrong time; see *General History of Pyrates*, pp. 248–87.

5   Osteen and Woodmansee (1999); Moore (2004); see also Thomas (2015) and a special issue of *Early American Literature* devoted to the new economic criticism, guest edited by Baker and Wertheimer (2006).

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